

AFGHANISTAN
MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT
July and August 2012

The UK is part of a 50-nation coalition to prevent international terrorists, including Al Qaeda, from again using Afghanistan as a base from which to operate, threatening our security and that of the region.

The Government has committed itself to keeping Parliament informed about developments in Afghanistan on a monthly basis. This twentieth report covers progress in July and August 2012. It reflects the combined assessment of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development.

The Rt Hon. William Hague MP
Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs

Overview

On 8 July at the Tokyo Conference the international community, including the UK, agreed to help the Government of Afghanistan meet its country's development needs for the years up to and after security transition in 2014. Specific pledges were made to 2017, with strong commitments from the international community to provide financial assistance to Afghanistan through the 'Transformation Decade' to the end of 2024. This support is vital to ensure that the Government can provide continued stability and prospects for its people when international military troops withdraw at the end of 2014. Our support will depend on the Government taking forward key governance and economic reforms, including on protecting the rights of women and girls, outlined in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF). At the request of the Government of Afghanistan, the UK agreed to co-chair the first Ministerial review of the TMAF benchmarks in 2014,

The insurgency remains a tangible threat in Afghanistan as the separate attacks in Nimruz and Kunduz provinces on 14 August demonstrated. However, as transition progresses and the ANSF increasingly move to the fore on operations, we are seeing more evidence that violent incidents are being evermore displaced away from the protected communities where the majority of Afghans live. While there are still areas where the insurgent has relative freedom of movement they are finding it hard to concentrate their forces as they would wish. It is likely that they will continue to rely on IEDs, high-profile attacks and assassination attempts as means of conducting their campaign and maintaining relevance.

Insider attacks (incidents where members of the ANSF attack their ISAF partners¹) remain a serious concern. We are working with ISAF and our Afghan partners to reduce the potential for such incidents, but while being adamant that they will not derail our strategy for transition.

The UK continued to support the development of the local economy in Helmand province. UK Aid has delivered technical and vocational education and training to more than 7,300 Helmandis, giving them the skills to get jobs and start businesses in the emerging private sector. Our assistance is also helping local government officials in Helmand take control of vital infrastructure, including roads, canals and irrigation systems.

Strengthening the Afghan State

On 8 July the international community met to agree how we would help to meet Afghanistan's development needs for the decade after transition at the Tokyo Conference. The UK announced it would continue to provide assistance to Afghanistan at current levels (£178 million per annum) through to 2017, ensuring that the Afghan state remains financially viable in the years immediately after security transition in 2014. Many other international partners including the US, Japan, Germany, France, Australia, Canada and the Scandinavians followed our lead, making similar commitments. Our support will depend on the Government of Afghanistan's progress towards key governance and economic reforms, set out in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF), which all partners including the Government have signed. At the Afghan Government's request, the UK agreed to co-chair the first Ministerial review of progress against the TMAF benchmarks in 2014. We will therefore be taking an active role in supporting the Government of Afghanistan as it takes forward this work.

The TMAF includes strong commitments from the Afghan Government on furthering the rights of women and girls, including taking steps to ensure that the Elimination of Violence Against Women Law is properly implemented.

Political

The Prime Minister visited Afghanistan on 18-19 July. His visit began with a series of meetings in Helmand Province to support the work of British and international troops and civilians and to review progress on the security and governance transition process. In Kabul, the Prime Minister met President Karzai to discuss issues including Afghan preparations for the Presidential elections due in 2014 and the President's plans for tackling corruption.

During his visit, the Prime Minister also participated in a meeting between representatives of the Governments of the UK, Afghanistan and Pakistan. The Prime Minister, President Karzai and Pakistani Prime Minister Raja Pervez Ashraf discussed the mutual security concerns of all three countries and the opportunities for further future engagement and cooperation.

On 4 August, the Lower House of the Afghan National Assembly, the Wolesi Jirga, passed votes of no confidence in Abdul Rahim Wardak, the Minister of Defence, and Bismullah Khan Muhammedi, the Minister of the Interior. Both Ministers had been summoned to the Wolesi Jirga to account for their response to cross-border shelling in Konar Province.

¹ Also known as Green on Blue attacks.

Minister Wardak publicly resigned three days later, before being appointed as a special advisor to President Karzai on defence matters. Both Bismullah Khan and Wardak were long serving members of Karzai's Cabinet, and were awarded the Ghazi Amir Amanullah Khan medal for services to the state of Afghanistan.

On 2 September a spokesman for the Presidential Palace said that Bismullah Khan had been nominated by the President to take up the position of Minister of Defence and Ghulam Mujtaba Patang, currently Deputy Interior Minister, was named as the new head of the Ministry. Alongside these appointments, Haji Azizullah Din Mohammad was nominated as the new Minister for the Borders and Tribal Affairs. All appointments will now need to be approved by the Afghan Parliament.

Following a decision taken by President Karzai to limit the term of office of the Director General of the National Directorate of Security to two years, on 29 August the Palace announced that Engineer Rahmatullah Nabil would be moving on from the position to take up an Ambassadorship in an unspecified country. His replacement will be Assadullah Khalid, who formerly held the position of Minister for the Borders and Tribal Affairs.

Reconciliation and Reintegration

Nationwide, 5,000 former insurgents have now reintegrated under the Afghan Peace and Reintegration Programme, although the vast majority of these continue to come from the less challenging parts of the country. In July the Provincial Governor held a reintegration Shura attended by District Governors, ANSF commanders and the Helmand Provincial Peace Council.

The Helmand Provincial Peace Council increased the tempo of their outreach activity in July, visiting Garmsir, Khan Neshin and Kajaki in quick succession. During the visits the Council held public Shuras and met with local ANSF to discuss the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP) role in reintegration. More visits are planned for after Eid.

We continued to see signs that there is real debate within the Taleban about their political outreach and role in Afghanistan's future. But the insurgency is a complex and disparate entity and other elements continue to reject engagement with the West and the Afghan government. There was no change to the Taleban's decision earlier this year to break off from talks about the establishment of a political office in Qatar.

Governance

The Chief Executive of the Afghan Independent Elections Commission (IEC) Abdullah Ahmadzai resigned on 10 July. President Karzai has yet to appoint his successor. His replacement will face the key challenges of driving forward the electoral reform process and the wider preparations necessary in advance of the 2014 presidential election. The draft Electoral Law is currently under consideration in the Afghan Ministry of Justice.

On the 23 July, President Karzai issued a far reaching Decree on tackling corruption across Government. It included specific, time-limited instructions for Ministries and other Government organisations, for example on the appointment and personal wealth of public officials. The Office of Administrative Affairs and the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers will monitor each project and report to the President and Cabinet on their progress.

The independent Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC) visited Kabul for the sixth time in July. During their visit MEC members met with Afghan Government and Civil Society representatives. The work of the Committee culminated in the endorsement of 17 recommendations and benchmarks on key issues including measures for greater transparency and accountability, public awareness raising and stronger investigations for tackling corruption.

The UK Government continues to support the development of stronger local government bodies in Afghanistan to ensure that UK aid delivers results for local communities. A recent evaluation of the UK-funded Performance-Based Governance Fund has shown that Provincial Governors' offices have improved their performance in key areas such as local government planning and budgeting and consultation with local communities, including with marginalised groups such as women.

Economic and Social Development

Thanks to UK assistance more than 5,600 drought-affected families in Faryab, Samangan and Jawzjan have received life-saving humanitarian assistance to prevent disease, hunger and displacement. In August, the project completed its final round of cash transfers using mobile phone technology to help households buy their own food and other necessities from local markets.

Through the joint Conflict Pool-DFID funded 'train the trainers' programme, the Royal Engineers delivered 147 hours of training to 12 staff from the Afghanistan Vocational Training Institute (ATVI) in Helmand on road and canal maintenance, project management and supervision. In turn, ATVI trainers delivered 266 hours of training to 75 public servants from 11 local government departments in a range of areas including procurement, computer skills, basic maths and English, design drawing, road and canal maintenance and surveying.

The UK-led Helmand PRT continued to help develop local markets and businesses, reducing the reliance on imported livestock and agriculture produce. UK Conflict Pool assistance has provided advice and start-up financing to Helmandi poultry farmers on modern incubation techniques to rear 'day old' chicks. In July, 90,000 chicks were reared and sold to the local markets. 200 farmers received training in greenhouse farming techniques at the UK-funded Bolan Farm in Lashkar Gah.

The DFID-funded Mercy Corps vocational training programme has delivered training for 7,366 graduates to date, including 1,251 women. Plans to expand training into Sangin district were agreed with the District Governor over the summer.

The UK continued to help local government deliver better public services in Helmand. In August, the UK PRT delivered the first of a series of training workshops for District Health Officers (DHOs), improving their managerial skills and technical knowledge, helping them to deliver better healthcare services at the district level and linking them to government bodies at the provincial level. The PRT is planning similar workshops on core administration skills for District Education Directors in the future.

London 2012 Olympics

Afghanistan's star Olympic athlete, Rohullah Nikpai, matched his successful appearance at the 2008 Games in Beijing by winning a second bronze medal in taekwondo at the London Olympics. This was Afghanistan's second ever medal in the Olympic Games. Afghanistan's only female athlete at the London 2012 Games, Tahima Kohistani, did not win a medal. But she returned to Afghanistan having demonstrated what Afghan women can achieve and keen to promote women's sport.

Rule of Law

During July, 18 courses were delivered to a total of 127 Afghan National Police (ANP) officers at the Police Staff College. This was lower than usual due to Ramadan. More than 4,000 students have been trained so far. Also during July, 148 ANP students graduated from courses at the Crime Management College. This took the total to 663 since the inception of the College in April 2012.

Catherine Royle, former Deputy Ambassador in Kabul, started work as Head of Secretariat to the International Policing Co-ordination Board on 25th August.

Security

Violence levels in Afghanistan remained broadly commensurate with 2011 figures. In the May and June reports we noted that the number of violent incidents had increased, compared to the same time period in 2011. The increasing trends have in part been attributed to the shorter than usual poppy harvest, which diverted insurgents away from the battlefield for less time than usual.

The ANSF, supported by ISAF, maintained a high operational tempo over the summer months, particularly in southern Afghanistan where the bulk of the country's violent incidents occur.² The insurgents are operating under increasing pressure. However we should not underestimate the threat they represent. They remain resilient and are committed to conducting a campaign of violence. In Helmand province we assess that the majority of enemy initiated attacks are in reaction to sustained Combined Force³ operations in the insurgents' traditional strongholds located outside the key population centres. We also assess that the pace of these operations - and the insurgents' reaction to them - has contributed to the increased number of reported violent incidents. As the insurgents focus on protecting their safe havens their capability to target population centres is gradually becoming more limited. The result is that insurgent activity is increasingly being pushed to the fringes, with the majority of Afghans remaining largely unaffected by the violence. This is true both in central Helmand and nationally, where 80% of enemy initiated attacks occur in areas home to only 20% of the population. However, the factors that have led to this position remain fragile and are not yet irreversible.

Ramadan

Ramadan started on 20 July. Reporting suggested that the Taliban leadership instructed their fighters to maintain a high operational tempo throughout Ramadan. Symptomatic of their increasingly difficult operating environment, and the fact that many low-level fighters return

² ISAF reporting shows that in the year Jun 2011 – Jun 2012 Regional Commands (South) and (South West) – home to approximately 11% of the population - received 55% of all enemy initiated attacks.

³ ANSF and ISAF.

home to their families, their success in achieving this objective was limited. The insurgency nevertheless remains a tangible threat as the events of 14 August demonstrated.

14 August Attacks

In the early evening on 14 August multiple suicide bombers detonated Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) at the hospital and bazaar in Zaranj, Nimruz province. The blasts left at least 27 civilians dead and up to eighty more wounded. Seven members of the Afghan Uniformed Police were also killed in the attacks. Six insurgents were reported killed and three more were captured. The ANSF responded to the attack without needing to ask for ISAF support.

In a separate incident, an IED placed on a motorcycle detonated at a roundabout in the northern province of Kunduz. The attack resulted in the deaths of at least nine civilians and one member of the Afghan Local Police, in addition to 35 civilians who were injured.

These attacks were responsible for more civilian deaths in a single day than any other in Afghanistan so far this year. We join President Karzai and General Allen (Commander ISAF) in strongly condemning these attacks and the insurgents' tactics that indiscriminately target civilians.

Musa Quala Killings

On the evening of 26-27 August 17 Afghan civilians were murdered following a party in Helmand's Musa Quala district. The bodies of the 15 men and two women were discovered by the side of the road. A spokesman for the Provincial Governor attributed the killings to the Taliban.

In September it is likely that insurgents will continue their attempts to launch high profile attacks. We also expect them increasingly to target Afghan security forces in an attempt to undermine public confidence in the Afghan Government's ability to provide security and to hinder recruitment, retention and resolve within the ANSF. The ANSF, supported by ISAF, will continue their efforts to disrupt and degrade the insurgents and remain on alert for further attacks after the end of Ramadan

Insider Attacks

On 1 July three members of the UK Armed Forces were killed by a member of the Afghan National Civil Order Police as they left a checkpoint in Nahr-e Saraj. The gunman was shot and injured and is now in custody. There is no evidence to link this incident to insurgent infiltration.

The 1 July attack was the most recent insider attack directly to affect British forces. ISAF, which holds data from across the coalition, reported a total of 34 insider threat attacks so far this year⁴ an increase compared with the same period in 2011 (by which point there had been 16 attacks). Attacks in 2012 have resulted in 37 ISAF deaths, which is also more than the same period in 2011 (by which point there had been 28 coalition deaths). We treat these incidents extremely seriously and routinely assess and refine our force protection to meet mission requirements and best ensure the personal safety of our forces. For a variety of

⁴ As at 27 August.

reasons understanding the motivation behind these attacks is challenging (often the perpetrators are either killed or escape) and in a number of cases it is simply not possible firmly to attribute a motive with any certainty. Analysis does indicate that there is no single overriding factor which triggers insider-threat attacks.

We continue to work hard within ISAF and in partnership with the Afghans to reduce the insider threat. The Afghan Ministry of Defence has issued a number of directives geared towards improving security postures and reducing vulnerabilities. Additionally the ANSF has recruited 900 Religious and Cultural Affairs officers who are assigned throughout the ANA down to kandak (battalion) level. They train and educate members of the ANA on cultural differences. This is to mitigate the risk of insider attacks caused by disagreements, grievances or perceived offences. They also screen ANA soldiers returning from leave for signs that they have been radicalised.

Although the number of insider attacks has increased, they remain isolated incidents, carried out by rogue elements within the ANSF. We are working with our Afghan partners at every level, from ministers to soldiers and policemen, to decrease the threat to an irreducible minimum without prejudicing mission achievement. Every day tens of thousands of coalition forces work successfully alongside their ANSF counterparts without incident. They share the same mission and goals: to fight the insurgency to help build lasting peace and stability for Afghanistan. Those responsible for this year's attacks account for less than 0.01% of the ANSF and they are not representative of the Afghan Government, people, culture or values. Partnering is not without risk. But it is essential to success.

Helmand

Following two insider attacks in Sangin and Garmsir, which resulted in three US servicemen being killed in each incident, Governor Mangal held an emergency security shura in Lashkar Gah on 11 August. The Deputy Chief of Police in Garmsir was dismissed and an acting District Governor was installed because of the protracted absence of District Governor Fahim.

A children's shura was held in Lashkar Gah in August. The shura (led by the AUP and supported by UK forces) was attended by over 200 children, teachers and local elders. Children received IED-awareness instruction and advice on community responsibility.

Civilian Casualties

On 8 August, the United Nations Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA) released its *Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict 2012 Midyear Report*. The report, which covered the first six months of this year, recorded a 15% decrease in overall civilian casualties compared with the same period in 2011. UNAMA reported that insurgents were responsible for 80% of civilian casualties and ISAF/ANSF operations for 10%. A further 10% of civilian casualties could not be attributed to any party in the conflict. IEDs, which are an indiscriminate weapon, continue to cause the greatest number of civilian casualties. The protection of the Afghan civilian population remains at the core of ISAF's strategy and we will continue to take considerable steps to prevent civilian casualties.

Redeployment

On 4 July, Pakistan reopened the ground lines into, and out of, Afghanistan after the United States issued an expression of regret for the November 2011 cross-border incident which led to the accidental deaths of 24 Pakistani soldiers. The agreement ended the seven month closure that forced ISAF nations to use alternative logistical routes – albeit with no constraint to operations. We welcome the reopening of an important transport artery for our operations in Afghanistan, including the redeployment of equipment and materiel.

The closure of the transit routes through Pakistan for much of this year has reinforced the need to increase the resilience of equipment recovery operations as troop numbers draw down. The UK has therefore been seeking to extend our options by expanding transit routes through the Central Asian Republics – the Northern Line of Communication. Negotiations with Uzbekistan are the most advanced, and formal bilateral transit agreements were signed in very early September. Discussions with other central Asian countries are continuing.

Table One: ANSF Growth to 31 July 2012

	Target Strength (July 2012)	Actual Strength (July 2012)	July Target Met
ANA:	180,500	183,392	YES
AAF:	5,800	6,057	YES
ANP:	153,118	147,912	NO

The reduced growth rate in ANP figures is a result of a cessation in recruiting in favour of balancing the structure of policemen and NCOs within the force. However, the current growth and attrition rates indicate that the ANP will likely achieve its surge target of 157,000 by the end of October.

Table Two: ANSF Attrition Rates

	Target Monthly Attrition	Actual Monthly Attrition	July Target Met
ANA:	1.4%	2.5%	NO
AAF:	1.4%	0.4%	YES
ANP:	1.4%	1.1%	YES
Uniformed Police	1.4%	1.0%	YES
Border Police	1.4%	2.0%	NO
National Civil Order Police	1.4%	0.1%	YES

Violence Levels

Table Three: Security Incidents

Type of incident	Definition	Change from June 2012	Comparison with July 2011
Security incidents	Enemy action and explosive hazards, both executed attacks and ‘potential’ attacks (e.g. an IED found and cleared)	↔	↔

		No significant change	No significant change
Enemy initiated attacks	Attacks executed by insurgents (This does not include 'potential' attacks)	↓ Fall in attacks	↔ No significant change
Complex attacks	Attacks conducted by multiple hostile elements employing at least two distinct classes of weapon	↔ No significant change	↔ No significant change

Table One: International Contributions to ISAF

Country	Contribution	% of Total
US	90,000	69.6%
UK	9,500	7.3%
Germany	4,701	3.6%
Italy	3,986	3.1%
France	3,279	2.5%
Poland	2,420	1.9%
Romania	1,800	1.4%
Spain	1,596	1.2%
Australia	1,550	1.2%
Turkey	1,272	1%
Others (38 nations)	9,365	7.2%
Current Total	129,469	100.00%
<i>Above numbers are indicative of troop contributions as at 15 May 2012, actual numbers fluctuate daily. Source: ISAF</i>		

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office
September 2012**