

AFGHANISTAN
MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT
September 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 twenty first report covers progress in September 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

September has been a sombre month for British forces in Afghanistan. The loss of eight members of our Armed Forces has been keenly felt. We offer our deepest sympathies to the family and friends of those who have died and pay tribute to their bravery. They will never be forgotten.

The attack on Camp Bastion reminded us that we face a determined enemy in Afghanistan and we must expect challenges ahead. But tangible progress continues to be made as we work with the ANSF towards delivering our shared security objectives. Transition is gathering pace. In part this is because of the increasing strength, confidence and capability of the ANSF. With the help of UK and ISAF forces, they are steadily developing into capable and professional forces.

We continue to work closely with ISAF and our Afghan partners to mitigate the threat of insider attacks. Vetting and screening of recruits to the ANSF is getting stronger. Counter-intelligence efforts have been stepped up. Cultural awareness training has been intensified. The surveillance and monitoring of Afghan forces deemed to be at risk has been increased.

Insider attacks remain the exception. The overwhelming majority of our forces work well with their Afghan colleagues. The ANSF are increasingly in the frontline in combating the insurgency and they too face the insider threat. We will not allow these terrible incidents to detract from the very real progress which has been, and continues to be, made in Afghanistan. Nor will we let them derail our strategy or our commitment to the mission.

The UK Government continued to promote sustainable development in Helmand, by supporting community-led development projects, including the building of a major health clinic and repairs to schools and canals. The UK is also helping the provincial government in Helmand to access national government finance and encourage international partners, public and private, to work in Helmand up to and after transition. This will help to ensure that development gains in Helmand endure.

We continue to support an Afghan-led political process to support peace and stability to Afghanistan. We agree with the Afghan Government that there is a role in this process for all Afghan groups that renounce violence, split from international terrorism and respect the Afghan constitutional framework. We recognise the way forward will be challenging but we are committed to supporting the Afghan Government's efforts.

Strengthening the Afghan State

Political

Following the trilateral meeting in Kabul in July, the Prime Minister held a further meeting with Presidents Karzai and Zardari in the margins of UN General Assembly Ministerial Week on 26 September. The Presidents confirmed that Afghanistan and Pakistan would start negotiations for a bilateral Strategic Partnership Agreement.

Following the removal in early August of the Minister of Defence and Minister for the Interior, on 15 September the Lower House of the Afghan National Assembly (*Wolesi Jirga*), voted on President Karzai's appointees to four roles in a small-scale Cabinet reshuffle. Assadullah Khaled was approved as the new Head of the National Directorate of Security (NDS). Mujtaba Patang and Bismullah Khan Mohammadi were confirmed for the Interior and Defence Ministries. Haji Din Mohammad's nomination as Minister for Border and Tribal Affairs was rejected.

On 20 September a Presidential Order was issued from the Department of Administrative Affairs in Kabul which announced the replacement of governors in ten provinces. This included replacing Helmand Governor Mohammad Gulab Mangal with General Mohammad Naeem Baluch. In his first few days in office he set up his Provincial team and met large numbers of Helmandis, including District officials. He also had initial meetings with civilian and military ISAF representatives, including the Head of the PRT.

On 23 September the Cooperation Council of Political Parties and Coalitions of Afghanistan, a collaboration of twenty political parties, issued a '*Democracy Charter*'. This marks the most significant coming together of Afghan political parties over policy so far, demonstrating a degree of unity over issues such as human rights, democratic values and the importance of credible and transparent elections.

Reconciliation and Reintegration

The High Peace Council (HPC) and Joint Secretariat held Afghanistan's first ever Peace and National Unity Week from 19 to 26 September to mark the UN's International Day of Peace (21 Sept) and to commemorate the first anniversary of the assassination of former HPC Chairman Burhanuddin Rabbani. At the HPC International Peace Conference, Jeffrey Donaldson and Dennis Haughey shared their experience of the Northern Irish peace and

reconciliation process. In Helmand, Peace and National Unity Week was marked by a series of shuras, a poetry festival and events focused on at women and young people.

Governance

Twenty of the 40 District Delivery Programme (DDP) development projects detailed in the monthly progress report for December 2011 have now been completed by the Afghan Government in Helmand with UK support. DDP has helped improve the services delivered to local people, giving them a voice in determining priorities for their communities. Projects have included: building a major health clinic, setting up a blood bank, repairing four schools, cleaning 60 kilometres of canals and improving the main irrigation canal in the province.

The Helmand Development Conference took place on 5 September. This was hosted by the Provincial Government with UK support. About 100 representatives from national ministries, donors and NGOs attended the event. It aimed to strengthen the links between Helmand province and Kabul. The Conference focused on post-2014 priorities, including securing Helmand's share of Afghan Government finance, convincing potential international partners that they can work in Helmand and showing investors that Helmand is a place where they can do business. The Conference was a timely reminder of how much has been achieved in the province since 2006 on governance, security and development.

Economic and Social Development

The UK continued efforts to promote women's rights in Afghanistan and ensure women have the opportunity to take decisions that affect their own lives. In September, and with UK support, 24 women received tailoring training in Lashkar Gah. This gave them the skills they need to earn a better living for themselves and their families. It takes the total number of women trained by the UK's Strengthening Municipality and Community Development Programme to over 1,000 since February 2011.

Rule of Law

Helmand

In September the EUPOL CID Mentor visited Kabul to discuss the proposed structure of EUPOL in Helmand. The Head of Security and acting Provincial Commissioner of Police Colonel Rabani discussed the new policing plan for Lashkar Gah. British Ministry of Defence Police mentors organised a second Children's Shura with approx 150 children who attended from their local school.

A three day Community Based Dispute Resolution conference workshop concluded on 27 September. Over 95 Elders from 11 districts attended this successful and entirely Afghan delivered event.

Security

National picture

The insurgent senior leadership remains committed to conducting a violent campaign in Afghanistan. However, reporting suggests that they are operating under increased pressure as

ANSF and ISAF operations continue to target their strongholds. In many parts of the country the insurgents have been forced from the key population centres where the majority of the population live. While they have found it difficult to deliver their media claims over the summer, international and Afghan forces nevertheless remain alert to insurgent activity and continue to expect challenges ahead.

Helmand

Two vehicle-borne IEDs were detonated within the Lashkar Gah city limits on 4 September. These were the first incidents of this type since February. The incidents indicate a strong insurgent attempt to target the city centre. While penetration of the city limits is significant, equally important is the ANSF reaction. The AUP responded to the attack competently, swiftly and robustly, by moving the five Afghan casualties to hospital, clearing the site and re-opening the road. ISAF were kept informed throughout, but at no point did the Afghans consider it necessary to call for their support.

Insider Attacks

On 15 September an ALP patrol returned to their checkpoint in Nahr-e Saraj accompanied by an additional trooper, who they believed belonged to a neighbouring checkpoint. The UK 'guardian angel' conducting overwatch at the checkpoint stopped the additional man who claimed to be injured and requested medical assistance. The ALP trooper then fired a burst of small arms fire resulting in the deaths of two soldiers from 3rd Battalion The Yorkshire Regiment. The trooper was subsequently killed by return fire.

Insider attacks in Afghanistan have resulted in the deaths of 18 members of the UK Armed Forces since 2007. While we cannot eliminate the threat in its entirety, the UK, working closely with our ISAF and Afghan partners, continues to do all we can to decrease the threat to an absolute minimum without prejudicing mission achievement.

Understanding the motivations behind insider attacks is difficult and the causes vary from case to case. Reporting suggests that insider attacks do form part of a wider Taliban tactic to undermine trust and confidence between international forces and our Afghan partners. This is what he seeks. We remain fully committed to the mission in Afghanistan, to the Lisbon timeline and to supporting the ANSF as they transition to full security control by the end of 2014.

Attack on Camp Bastion

On the evening of 14 September a group of 15 insurgents breached the perimeter fence on the eastern side of Camp Bastion, the UK's main operating base in Helmand. This was a complex and well coordinated attack. The insurgents were dressed in military uniforms and armed with automatic rifles, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and suicide vests. Six US Marine Corps Harrier jets were destroyed and a further two were damaged. UK and US forces responded to the incident with the UK Force Protection Wing Quick Reaction Force deploying immediately. ISAF forces engaged the insurgents over several hours, killing 14 and wounding one other who is now in custody. Two US Marines were killed in the operation and 13 coalition personnel¹ injured. Following the incident a number of Force Protection

¹ 12 military and one civilian.

measures were implemented. These include increased patrolling inside and outside the camp and additional deployment of intelligence, surveillance, target acquisition and reconnaissance assets. An investigation into the incident initiated by the outgoing Deputy Commander ISAF, General Adrian Bradshaw, is underway. The jets have been replaced and the fleet has returned to full strength.

Partnering

On 16 September, in response to elevated threat levels resulting in part from the *Innocence of Muslims* video, ISAF issued a directive which included a decision to change the level at which partnering is scrutinised and authorised (from the Task Force to the Regional Commanders). This is not a change in strategy and has had only a minimal effect on UK operations. Partnering below *Kandak* (battalion) level has not been suspended and British Commanders retain the flexibility to mentor at all levels in consultation with the Regional Commander. The Regional Commander in Regional Command (South West), which includes the UK's Area of Operations, has endorsed our approach to partnering which remains substantially unchanged by the order.

ALP Suspension in Recruitment

On 2 September, the US military announced that it had temporarily halted the training of 1,000 new recruits for the Afghan Local Police (ALP), in order to introduce tougher screening and vetting procedures. NATO's training mission is not affected by this temporary pause. The UK has not initiated a similar suspension in ALP training at the sites we mentor as we already have rigorous screening and vetting built into the recruiting process. Here as elsewhere, we continue to do all we can to reduce the risk posed by insider threat attacks, though we recognise that we cannot eliminate the risk in its entirety.

US Surge Recovery

In September the US completed drawing down the surge forces President Obama committed to the campaign in December 2009. The surge has achieved what it set out to do, which was to reverse insurgent momentum. It has now been recalled, as planned and on schedule. Over nearly three years the surge presence has allowed additional focus to be placed on developing the ANSF. Afghan security forces have grown by over 100,000 since the US surge was announced, and as US troops have drawn down they have been replaced by well-trained and capable Afghan forces. The ANSF are now approaching their own "surge" strength of 352,000 and in accordance with the strategy agreed at Lisbon they have the lead for provision of security across the majority of the country. 68,000 US combat troops remain in Afghanistan.

Helmand Olympics

Following a successful Olympic Games for both Afghanistan and the UK, the inaugural Helmand Olympics were held at the Karzai Sports Stadium in Lashkar Gah on 9 September. Teams representing the Afghan Uniformed Police, Afghan National Army, Afghan National Civil Order Police, National Directorate of Security, civilian sports clubs and British soldiers from 12 Mechanized Brigade all competed. The day began with an impromptu opening parade by the six teams taking part, all dressed in their colour coded sports kit. Events

included football, volleyball, basketball, 100m sprint, aikido, weightlifting, bodybuilding and chess.

The Afghan National Police topped the medals table with victories in football, bodybuilding and the 100 metres race. The British team won the weightlifting and the Afghan National Army claimed the chess gold medal.

Table One: ANSF Growth to 21 September 2012

	Target Strength (September 2012)	Actual Strength (September 2012)	September Target Met
ANA:	184,785	182,209	NO
AAF:	5,800	6,224	YES
ANP:	155,706	147,158	NO

At time of publication ISAF report that the current recruited strength of the Army is 195,000 (182,000 actually in training or in fielded units in September). The Police stand at 157,000 recruited (a little over 147,000 actually in training or fielded units in September). The remainder of ANSF personnel are awaiting induction at the training centres. We expect the Army to reach its trained and fielded strength in December 2012 and the Police in February 2013.

Table Two: ANSF Attrition Rates

	Target Monthly Attrition	Actual Monthly Attrition	September Target Met
ANA:	1.4%	3.0%	NO
AAF:	1.4%	0.4%	YES
ANP:	1.4%	1.1%	YES
Uniformed Police	1.4%	1.2%	YES
Border Police	1.4%	1.7%	NO
National Civil Order Police	1.4%	0.1%	YES

Violence Levels

Table Three: Security Incidents

Type of incident	Definition	Change from August 2012	Comparison with September 2011
Security incidents	Enemy action and explosive hazards, both executed attacks and ‘potential’ attacks (e.g. an IED found and cleared)	↓ Fall in attacks	↔ No significant change
Enemy initiated	Attacks executed by insurgents (This does not include ‘potential’)	↔	↔

attacks	attacks)	No significant change	No significant change
Complex attacks	Attacks conducted by multiple hostile elements employing at least two distinct classes of weapon	<p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Fall in attacks</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↑</p> <p>Rise in attacks</p>

Table One: International Contributions to ISAF

Country	Contribution	% of Total
US	68,000	64.8%
UK	9,500	9.1%
Germany	4,737	4.5%
Italy	4,000	3.8%
France	2,418	2.3%
Poland	1,800	1.7%
Romania	1,762	1.7%
Australia	1,550	1.5%
Spain	1,450	1.4%
Turkey	1,328	1.2%
Others (38 nations)	8,360	8%
Current Total	104,905	100.00%
<i>Above numbers are indicative of troop contributions as at 8 Oct 2012, actual numbers fluctuate daily. Source: ISAF</i>		

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office
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