**AFGHANISTAN**

**MONTHLY PROGRESS REPORT**

**July/August 2014**

The UK is part of a 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 report covers progress in July and August 2014. It reflects the combined assessment of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the Ministry of Defence and the Department for International Development.

The Rt Hon. Philip Hammond MP

Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs

**Overview**

The announcement of the preliminary results of the second round of the Presidential election by the IEC on 7 July triggered a political crisis, with Abdullah Abdullah threatening to pull out of the process. Intervention by the US Secretary of State John Kerry secured the agreement of both candidates to a full audit of the second round vote and that they would abide by the result of the UN supervised process. The audit began on 17 July. The Afghan government is currently facing significant fiscal challenges, exacerbated by the protracted election process.

President Karzai signed a new Minerals Law on 9 August; implementation will allow for better regulation of Afghanistan’s mineral resources.

On 12 July, UNAMA published their mid-year report ‘Protection of civilians in armed conflict’ which recorded a 24% rise in civilian casualties, compared to the first six months of 2013. It attributed 74% of these to Taleban action, undermining their claims that they try to minimise civilian casualties.

Despite seeing the traditional fall in insurgent activity and violence associated with Ramadan, the Taleban continued to test the Afghan Security Forces across Afghanistan throughout July. Consistent with this pattern, the insurgent offensive in Northern Helmand that began in June persisted, but reduced in intensity, through July. The ANSF were better prepared this time and resisted Taleban attempts to make significant gains.

On 5 August, at the Marshal Fahim National Defence University in Kabul, Major General Harold J. Greene (US Army), the Deputy Commander of the Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan was killed by a Afghan National Army soldier. Two UK personnel were amongst the wounded.

**Strengthening the Afghan State**

**Elections**

On 7 July, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced the preliminary results of the second round of the presidential election, after completing an enhanced audit focused on examining very full ballot boxes. These results put Ashraf Ghani Ahmadzai in the lead on 56.4% of the vote, with Abdullah Abdullah on 43.6%. In response to this announcement, Abdullah announced that he would no longer participate in the process, citing the IEC’s limited response to his team’s claims of large scale fraud.

US Secretary of State, John Kerry, arrived in Kabul on 10 July. After meeting with both candidates and the UN Special Representative of the Secretary General, Jan Kubis, Kerry held a press conference with both candidates to announce the agreement of a deal to move forward the electoral impasse. Abdullah and Ghani agreed to the holding of an audit of all the ballots from the second round of the election, closely observed by the international community and with advice from the UN to a level of scrutiny that Kubis described as ‘unprecedented’. The candidates agreed to abide by the results of the audit, and to form a government of national unity on the basis of its result. A Chief Executive Officer position would be created which the losing candidate could nominate. At the same time, Kubis formally requested that President Karzai delay the inauguration ceremony for the new president, scheduled for 2 August, to allow the audit to finish.

The audit began on 17 July. The process was protracted, stopping and starting on a number of occasions to allow for national events – such as the Eid holiday – and to allow the UN and IEC to address complaints from the candidate teams, as well as disputes between the teams. On one occasion, this led to a violent altercation in which a number of IEC officials suffered superficial stab wounds. On 2 August, Abdullah’s team walked out of the audit in protest, claiming that their concerns regarding how the process should work were not being met. Secretary Kerry visited Kabul for a second time between 7-8 August. After this visit, the candidates recommitted to the deal they had agreed in July, and the audit restarted.

Abdullah’s team withdrew from the audit for the final time on 25 August. To allow the audit to continue and to protect it from allegations of bias towards either of the candidates, the UN asked for Ghani’s observers to also leave the audit venue. The Prime Minister made calls to both candidates on 27 August to encourage them to fulfil their commitment to abide by the results of the audit and to form a government of national unity.

Throughout July and August, the process of counting the votes and addressing disputes in the Provincial Council elections continued. The completion of the Provincial Council elections was heavily delayed by the intensive resources required to deliver the audit in the presidential election.

On 19 August, President Karzai led celebrations to mark the 95th anniversary of Afghanistan’s Independence Day.

**Human Rights**

In July the Afghan Government reaffirmed their commitment to end and prevent the recruitment of children in the Afghan national security forces by endorsing a “Road Map Towards Compliance”.  The road map sets out in detail 15 measures to implement fully an action plan signed between the Afghan Government and the UN in 2011. Measures include: the establishment of a system to investigate, prosecute and take disciplinary action against those responsible for the recruitment of children; the development of a policy to ensure that children arrested and detained on national security-related charges are treated in line with international juvenile justice standards; and improved screening and age verification procedures.

On 25 July, media reported that two minibuses travelling through the rural district of Lal Wa Sarjangal in Ghor Province were stopped and at least 13 Hazaras, including women and children, were separated from the other passengers and killed. The UK strongly condemns the killing of all civilians, regardless of ethnicity, and emphasises the need to ensure that perpetrators of violence are brought to justice.

**Regional**

Shelling continued along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border through July and August. The Afghan Government has claimed that the Pakistani military had fired 3,624 mortar shells and rockets into Afghanistan’s eastern Kunar province since March 2014. They also claimed that the Pakistani North Waziristan operation had failed to target the Afghan Taleban and the Haqqani network. Pakistan’s National Security Advisor, Sartaj Aziz renewed Pakistan’s demand for the handover of Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan leader Maulana Fazlullah.

On 10 July, a Senior Officials Meeting of the Heart of Asia Process was conducted in Beijing. A broad consensus was reached to deepen cooperation over regional confidence building measures. A joint press statement called for the timely completion of the Afghan electoral process within the constitutional framework, and the resolution of differences between the two candidates through political dialogue to enable the successful transition of power to the new president. China postponed the Heart of Asia Ministerial in Tianjin planned for 29 August pending the completion of the Afghan elections.

**Peace Process**

On the 25 July, Taleban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar issued a Eid al-Fitr message.  It contained familiar content - predicting imminent victory and rejecting the continued presence of international forces in Afghanistan.  Omar referenced the Taleban Political Commission’s negotiation of the Guantanamo prisoner exchange and reiterated that his movement posed no threat to the region or the world.  Separately, Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar’s Eid al-Fitr statement directed his followers not to target civilians and government employees during the election period and urged foreign troops to withdraw from Afghanistan.

On 30 July the UN Security Council Sanction Committee added the names of Muhammad Omar Zadran, Yahya Haqqani, and Saidullah Jan to the 1988 Sanctions List established pursuant to resolution 1988 (2011).  The three individuals are understood to be senior members of the Haqqani Network.  This brings the total number of those listed under the regime to 135 individuals and 4 entities and other groups.  Those listed are subject to asset freezes and travel bans.

**Governance Reform**

A new Minerals Law was signed off by President Karzai on 9 August. The law’s implementation creates the opportunity for better regulation of Afghanistan’s mineral resources and will build confidence amongst potential investors in the mineral sector. These are important to enable the country to take advantage of its valuable mineral deposits. Although not perfect, the law should allow some significant mineral projects, such as Hajigak Iron Ore, Balkhab Copper, Badakhshan Gold, Shaida Copper and Zarkashan Copper-Gold, to begin.

The Afghan government is currently facing significant fiscal challenges, exacerbated by the protracted election process. The Afghanistan Revenue Department (ARD) has reported that revenue continues to increase but is approximately 25% behind IMF targets. Customs revenue is worst affected with a 10% reduction in trade due to the uncertainty around election results. Tax revenue is also down approximately 10%. The VAT Law remains with Parliament. A joint committee has been established to decide whether the VAT rate should be restored to 8% after being reduced to 5%.

**Economic and Social Development**

The UK has provided £5 million funding in response to the 2014 Emergency Appeal of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Afghanistan. Between April and September 2014, ICRC provided food assistance, essential household items, water, shelter and training to 308,000 people, including internally displaced people, returnees, refugees and other conflict-affected Afghans. In addition, 40,000 patients were treated and received health and physical rehabilitation services through 10 ICRC-supported hospitals, 48 health centres and 8 physical rehabilitation clinics across Afghanistan.

The UK continues to support increased legal rural employment and income opportunities through the Comprehensive Agriculture and Rural Development Facility (CARD-F). It also aims to reduce the risk of resurgence in poppy cultivation by creating sustainable alternatives for farmers. In August, CARD-F trained more than 500 farmers of high-value crops in post-harvesting and marketing.

**Rule of Law**

The UK has been nominated to chair the Senior Police Advisory Group (SPAG), a policing subgroup of the International Police Coordination Board (IPCB), which provides policing reform recommendations to the board. The SPAG is made up of representatives from all major international policing actors, including the EU Police Training Mission Afghanistan (EUPOL), UN Development Programme (UNDP), ISAF, ISAF Joint Command (IJC) and the UN Assistance Mission Afghanistan (UNAMA).

The UK has been directly involved in the preparation of the Female Development Course for female police officers, which began on 30 August. The UK police officer within the European Union Policing Mission Afghanistan is currently working to transition this course to Afghan ownership. The UK directly mentors the only female trainer at Afghan Police Staff College to ensure courses intended for female Afghan National Police are effectively designed and delivered.

The UK has also been closely involved in meetings between the UN and EU regarding the effective structuring of the complaints system for female Afghan National Police in response to the high profile assault on a female officer in Herat by her supervisor. The intent of these meetings is to recommend an effective complaints system for female police, with a view to implementation by the Afghan Ministry of Interior.

The UK has continued to work with the Afghan Directorate of Police Intelligence to support the use and development of the National Intelligence Management System (NIMS), the sole intelligence system used by the police in Afghanistan. NIMS connects police stations across the country with the Ministry of Interior and intelligence agencies through a secure and protected network. The UK leads a team of NATO advisors working to increase Afghan ownership of the system and improve use of intelligence in policing operations.

**Security**

Despite seeing the traditional fall in insurgent activity and violence associated with Ramadan, the Taleban continued to test the Afghan Security Forces across Afghanistan throughout July. Consistent with this pattern, the insurgent offensive in Northern Helmand that began in June persisted, but reduced in intensity, through July. The ANSF were better prepared compared to last year’s fighting season. They not only resisted Taleban attempts to make significant gains, but were also successful in a number of offensive actions against the Taleban. Outside Helmand, insurgents mounted notable offensives in the provinces of Kandahar, Nangarhar, Kunduz, Faryab and Badakshan. Only the West of Afghanistan has been free of heavy fighting. Post-Eid, fighting continued in the Upper Sangin Valley and Musa Qala areas of Helmand but the Afghan Security Forces maintained control of the District Centres.

On 12 July, UNAMA published its mid-year report ‘Protection of civilians in armed conflict’ which recorded a 24% rise in civilian casualties, compared to the first six months of 2013. It attributed 74% of these to Taleban action, undermining Taleban claims that it tries to minimise civilian casualties.

On 15 July, insurgents conducted a vehicle-borne IED attack in Orgun district, Paktika province that killed 42 civilians and injured a further 67. The Taleban subsequently denied involvement. However, it is likely that the Taleban, or an affiliated insurgent group, was behind the attack.

On 28 July, the Eid al-Fitr festival to mark the end of Ramadan began. Although Eid brought a temporary lull in hostilities in Kabul, the festival period was used to facilitate two high-profile attacks. On 29 July, in Kandahar, the President’s cousin, Hashmat Karzai, was assassinated by a suicide bomber at an Eid celebration, and on 1 August, in Logar province, the District Governor, Mohammad Agha, and his wife were killed in their home.

Kabul has experienced an increased number of insurgent incidents compared with last year, with 52 by 20 August, compared to only 30 incidents in the whole of 2013. On 9 August there were three attacks in 24 hours: a remote controlled Improvised Explosive Device (IED) detonated near a bus stop close to Pul-e-Charki prison, injuring four Afghan soldiers and three civilians; a police vehicle was destroyed by a magnetic IED in front of the Pul-e Khishti Maskid mosque which injured two civilians; and a magnetic IED was identified on a Ministry of Interior vehicle near the American University, but was dealt with by an Explosives and Ordinance Disposal (EOD) team with no casualties. On 10 August, a truck-borne IED drove up to a small ANSF/US convoy and detonated, killing one US soldier and four civilians, and injuring another 26 civilians.

Throughout July there were significant attacks that threatened or struck Kabul International Airport, several of which attracted international media attention. On 3 July, an indirect fire attack against Kabul International Airport destroyed one MI-17 helicopter from the President’s flight and damaged three other aircraft. On 16 July, two indirect fire rounds were fired at the airport but no damage was caused and the airport was only closed for a short time. On 17 July, four insurgents took over a building under construction next to ANSF Camp Oqab near to the ISAF base within the airport. The attack was rapidly ended by Afghan Special Forces. On 22 July, an insurgent dressed in ANSF uniform detonated a motorcycle borne IED within Camp Gibson near to the Airport, killing five private security contractors and wounding a further 11, the majority of whom were foreign nationals.

The Taleban also showed their willingness to attack well-secured targets. On 24 August, in Jalalabad, insurgents launched a complex attack against the heavily fortified National Directorate of Security headquarters. Two attackers drove a car and a truck packed with explosives to the gate of the headquarters. The attackers blew themselves up, clearing the way for six other insurgents to enter the compound. Five National Directorate of Security personnel were killed and four injured; one civilian was also killed and 26 injured. All six insurgents were killed.

There were two significant attacks on ISAF personnel in July and August. On 8 July, a suicide bomber dressed in a police uniform detonated an IED beside an ISAF patrol near Bagram Airfield, north of Kabul. The blast killed four Czech soldiers, two Afghan National Police (ANP) officers and 16 civilians as well as injuring one Czech soldier and one ANP officer. On 5 August, the most significant insider attack of 2014 occurred at the Marshal Fahim National Defence University in Kabul. An Afghan National Army soldier opened fire on ISAF and Afghan personnel attending a routine project board, wounding 14 personnel and fatally wounding Major General Harold J. Greene (US Army), the Deputy Commander of the Combined Security Transition Command - Afghanistan. Two UK personnel were amongst the wounded. There have now been six successful insider attacks on ISAF personnel in 2014, but these have been reducing year-on-year since a peak of 47 in 2012, and 13 in 2013.

Two high-profile criminal events in July and August demonstrated that security threats are not solely linked to the insurgency. On 5 July, a fire at Maidian Shar truck yard, Paghmann District, Kabul Province destroyed an estimated 300 fuel tankers. While approximately 250 of the tankers were used by contractors to distribute fuel to ISAF, there was no significant impact on operations. The Taleban attempted to exploit the situation by claiming responsibility but it is considered more likely to have been a criminal act. On 20 August, a US serviceman was killed by a passing civilian after he exited a US vehicle to assist his convoy through an ANSF checkpoint. The assailant fled the scene but was later arrested.

There were two high profile visits in July and August. On 28 July, His Royal Highness the Duke of York visited Camp Bastion and Kandahar Airfield. On 7 August, the Secretary of State for Defence Rt Hon Michael Fallon MP conducted his first visit to Afghanistan and visited Camp Bastion and Kandahar Airfield.

**ANSF**

The ANSF have shown resilience during the Fighting Season, particularly in the face of a sustained insurgent offensive in Northern Helmand, and have shown little sign of being affected by the political situation. The Taleban has attempted to exploit the situation, but has largely been held in check by sustained ANSF pressure. By the end of August, the ANSF had shown that they can maintain a high operational tempo of over 40 operations per week through a period of sustained fighting. ANSF requests for ISAF support were limited in July and August, mostly only for intelligence and demonstrative air power.

On 12 July, the ANSF began the clearance of the Saewan Qalah area (to the north of the Sangin District Centre). The Afghan Air Force conducted more than 12 casualty evacuation flights, moving the injured from the battlefield in Sangin to the Afghan medical facility at Camp Shorabak, which tested its capacity and capability. July was the first month that the UK Medical Emergency Reaction Team (MERT) was not required, demonstrating the development of the ANSF casualty evacuation capability.

On 21 August, the new ANSF Shorabak Role Two Trauma Facility was officially opened by Major General Wardak, the Afghan National Army Surgeon General. The facility is highly capable, offering a fully equipped Emergency Room, an Operating Theatre and five-bed Intensive Treatment on a 30 bed general patient ward. It has already proved its worth, conducting over 50 surgical procedures, without intervention from ISAF mentors, during a particularly busy 36 hour period.

**Resolute Support mission (RSM)**

On 9 July, NATO held its Force Generation Conference for the Resolute Support mission which secured the majority of the required forces from contributing nations. The UK re-affirmed its commitment to provide the coalition lead at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy. The UK also committed to providing a small number of advisors in the Ministerial Advisory Groups in the Afghan security ministries, and to lead the General Command Police Special Units (GCPSU) Special Operations Advisory Group.

On 26 August, General John F. Campbell, US Army, assumed command of ISAF forces. This is his third tour in Afghanistan having most recently commanded Regional Command (East) in 2011. General Cambell will be the last Commander of the ISAF combat mission and will manage transition into the follow-on Resolute Support mission.

**Detentions**

On 29 June, the sole remaining UK detainee was transferred from UK custody to the Afghan authorities at the Afghan National Detention facility in Parwan.  Following this transfer, all UK Detention facilities in Afghanistan were closed. These facilities will be completely dismantled by 1 December. UK military forces in Afghanistan continue to provide support to the ANSF, including support to Afghan-led and approved detention operations against those who pose a threat to ISAF, ANSF personnel and Afghan civilians. Only in extremis, and for immediate force protection reasons, would the UK conduct unilateral detention operations.

**Redeployment**

ISAF redeployment continues and the number of bases has now reduced to just 42 locations. There are only 18 locations left to transfer or close before the Resolute Support mission begins.

On 10 July, Regional Command (Capital) transitioned to become Train Advise Assist Command (Capital); the first of the Regional Command HQs to adopt the Resolute Support command construct. This was followed by Regional Command (West) on 23 July and then Regional Command (North) on 1 August.

On 15 July, the Georgian contingent ceased operations in Regional Command (South-West). Subsequently, on 21 and 23 July, ceremonies took place to mark the departure of Danish and Jordanian forces. The flag lowering ceremonies and departure of these nations marked a seminal moment in the campaign, leaving just US and UK forces in Helmand.

Over 27 to 30 August, the Manoeuvre Battle Group and the Joint Aviation Group, less the immediate reaction Apache force and the Medical Emergency Reaction Team aircraft (MERT), moved to Kandahar Airfield. These Kandahar Airfield-based forces will remain available to provide support to the ANSF and ISAF, including UK forces, until the completion of their redeployment by the end of the year.

The House of Commons Defence Committee requested that we start publishing information on redeployment progress in this report. In July, the UK redeployed 109 of our Vehicles and Major Equipment, and 255 Twenty-foot Equivalent Units of Materiel. In August, the UK redeployed 191 of our Vehicles and Major Equipment, and 233 Twenty-foot Equivalent Units of Materiel. By the end of August we had redeployed just under 80% of our total Vehicles and Major Equipment, and just over 90% of our total Materiel.

**ISAF Statistics**

As the ANSF are increasingly taking the lead for statistical reporting, ISAF’s ability to accurately record Enemy-Initiated Attacks (EIA) has decreased. Consequently, HQ ISAF no longer publishes EIA data which prevents inclusion of such data in this report. However, Tables 1 – 3 below report ANSF Growth, ANSF Attrition Rates, and Coalition Contributions to the ISAF Mission:

**Table One: ANSF Growth to 23 June 2014**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Target Strength(Jun 2014) | Actual Strength(Jun 2014) | Jun Target Met |
| ANA: | 187,630 | 175,858 | NO |
| AAF: | 6756 | 6756 | YES |
| ANP: | 157,000 | 153,021 | NO |

**Table Two: ANSF Growth to 30 July 2014**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Target Strength(Jul 2014) | Actual Strength(Jul 2014) | Jul Target Met |
| ANA: | 187,630 | 173,524 | NO |
| AAF: | 6766 | 6766 | YES |
| ANP: | 157,000 | 150,509 | NO |

**Table Three:  ANSF Attrition Rates June 2014[[1]](#footnote-1)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Target Monthly Attrition | Actual Monthly Attrition | Jun Target Met |
| ANA: | 1.4% | 2.0% | NO |
| AAF: | 1.4% | 0.6% | YES |
| ANP: | 1.4% | 1.92% | NO |

**Table Three:  ANSF Attrition Rates July 2014[[2]](#footnote-2)**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | Target Monthly Attrition | Actual Monthly Attrition | Jul Target Met |
| ANA: | 1.4% | 2.2% | NO |
| AAF: | 1.4% | 0.9% | YES |
| ANP: | 1.4% | 2.35% | NO |

**Table Three: International Contributions to ISAF**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Country | Contribution | % of Total |
| US | 22,750 | 55% |
| UK | 4,000 | 11.3% |
| Germany | 2,464 | 5.9% |
| Italy  | 1,934 | 4.6% |
| Georgia | 1,567 | 3.7% |
| Poland | 309 | 0.74% |
| Romania | 779 | 1.8% |
| Turkey | 767 | 1.85% |
| Jordan | 904 | 2.1% |
| Bulgaria | 429 | 1.3% |
| Others (38 nations) | 4,676 | 11.3% |
| Current Total: 41,265  |
| *The above numbers are indicative of troop contributions as at 19 July 2014, actual numbers fluctuate daily. Source: ISAF* |

**Foreign and Commonwealth Office**

**September 2014**

1. Attrition in the ANSF is defined as the planned or unplanned loss of a soldier from the ranks. Examples of unplanned losses include those dropped from rolls (DFR), killed in action, or medically released. Planned losses include separations, retirements, and term ends. The largest component of attrition is DFR, which occurs after 20 days of Absent Without Official Leave (AWOL); the status for a soldier not on leave, and after 30 days for a soldier who is on leave. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
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