



Afghanistan Update

A twice-weekly, one-page situation report on the latest developments affecting U.S. policy and engagement in Afghanistan.

30 December
2009

Topic in Focus: The Afghan Cabinet

- The Afghan Cabinet is the **main policy and administrative government body** in Afghanistan.
- The constitution gives the **Lower House of the Afghan National Assembly** – a bicameral legislature – considerable power over Cabinet appointments.
- Cabinet nominees must present themselves to the Lower House (Wolesi Jirga) for **approval by secret ballot**.
- One of the most significant issues remains **balancing the Cabinet's composition** to reflect the ethnic diversity of Afghanistan.
- The complete Afghan Cabinet will consist of 25 Ministers who will head **25 separate government portfolios**.

Mark the Date

The Afghan National Assembly / Parliament will vote on the Cabinet nominations on 2 Jan 2009.

In Quotes

"There has been encouraging development in Afghanistan since the overthrow of the Taliban regime eight years ago. The statistics speak for themselves: in education, enrolled pupil numbers have grown from 1 million in 2001 to about 6.6 million today. More than a third of these are girls, up from virtually none under the Taliban." **Jim Dutton**, deputy commander of the international security and assistance force (ISAF) in Afghanistan. **29 Dec 2009.**

Who's Who: Hamid Karzai

- Hamid Karzai was born on December 24, 1957. **Both his grandfather and father held significant political positions.**
- He served as Director of Information for the National Liberation Front led by Professor Sebghatullah Mujadidi. He later became the Deputy Director of its Political Office.
- When the Mujahideen Government was established in Kabul in 1992, he was appointed as **its Deputy Foreign Minister**.
- His role as leader of Afghanistan was confirmed by members of the Emergency Loya Jirga when he was **elected President of the Transitional Government on June 13, 2002**. In Afghanistan's first presidential election on October 9, 2004, Hamid Karzai won the majority of votes, and was elected to a 5-year term and was elected again in 2009, as President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.

Today's Topic of Interest – The Afghan Cabinet

- On 19 Dec 09, President Karzai **nominated 23 people** to become members of the Afghan Cabinet, of a total of 25 posts.
- President Karzai **nominated the same people from the previous Cabinet to fill the key ministries** of: Interior (police), Defense, Finance, Agriculture, Education and Counter Narcotics.
- All nominees **need to be confirmed by the lower house** – in a vote of confidence conducted via secret ballot by the whole elected body.
- Before voting, nominees will have to **justify themselves and take questions** before the whole house.

- Following the **previous nominations in March 2006 reshuffle, 20 were confirmed, 5 were rejected.**
- Parliament voted to dismiss foreign minister Rangin Dadfar Spanta in a no-confidence vote in May 2007, but **Mr. Spanta ignored the move and continues to serve**. His name wasn't on the list submitted on Saturday.
- The **U.S. Embassy in Kabul** said: "We look forward to the lower house of parliament carrying out their duty to vet and approve candidates who will contribute to Afghanistan's progress towards institutional reform, security and prosperity."
- Commentators suggest that at least 5 will be rejected this time, some have even suggest 15 may not be confirmed.

News Updates:

A suicide bomber blew himself up Wednesday inside an Afghan military base used by the CIA, killing at least eight Americans in what is believed to be the deadliest single attack on U.S. intelligence personnel in the eight-year-long war, U.S. officials said. Washington Post 30 Dec 2009

The Afghanistan Congressional Communications Hub serves Members and staff by providing relevant and accessible information on Afghanistan. It is non-partisan.

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