



New Strategic Security Initiative

# Afghanistan Update

05 January 2010

## 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

On January 7, the Brookings Institution will host Richard C. Holbrooke, Special Representative to Afghanistan and Pakistan, for a conversation on the way forward in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

## In Quotes

*"We won't succeed in Afghanistan simply by doing more of the same based on scenarios that are either inappropriate or obsolete."*

**Lawrence Sellin**, Ph.D., is a colonel in the U.S. Army Reserve. **5 Jan 2010**.

**Who's Who:** **Mohammad Hanif Atmar** is the current Minister of Interior (the Afghan Police ministry) of Afghanistan.

Before that he worked with several international humanitarian organizations and served as Minister of Rural Rehabilitation (MRRD) and Development and Minister of Education.

Atmar, an ethnic Pashtun. As an adolescent and young adult he worked for the KHAD, an Afghan security and intelligence agency. During the Soviet-Afghan War he fought against the Afghan Mujahideen, and lost a leg defending Jalalabad in 1988. Atmar left for the UK in 1992.

He is seen as a highly proficient technocrat. While at MRRD he directed his energies into transforming a dysfunctional and non-descript ministry into one of national significance that reached into every province of the country. This included founding and managing the National Solidarity Program.

He now runs the MOI – which manages the police throughout the whole country.

## Topic of Interest – The Afghan Cabinet (2)

- On 02 January 2010, the Afghan National Assembly voted on the confirmation of individual proposed Cabinet ministers in President Karzai's government.
- Only **FIVE cabinet members were confirmed** out of 24 nominated. (17 rejected).
- The key security ministers **WARDAK (Ministry of Defense)** and **ATMAR (Ministry of Interior / Police)** were confirmed.
- On reconstruction – only the **Minister of Agriculture - RAHMI** and the **Minister of Finance - ZAKHILWAL** were confirmed.
- Until there are confirmed Ministers, **Deputy Ministers** (who do not require confirmation) will manage government departments.
- BUT, they have **substantially less power than confirmed ministers** – including hiring and firing, and routing our any corruption.
- Kai Eide, the UN envoy to Kabul, said it could **take weeks** to complete the formation of a new cabinet, distracting politicians from the task of building institutions **at a critical moment for the future** of international engagement in the country.
- Many commentators claim that **Afghanistan does not have a functioning government**.

**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

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**Contact:** [ACCH@NewStrategicSecurityInitiative.org](mailto:ACCH@NewStrategicSecurityInitiative.org) if you would like a specific issue paper, a customized briefing, or to be placed directly on the distribution list.