



# Afghanistan Update

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

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## 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**.

## Note the Date

On **28 January 2010**, the Afghanistan Conference will take place in London. It will be co-hosted by Prime Minister Gordon Brown, President Karzai and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. The purpose of the conference will be to deliver and coordinate support to enable President Karzai to meet the ambitions he set out in his inauguration speech.

## In Quotes

*"[We need to] get away from the idea that there's this one-stop solution for an immensely complicated country ... Let's not expect one man [Karzai] to solve the problems for the country. Historically Afghanistan, even in peacetime conditions, was not governed centrally."*

**Richard Holbrooke**, US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan. 08 Jan 2010

**Who's Who: Mohammad Yunos Qanuni** was elected Speaker of the Afghan National Assembly's People's Council (Wolesi Jirga) on 21 December, 2005.

He is an ethnic Tajik from Panjshir province and former ally of Ahmad Shah Masoud, the late Mujahideen leader assassinated in September 2001. As a founding member of the Northern Alliance, he supported the United States invasion of Afghanistan.

After the Taliban fell from power, Qanuni served as the Interior Minister in Afghanistan's Interim Administration and Education Minister in the Transitional Government.

Qanuni finished second to Karzai in the 2004 presidential election.

In March 2005, Qanuni formed the National Understanding Front with the goal of establishing a legal body to serve as a check on the government. The alliance was welcomed by President Karzai as "an important step towards strengthening democracy" in Afghanistan. When Qanuni was elected Speaker he resigned his leadership of the Front.

## Key Issues and Developments:

- On 10 January, President Karzai presented a revised line up of 17 new nominees to fill his Cabinet, after the Afghan parliament initially confirmed only **FIVE cabinet members** out of 24 nominated.
- The key security ministers **WARDAK (Defense)** and **ATMAR (Interior / Police)** have been confirmed.
- On reconstruction – only **Minister of Agriculture** - RAHMI and **Minister of Finance** - ZAKHILWAL have been confirmed.
- The new list includes **three women**, nominated for the ministries of health, social affairs and women.
- The Afghan president has nominated his Security Council chief, ZALMAY RASUL, as the **Minister of Foreign Affairs** -- the position remained vacant in Karzai's first list.
- Diplomats said Karzai wants a functioning government in place ahead of the international conference in **London on January 28** to discuss a road map for the country's future.
- The president has ordered lawmakers to **put off their winter recess for a vote by secret ballot** on the new list, which should be held by this week's end.
- Analysts have raised concerns over several new appointees. Most prominently, **Zarar Ahmed Moqbel**, accused of corruption and incompetence whilst Minister of Interior, has been proposed to lead the country's counter-narcotics efforts.
- Analysts said that while the new nominees represent a **cross-section of Afghanistan's ethnic mix**, the new list consisted of a mixture of qualified candidates and those with little relevant experience.

**News Updates:** Six international soldiers were killed on Monday in a wave of violence in some of the most volatile regions of Afghanistan. They included three Americans in southern Afghanistan, one French soldier northeast of Kabul, and two whose nationalities were not given.

A new poll commissioned by the BBC, ABC News and Germany's ARD shows that most Afghans are increasingly optimistic about the state of their country. 70% said they believed Afghanistan was going in the right direction - a big jump from 40% a year ago.

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