



# Afghanistan Update

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

26 January  
2010

## Topics in Focus:

- **London Conference:** On Thursday, 28 January, London will host an international conference to align coalition countries' civilian and military resources behind an Afghan-led political strategy to defeat the Taliban.
- **Postponed Elections:** Afghanistan is delaying its parliamentary elections by four months.
- **New NATO civilian post:** Mark Sedwill, UK ambassador in Kabul will be appointed as the senior NATO civilian in Afghanistan.

## In Quotes:

"Match the increase in military forces with an increased political momentum, focus the international community on a clear set of priorities across the 43-nation [ISAF] coalition and marshal the maximum international effort to help the Afghan government deliver." The impetus for the London Conference as described by UN **Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon**. November 2009.

## In Quotes:

"The Independent Election Commission, due to lack of budget, security and uncertainty and logistical challenges... has decided to conduct the [parliamentary] election on September 18, 2010." **Fazil Ahmad Manawi**, senior election commissioner on postponing parliamentary elections by four months.

## Who's Who:

**Mark Sedwill** is the current UK ambassador to Afghanistan, and he will be appointed the **new NATO senior civilian representative for Afghanistan**.

## Recent news:

On 26 January it was announced that Sedwill will succeed Ambassador Fernando Gentilini (Italy) to become the fifth senior NATO civilian representative for Afghanistan.

In a reinvigorated civilian role, Sedwill will be responsible for the **political aspects of NATO's assistance** to the Afghan government, and the implementation of civilian aid for development. He will act as a civilian counterpart to the military commander, U.S. General Stanley McChrystal

Career Background: (b. 1964) Joined the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office in 1989, service in Egypt, Iraq, Cyprus, Pakistan, and in Afghanistan since April 2009. Engaged in UN weapons inspections in Iraq, and as Deputy Director for Middle East and North Africa.

## Key Issues: London Conference

- The 28 January London Conference has invited foreign ministers from International Security Assistance Force partners, Afghanistan's immediate neighbors and key regional players, as well as representatives from NATO, the United Nations, the EU and other international organizations such as the World Bank.
- The purpose of the conference is to **deliver and coordinate international support** to enable President Karzai to meet the ambitions he set out in his inauguration speech:
  - **Taliban Reconciliation:** A major focus of the conference; Britain and Japan have signed on to head an international trust fund of up to \$500 million over five years designed to lure Taliban fighters to lay down their arms by offering jobs, protection, and de-blacklisting.
  - **Security:** How the role of the international and Afghan forces should evolve over time and what should be the commitments for army and police training and support.
  - **Governance and Development:** What concrete steps by the Afghan authorities will tackle corruption and improve financial management; how should development assistance support Afghan leadership.
  - **Regional Support:** How to promote more systematic engagement by all regional stakeholders, although Iran is anticipated to not be attending the conference.

## Key Issues: Postponed Elections

- **Afghanistan is to postpone its parliamentary elections by four months until September.** Elections were to take place before 22 May 2010, as mandated by the constitution.
- The commission cited a **lack of funds and security concerns** for the delay.
- A new date of 18 September has been set, which will hopefully allow time to **reform key electoral institutions** to enable parliamentary elections that would be cleaner than the presidential election, which is widely described as suffering from fraud.
- Afghanistan is facing **ongoing political uncertainty:** Several cabinet posts remain vacant following Karzai's re-election as president. The current parliament has twice rejected many of President Karzai's nominations for a new cabinet, forcing the president to direct deputy ministers or other caretaker figures to run their ministries.

**Related News:** President Obama plans to ask Congress for another **\$14.2 billion to train Afghanistan's army and police** over the next two years, as part of a long-term U.S. commitment to Afghanistan's security forces. This is more than **double the \$6.6 billion already allocated** for Afghan security forces this year. (Reuters)

The [Afghanistan Congressional Communications Hub](http://www.AfghanistanCongressionalCommunicationsHub.org) serves Members and staff by providing relevant and accessible information on Afghanistan. It is non-partisan.

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