



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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In the News

- The Afghan government is in **tentative talks with insurgent leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar**, who leads one of Afghanistan's major insurgent groups.
- **Pakistan has reportedly told the U.S. it will offer its influence over the Haqqani militant network**, in exchange for a "friendly" Afghanistan with a limited Indian presence.
- **Opium crops are predicted to be stable in 2010 after two years of declines.** Approximately 123,000 hectares of poppies (the size of Los Angeles) will be harvested this year.
- The U.S. may send 2,500 soldiers to northern Afghanistan to assist German troops due to the rise in violent insurgent attacks around Kunduz. [AP](#)

In Quotes:

"This may be the largest IED threat and largest minefield that NATO has ever faced."

- **Brigadier General Larry Nicholson** on the anticipated hazards in the upcoming Marjah offensive.

In Quotes:

"As the world now knows, [Charlie Wilson's] efforts and exploits helped repel an invader, liberate a people, and bring the Cold War to a close... After the Soviets left, Charlie kept fighting for the Afghan people and warned against abandoning that traumatized country to its fate – a warning we should have heeded then, and should remember today." **Secretary of Defense Robert Gates**

Who's Who:

Congressman Charlie Wilson, a Texas Democrat who championed covert CIA support for Afghan Mujahidin in the 1980s, died on 10 February 2010. He was 76.

Charlie Wilson served 12 consecutive terms in the House of Representatives representing the 2nd District in east Texas. While on the House Appropriations Committee he steered enormous increases in CIA funding for efforts to assist Afghan Mujahidin fighting Soviet occupation forces after the 1979 invasion.

Billions of dollars were spent by the CIA in the covert actions against Soviet forces, including in the purchase of high-tech weapons such as the Stinger anti-aircraft missiles, which were used to shoot down Soviet helicopters.

Charlie Wilson was born in Trinity, Texas, in 1933. He attended in U.S. Naval Academy, and served in the U.S. Navy. His support for the Afghan resistance in the 1980s and after the Soviet withdrawal is chronicled in the book and movie, "Charlie Wilson's War."

Key Issue: Recent Humanitarian Concerns

- **Avalanches this week have killed at least 165 people** on the Salang Pass, blocking a key road that connects Kabul with the north. According to Ahmad Shah Waheed, the deputy public works minister, over 1,600 people have been rescued but hundreds of vehicles and their passengers remain trapped. [AP](#)
- **Flooding in Kandahar, Helmand, and Uruzgan Provinces** this week prompted an emergency meeting by the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Recent torrential rains and floods have killed over 20 and left hundreds of families homeless, and thousands have suffered property losses. [UN](#)
- President Karzai's spokesman Waheed Omer says the Afghan government has prepared **resources to feed 6,000 families in the Marjah area** in anticipation of the upcoming operation. [Daily Times](#)
- The UN is appealing for **\$538 million in humanitarian aid for Pakistan** to help an estimated one million Pakistanis displaced by Pakistan military clashes with Taliban insurgents. [AP](#)

Key Issue: Marjah Offensive

- **Rockets and mortars** have been fired at American and Afghan units surrounding Marjah, and gunfire has been exchanged with insurgents as the offensive is prepared.
- **An estimated 2,000 insurgents** are dug-in and are believed to have planted roadside bombs and booby-trapped buildings around Marjah. Residents said the insurgents had dug trenches in a traffic circle and mined the roads out of town. [McClatchy](#)
- **Local Civilian Population:** Fewer than 200 families, around 1,200 people, had left the town of Marjah and the surrounding area, which have a population of about 80,000, the US-led force said Tuesday. On Wednesday another 100 families had left. [McClatchy](#)
- A **"government-in-waiting"** is poised to take control of Marjah once the Taliban's "shadow government" is forced out. Tribal elders, forced to flee by the insurgents, are on standby to return from the provincial capital of Lashkar Gah. [The Times](#)

Tribal Reconciliation News:

The Shinwari tribe, which recently received \$1 million in development assistance from U.S. military commanders, has taken a public step in its anti-Taliban pact: they have delivered a 28-year old man accused of running drugs and abetting the Taliban who has agreed to enter an Afghan government reconciliation program. If he breaks the program's rules he will be fined \$20,000 and his house will be burned down. [AP](#)

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