



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:

- **A drone strike killed three members of the Haqqani Network**, including the brother of its leader Sirajuddin Haqqani, in North Waziristan on 18 February. This is the fourth U.S. airstrike in five days against the Taliban and al Qaeda in Pakistan.
- **An Afghan police unit surrendered and perhaps joined the Taliban** in the Wardak province, which borders Kabul. The entire 25-man unit disappeared with all their weapons, possibly over a pay dispute. A Taliban spokesman said, "They are safe now and will not be harmed and will be treated well under our code of conduct."
- **Richard Holbrooke**, U.S. special envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, will travel through Central Asia this weekend to discuss closer regional cooperation on terrorism, counter-narcotics, and weapons proliferation. Visits will include Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Kazakhstan.

In Quotes:

"No one has ever asked me to decide before." -**Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai** on being consulted regarding the Marjah Offensive.

In Quotes:

"This was the first time that [Karzai's] own ministers were directly involved. In the past, they've kind of authorized and supplied some forces, but they haven't really felt that they were leading the planning." -**Mark Sedwill**, senior NATO civilian representative, discussing the Marjah Offensive.

In Quotes:

"[The Taliban] have shadow governance in every district in the south. And we, broadly speaking, can identify who they are... Now, [the] extent to which that shadow governance is successful is patchy to say the least." -**British Army Maj. Gen. Nick Carter** on the Taliban.

Who's Who:

Sirajuddin Haqqani is the leader of the Haqqani Network, a major Taliban affiliated insurgent group with close links to Mullah Omar. Some analysts claim it maintains links with al Qaeda as well as with Pakistan's military intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence, or ISI.

The Haqqani Network controls large swaths of eastern Afghanistan and North Waziristan, Pakistan, running a Shadow Government with courts, recruiting centers, tax offices, and security forces.

Sirajuddin Haqqani is thought to be an "irreconcilable" Taliban commander. The U.S. ramped up the attacks on his network after an al Qaeda suicide bomber, aided by the Haqqani Network and Pakistani Taliban leader Hakeemullah Mehsud, killed seven CIA officials, including the station chief, and a Jordanian intelligence officer on December 30, 2009.

Key Issue: Marjah Offensive

- Afghan forces raised their country's flag over an abandoned shop in the main bazaar yesterday in the town of Marjah. The seven-day-old coalition offensive in the Helmand province continues to face strong resistance from Taliban snipers, rocket propelled grenades, and roadside bombs.
- NATO intelligence reportedly believes the Taliban is running out of ammunition and has called for reinforcements. At least eight Americans, three Britons, three Afghan National Army soldiers, and around 120 Taliban fighters have died in the fighting so far.
- The United Nations said yesterday that it will not participate in NATO's plans for reconstructing Marjah, sharply criticizing what it perceives as the "militarization of humanitarian aid."
- Pakistan has reportedly increased security along its Baluchistan border with southern Afghanistan to try and halt spillover as Taliban fighters flee the operations in Marjah.
- With the fighting slowing, coalition officials now are getting ready to roll out what they're calling a "government-in-a-box"—a ready-made administration for the town—and pump millions of reconstruction dollars into the area, to try and quickly restore the Afghan government's presence and credibility.

Key Issue: The Taliban Shadow Government

- A central part of the Taliban insurgency strategy is to displace the Afghan government through competing parallel government structures, the so-called "Taliban Shadow Government," which operates under the name of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan.
- The Shadow Government gains loyalty through fear and intimidation, as well as by offering government services, such as dispute resolution, that the Afghan government fails to provide.
- The Taliban's Shadow Government administers much like a legitimate government: it appoints governors, gives them performance reviews, and replaces them if necessary. Citizens are able to file complaints against abusive Taliban officials and receive compensation for property losses during battles.
- 33 of 34 provinces in Afghanistan have "Shadow Governors," who report to "regional shuras." These groups take their orders from the "inner shura" led by Mullah Omar.
- The Shadow Government has suffered several arrests in recent weeks: the "Shadow Governors" for the Afghan provinces of Baghlan, Kunduz, Laghman, and former shadow governor of Zabul. These Taliban officials reported to the recently captured second-in-command of the Afghan Taliban, Mullah Baradar.

Police Training News:

General McChrystal's order that control of police training in Afghanistan be shifted from the State Department to the NATO Training Mission has been delayed due to an appeal by DynCorp, the contractor hired by the State Department for police training. DynCorp has come under increasing criticism for the quality their training. Some commentators worry that DynCorp has produced police that are unable to effectively participate in the Afghan criminal justice system or assist in the counterinsurgency. [The Daily Beast](#), [The New York Times](#)

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