



New Strategic Security Initiative

# Afghanistan Update

A twice-weekly, one-page situation report from the [Afghanistan Congressional Communications Hub](#) on the latest developments affecting U.S. policy and engagement in Afghanistan.

19 March 2010

## In the News:

- In response to **growing Taliban insurgency in northern Kunduz Province**, U.S. officials say that about 3,000 of the new 'surge' troops will be shifted to operations in the North to reinforce about 1,100 German soldiers, in the first significant American deployment to the area since 2001.
- It is reported that about **3,000 tribal leaders in the north of Pakistan** representing the 20 largest tribes in North West Frontier Province (NWFP) and the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) will meet in the provincial capital of Peshawar tomorrow to discuss a strategy to end support for militants.
- **Taliban fighters more than doubled the number of improvised explosive devices (IEDs)** they used against U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan last year. The U.S. military recorded 8,159 IED incidents in Afghanistan in 2009, compared with 3,867 in 2008. IEDs are the leading cause of U.S. and allied casualties by a large margin.
- **A record number of British troops have been honored for their bravery in Afghanistan**, the highest number since the Second World War. More than 150 servicemen and women were decorated this week, including two bomb disposal experts awarded the George Cross (one posthumously), the country's highest award for gallantry by military personnel not in the presence of the enemy.

## In Quotes:

*"The effect of [the arrests of Taliban leaders] in total, certainly, was negative on our possibility of continuing the political process that we saw as so necessary at that particular juncture... I believe that what has happened over the last few weeks may well have hardened the Taliban rather than moved them closer to the table."* **Kai Eide, BBC interview**, 19 March 2010.

## In Quotes:

*"We used not to have a number of powers. Now after the president signed this decree, we have been granted some legal authority, meaning that our staff are authorized to act, in some cases, as prosecutor."* **Mohammad Yasin Osmani**, Head of the High Office of Oversight and Anti-Corruption.

## Who's Who: Kai Eide

- Kai Eide (born 1949) is a Norwegian diplomat who served as the United Nations Special Representative to Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan between March 2008 and March 2010.
- He previously served as the Special Envoy of the United Nations Secretary-General in Kosovo in 2005 and as Special Representative of the Secretary-General in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1997-1998.
- He has been a member of the Norwegian Foreign Service since 1975. He was the Norwegian ambassador to North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) from 2002 to 2006 and to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) from 1998 to 2002.

## Key Issue: Ex- UN Mission Chief Speaks Out

- In his [first interview](#) since leaving his role in Afghanistan Kai Eide told the BBC that the effect of the Pakistani arrests of Abdul Ghani Baradar, and other senior Taliban leaders in recent weeks has been to set back the prospects of a dialogue, and that Pakistan must have known its actions would have that effect.
- Mr Eide confirmed publicly for the first time that his secret contacts with senior Taliban members had begun a year ago. He said there were now many channels of communication with the Taliban, including those involving senior representatives of Afghan President Hamid Karzai.
- There is still no consensus among Afghanistan and its foreign allies about if, and how, to engage with a movement many of whose senior members are still linked to al-Qaeda.
- US officials have recently praised what they called new co-operation by Pakistan. Officials also said on Wednesday that U.S. investigators have recently been given more regular direct access to Pakistani-led interrogations of Baradar. Meanwhile General Stanley McChrystal said that the arrest "seems to have shaken the confidence of some of the Afghan Taliban leadership."

## Key Issue: Fighting Corruption

- Afghan President Hamid Karzai has given greater authority to the Afghan government's anti-corruption body as part of a campaign to battle the fraud and bribery that the US and foreign allies in Afghanistan say is endemic and an ongoing impediment on efforts to stabilize the country.
- Karzai's decree will give the body – the High Office of Oversight and Anti-corruption – the power to suspend and detain government officials. 17 ministers who either served in the previous or current cabinet of Karzai are being questioned over accusations of administrative corruption.
- Karzai concedes corruption is rife in his government, but says the problem has been exaggerated in Western media. He has repeatedly said that the biggest cause of corruption is poor oversight among Western donors of their own billions in aid contracts, which dwarf Afghanistan's budget.
- Earlier this week Staffan De Mistura, Mr. Eide's replacement as UN special envoy to Afghanistan, praised President Karzai for revoking a decree that barred foreign observers from the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC), tasked with reviewing voting fraud. The move had drawn strong criticism from Western allies and domestic political opposition. But during his first meeting with De Mistura on Tuesday, Karzai said the UN will be able to choose two foreigners to sit on the five-member panel.

The [Afghanistan Congressional Communications Hub](#) 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 on the distribution list.