



# Afghanistan Update

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2010

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.

## In the News:

- The Pentagon is **overhauling its organization of troop deployments to Afghanistan**, instigating a new system that will return units to the same parts of the country so they can develop familiarity, deeper regional expertise and closer relationships with local Afghan leaders.

The "Campaign Continuity" initiative will be a major step in forging 'institutional memory' of US and Western presence in Afghanistan that has been hindered by short-term rotations and frequent changes in both military and civilian personnel.

- The United States will reportedly ask **Canada to keep as many as 600 troops in Afghanistan** after the Canadian military mission there ends in 2011. The troops would serve as military trainers and would be most likely based in Kabul. The U.S. and NATO allies are keen to keep as many partner nations engaged in Afghanistan, at a time when political pressures at home are questioning nations' ongoing commitment there.
- Control of key facilities at Kabul International Airport, **Afghanistan's largest civilian airport, were handed over to the Government of Afghanistan** by the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) this week. The transfer of the airfield is the final step in the move towards shifting control back to the government of Afghanistan. "This hand over is significant in that it allows GIRA to further develop their civilian capacity at the airport," said ISAF Deputy Commander British Lt. Gen. Sir Nick Parker.

## In Quotes:

*"Why in the world are we not able to ask questions at a hearing in a few minutes as to why the police training is not going well in Afghanistan and how we can do better. Our men and women are over there and they are at risk if we don't get this right,"* **Sen. Claire McCaskill**, 24 March 2010.

## In Quotes:

*"This law [pardoning war crimes] is likely to undermine efforts to secure genuine reconciliation which ... is about bringing together different elements of a fractured society in a manner that allows them to overcome or deal with harmful and divisive practices it breeds. At the very minimum there must be an acknowledgement of the grave injustices that have occurred if the long and notorious pattern of abuse is to end in this country."* **Norah Niland**, chief UN human rights officer in Afghanistan

## In the News

The United Nations urged Afghanistan on Thursday to **repeal a law that grants a blanket pardon for perpetrators of war crimes and rights abuses**, saying the law could hamper efforts to make peace.

President Karzai's spokesman said earlier this month that the bill had become law because it was passed by two-thirds of the parliament and therefore did not require Karzai's signature.

The UN believes that the law contravenes Afghanistan's obligations of international law, green-lights impunity and perpetuates human rights violations.

## Key Issue: Afghan National Police

- Media scrutiny of the Afghan National Police force (ANP) has grown this week. Sources have cited drug abuse, lack of education and corruption amongst the many problems that plague the U.S.-led training and capacity building effort.
- Newsweek reports that less than 12 percent of the ANP units are capable of operating on their own, 90 percent of recruits are illiterate, 15 percent test positive for drug use and only 25 percent of the current 98,000 ANP force has received any formal training. Of the roughly 170,000 Afghans in total who have been trained since the start of the program, only about 30,000 remain in the force.
- Of the \$33 billion in additional funding that Defense Secretary Robert Gates and Secretary of State Hillary Clinton have asked the Senate Appropriations Committee for, \$2.6 billion is to train the Afghan national security forces. The U.S. has so far spent \$6 billion on the ANP training.
- A professional police force in Afghanistan is an important part of the U.S. strategy for handover of security and eventual withdrawal of troops from the country.

## Key Issue: Oversight of Afghan National Police Training

- Sen. Claire McCaskill's Oversight Committee hearing this Wednesday on the U.S. effort to train Afghanistan's police force was cancelled on the same day that it was to take place. She has rescheduled the meeting for April.
- A GAO investigation into the ANP training contract has slowed down progress to make improvements to the current system. It has blocked US Army plans to transfer a \$15 billion Afghan National Police (ANP) training contract to become part of an existing Defense contract without "full and open competition". The incumbent chief contractor, DynCorp International, has been asked to continue its current operation until the end of 2010.

The [Afghanistan Congressional Communications Hub](#) serves Members and staff by providing relevant and accessible information on Afghanistan. It is non-partisan.

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