



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.

30 April
2010

Issue in Focus: Kandahar

- **Insurgents are escalating levels of violence** in Kandahar:
 - Three explosions in the provincial capital, Kandahar City, on Monday killed two civilians, apparently targeting Kandahar's deputy police chief.
 - Kandahar's deputy mayor and a tribal elder were both shot dead in the past week by unknown assassins.
 - 99 people have been killed in 150 violent incidents in Kandahar City so far this year, up to April 18. Police officers are the most common targets for assassination, and have accounted for 30 percent of the dead.
- The **United Nations** on Monday pulled foreign staff out of the city and instructed hundreds of its local employees not to come to work.
- **Ahmed Wali Karzai**, elected Head of the Kandahar Provincial Council and the half-brother of President Karzai, has vowed to back a major NATO campaign in Kandahar this summer.
- U.S. officials are providing support for the **governor of Kandahar, Tooryalai Wesa**, who recently returned to Afghanistan after more than a decade in Canada, hoping to shore up his power and credibility ahead of NATO's planned campaign.

Issue in Focus: Pentagon Report

- Media reports on a major Pentagon report to Congress this week have highlighted:
- **The Karzai government** is supported in only a quarter of 121 local districts designated as 'Key Terrain and Areas of Interest', whilst the insurgency is supported in 92 of 121 those key districts.
 - **Violence is sharply above the seasonal average** for the previous year -- an 87 percent increase from February 2009 to March 2010.
 - **The Taliban-led insurgency's** abilities are expanding and its operations are increasing in sophistication. Between October and March, the insurgency was responsible for 157 civilian deaths while NATO and Afghan security forces were responsible for 68.
 - Taliban insurgents were coming under "**unprecedented pressure**" leading to tension and sporadic dips in morale.
 - "**Greater fissures**" among insurgent groups, particularly at the local level, have increased difficulty coordinating their operations.

In the News

- After a two-year slump in opium prices, early reports from the poppy harvest are quoting farmers and officials saying that **production and revenues in Helmand are rising again**. Following a one-third drop in cultivation nationally since 2008, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime this year also predicts a stable crop in Helmand. A rebalancing of opium and wheat prices is tipping back in favor of opium (after a massive wheat shortage in 2008) is encouraging greater poppy cultivation. Farmers are also beginning to grow their crops in the desert where they are less accessible and given greater protection from the Taliban. ([IWPR](#))
- A **classified White House assessment** of how its objectives in Afghanistan and Pakistan are being met received a cool reception from the U.S. Congress because of its lack of concrete detail, congressional aides said this week. Democrats and Republicans on the key committees called the document "vague", "lacking in detail" and a "disappointment". ([Reuters](#))

In Quotes

"My father was the head of [Kandahar] province, my grandfather was head of this province... I learnt from my father how to deal with the tribes, how to earn their respect. I would like to use that power to support the international community's effort." **Ahmed Wali Karzai**, Head of Kandahar Provincial Council. 26 April, 2010. ([Financial Times](#))

"If the [NATO] offensive goes on while Ahmed Wali Karzai is still there, it will fail... There is a very big risk that he will take advantage of it to widen his influence." **Malalai Ishaq Zai**, an MP from Kandahar. 26 April, 2010. ([Financial Times](#))

House Armed Services Committee Hearing:

Testimony on developments in security and stability in Afghanistan.
Wednesday, May 5, 2010
10:00am – 2118 Rayburn

Witnesses:

- **The Honorable Michèle Flournoy**, Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, Department of Defense
- **Lieutenant General John M. Paxton Jr.**, USMC, Director for Operations, J-3, Joint Chiefs of Staff

Civilian Casualties

Several incidents of civilian casualties caused by U.S., NATO and Afghan troops have prompted strong reactions in Afghanistan this week:

- **NATO supply vehicles in eastern Afghanistan were torched** last Sunday in response to allegations that U.S. and Afghan troops had killed three civilians during a nighttime raid in Logar Province. Despite strong evidence that the men were insurgents, local people still protested. ([Washington Post](#))
- **Hundreds of residents** of a village near Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan rioted after the brother-in-law of a female parliament member was killed during a NATO raid. NATO reports that the man was armed and refused repeated requests to lower his weapon. ([AP](#))
- **A French military investigation** has concluded that French troops mistakenly killed four Afghan civilians during a clash with insurgents 30 miles east of Kabul that occurred on April 6. ([AP](#))

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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