



Afghanistan Update

12 March
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:

- House of Representatives rejected an effort by Congressman Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) to force U.S. troops to withdraw from Afghanistan by the end of the year. The resolution received 65 "yes" votes (60 Democrats, 5 Republicans) and 356 "no" votes (189 Democrats, 167 Republicans).
- President Karzai visited Pakistan for two days this week, saying that Islamabad has a "significantly important" role to play in the peace talks his government is encouraging with Taliban insurgents.
- Pakistan suffered several major incidences of violence this week. Military personnel around the country were targeted in attacks resulting in significant civilian casualties. The surge in violence follows Pakistan's crackdown on Taliban elements operating within its borders.

In Quotes:

"If we don't get the police fixed, we'll never change the dynamics in the country. No matter how well we do the clearing and holding, we will never build on that progress and sustain it without a police force. We have to get this right."
Lt. Gen William Caldwell on police training, 12 March 2010.

In Quotes:

"Afghans are crazy about education abroad. I can say this with authority because I used to be the minister of education."
Afghan Minister of Interior Hanif Atmar on his plan to send police abroad for training, 12 March 2010.

Who's Who:

Hanif Atmar became the Afghan Minister of Interior in October 2008, after previously serving as the Minister of Education 2006-2007, and the Minister of Rural Rehabilitation and Development 2002-2004.

Atmar, an ethnic Pashtun, was born in 1968 in Laghman Province, Afghanistan. He worked for the KHAD, the Afghan intelligence agency trained by the KGB. In 1988 he lost one of his legs fighting with a special-operations unit against mujahedin near Jalalabad.

When Kabul fell to the mujahedin, Atmar went to the United Kingdom, where he gained a college and masters degree in international relations and post-war recovery. He has authored many articles and books on development, humanitarian aid, and the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Atmar is fluent in Dari, Pashto, English and Urdu.

Key Issue: GAO Reviews U.S.

Counternarcotics Efforts

- The GAO [released a report](#) this week evaluating the U.S. counternarcotics effort in Afghanistan. The U.S. has spent over \$2.5 billion since 2005 towards counternarcotics efforts with mixed results.
- The report found that the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan lacked a comprehensive capacity building strategy, and that their institutional capacity was weak.
- Drug problems are manifold: between 12 to 41 percent of Afghan police recruits at Regional Training Centers tested positive for drugs, and up to \$160 million in drug money funds insurgents each year. Furthermore, the report cites drug-related corruption as "pervasive."
- The State Department was successful with an incentive program: \$1 million in additional annual development funds are offered to poppy-free provinces, and \$80 million has been paid to over one dozen poppy-free provinces since the program began.
- The U.S. counternarcotics efforts have shifted towards increased military coordination due to the close ties between drug traffickers and insurgent networks. Eradication has been de-emphasized, with an increased focus on interdiction efforts and alternative agricultural assistance for poppy farmers.

Key Issue: New Police Training Strategy

- Afghan and NATO-ISAF officials have announced the "Afghan National Police Strategy," a major new effort to overhaul the Afghan National Police (ANP) with an intensive new focus on training.
- Around three quarters of the 90,000-strong ANP were dispatched with no formal training, and supervision is minimal. Some commentators note that this has led to police bribery, theft, and extortion, as well as defections to the Taliban and involvement in Afghanistan's drug trade.
- Beginning next week, all new recruits will receive at least six weeks of formal training. Lt. Gen. William Caldwell, who oversees the NATO training programs, said "it is still beyond my comprehension" that ANP have been deployed without formal training, stating, "we weren't doing it right."
- The new strategy prioritizes regaining the public's confidence, eliminating corruption, and improving ANP capabilities and morale. Canadian General Michael Ward, who oversees police development, said "It may take a Richter-scale-size event to win back the public's confidence in the police."
- A major element of the new training effort will be sending up to 3,000 police officers each year for instruction in Jordan and Turkey, which will help make up for the shortage of NATO police trainers and training facilities in Afghanistan. These officers would then be sent to replace ineffective or corrupt police chiefs.
- The ANP's goal is to increase its manpower from its current 92,000 to 110,000 by October. Because of high attrition and desertion rates this will necessitate around 40,000 new police recruits.

Humanitarian Aid News:

A spokesman for the Afghan Taliban insurgency said they would consider working with the United Nations and other humanitarian aid agencies to distribute relief supplies, saying "if aid agencies contact our local mujahedin and reach an agreement we would vouch for the safety of their workers and convoys." This announcement came one day after militants stormed the office of [World Vision International](#), a U.S. aid group operating in northwestern Pakistan's Mansehra district, killing six Pakistani employees. World Vision International is a Christian charity that has been providing humanitarian assistance since the 2005 earthquake.

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