



# Afghanistan Update

5 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:

- The role of UN envoy to Afghanistan has transitioned from Kai Eide of Norway to Staffan di Mistura, of dual Swedish and Italian citizenship. At a press conference marking the end of his 18-month term, Kai Eide said President Karzai needed more resolve. He criticized Afghanistan's lack of reform and the international community's "fast-ticking clocks" and unrealistic demands.
- Pakistan is thought to have killed Faqir Mohammed in an airstrike; he was the second in command of the *Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan*. Also killed in the same strike was Qari Zia Rahman an al Qaeda leader who operates in Pakistan's Bajaur tribal agency and Afghanistan's Nuristan and Kunar provinces.
- Pakistan has continued to arrest Taliban figures: Agha Jan Mohtasim was arrested in Karachi. He was a possible successor to Mullah Baradar as the Taliban's military commander for eastern Afghanistan. Mohtasim is Mullah Omar's son-in-law, and was the seventh highest ranking Taliban official.

## In Quotes:

*"It is now time to talk. I believe the reconciliation and peace process, whatever shape it takes, should get underway as soon as possible"* Outgoing UN envoy for Afghanistan **Kai Eide**, on negotiating with the Taliban. 5 March 2010

## In Quotes:

*"This is a significant development. It will provide General McChrystal authorities that I never had as the commander in Iraq – though I wish I had them – and that his predecessors never had in Afghanistan either."* **Gen. Petraeus** on McChrystal's new authorities in Afghanistan, 4 March 2010

## Testimony Summary:

**James Bever, Director USAID Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force.**

Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, [3 March 2010](#).

USAID has been involved in agriculture and alternative development activities in Afghanistan since 2002, and has obligated over \$1.839 billion: \$746 million in agriculture and \$1.093 billion in alternative development.

USAID's goal is to help create permanent, licit alternatives to poppy production to help to break the annual cycle of farmers deciding whether to plant poppy or not.

Important Lessons Learned: Road security and local governance is of paramount importance; quick-fix projects need follow-up; and supporting institutions are needed, such as access to credit and international markets.

## Key Issue: McChrystal's New Directive and Control

- General McChrystal received newly expanded authority this week of total operational control over nearly all U.S. forces in Afghanistan. Previously, U.S. Special Operations forces and detention facility personnel reported directly to General Petraeus.
- General Petraeus, the commander of CENTCOM, which is responsible for the area of operations that includes Afghanistan and Iraq, announced that he ordered "all U.S. forces, less a handful, be placed there under General McChrystal's operational, not just tactical, control."
- Special Operations forces have come under increased scrutiny since calling an airstrike in February which killed 27 Afghan civilians. General McChrystal seeks to limit airstrikes, which he feels risk civilian deaths, hurting the counterinsurgency campaign.
- McChrystal has also mandated the presence of Afghan troops in all night raids conducted by U.S. and NATO forces. President Karzai has sought an outright ban on night raids, but McChrystal values their tactical effectiveness for reducing civilian casualties.
- McChrystal has further ordered that Afghans lead searches during raids, including having females present for searching females, and compensation offered for property damaged or seized in a raid.
- Excerpts of McChrystal's classified directive were made public; he ordered Afghan security forces "should be the first force seen and the first voices heard by the occupants of any compound entered."

## Key Issue: New Regional Commands Announced

- NATO-ISAF has announced a new Regional Command structure for southern Afghanistan: RC-South will be split into RC-Southwest and RC-Southeast.
- Many of the 30,000 troops President Obama has ordered to Afghanistan are expected to head to southern Afghanistan. This will exceed the number of forces that can be effectively coordinated by a single regional command.
- RC-Southwest will be commanded by a two-star U.S. Marine general from the rapidly expanding Camp Bastion, an American base near Helmand's provincial capital of Lashkar Gah.
- RC-Southeast will be based at RC-South's current command headquarters at Kandahar Air Field, and led by its current commander, British Maj. Gen Nick Carter. RC-Southeast will transition to U.S. command in 2011.
- The new command structure will allow RC-Southeast to focus on the major upcoming campaign anticipated in Kandahar, which is an important region currently contested between the Afghan government and Taliban insurgents.
- The Pentagon will have considerable influence on the counterinsurgency campaign in Afghanistan's most instable regions, as the U.S. will eventually be leading both of NATO-ISAF's new southern regional commands, as well as RC-East.

## Contractor Oversight News

Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman Carl Levin (D-MI) said Thursday that the Pentagon should exclude Xe Services, formerly Blackwater, from a new \$1 billion contract to train Afghan police because of "serious questions" about the contractor's conduct. In a letter to Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, Senator Levin said that "the inadequacies in Blackwater's performance appear to have contributed to a shooting incident that has undermined our mission in Afghanistan." [AP](#)

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.