



Afghanistan Update

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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.

U.S. Relations with Karzai

- **Kabul and Washington have sought to draw a line under the recent cooling of relations** sparked by President Karzai's accusations of fraud by U.S and international actors in last year's elections. President Obama sent a letter to Mr. Karzai last week that included a recommitment to joint efforts in Afghanistan. The White House has declared the temporary upset to be over.
- Mr. Karzai sat down with US Special Representative Amb. Richard Holbrooke and USCENTCOM Commander Gen. David Petraeus in Kabul yesterday **at a two day conference reviewing US civilian and military strategy in Afghanistan.**
- Mr. Karzai and Gen. Stanley McChrystal **met with hundreds of elders in Kunduz in northern Afghanistan**, which has experienced an increase in insurgent activity. It was the third time Karzai and McChrystal have held joint-meetings with local Afghan elders, as part of NATO's strategy of emphasizing the Afghan government's leading role.
- **U.S. Democratic and Republican senators** have expressed their support for Mr. Karzai after meeting with him in Kabul. Sen. Tom Carper (D.-DE) encouraged Mr. Karzai to make a major appearance on a US news channel. Sen. Scott Brown (R.-MA) dismissed the media reports of Karzai's threat to join the Taliban as 'inaccurate'.

Civilian Casualties

- **Four civilians were killed and 18 wounded today**, when NATO troops fired on a bus in Kandahar, in southern Afghanistan, sparking protests and demonstrations. NATO allies are planning a major campaign this year to push insurgents out of Kandahar and win over the local population.
- Last week **US Vice Admiral William McRaven**, the commander of Joint Special Operations Command, has visited the family of five people who were killed by U.S. forces acting on mistaken intelligence reports, in February this year. The family had previously sworn revenge, with the father declaring "I will destroy everything I have and will launch my own suicide attack."

However, ABC News reports that **the father accepted the apology that VADM McRaven had made** in the traditional Pashtun offering of two sheep, and according to Pashtun culture is now obligated not to take revenge.

Gen. McChrystal had ordered VADM McRaven to go make the apology, according to a U.S. military official, who said this was not the first time American troops have performed such an act.

Afghanistan's Parliament Asserts Itself

- **Afghanistan's parliament has given President Karzai ten days to nominate candidates to fill 11 cabinet posts** left vacant since parliament's rejection of previous nominees in January this year.
- A resolution passed by the Lower House on Saturday has given a 10-day deadline to name the missing ministers, 20 days to appoint a commission to interpret the constitution, and a month to give an outline of state policy.
- Earlier last week **the Afghan Parliament also rejected the Karzai Administration's proposed annual budget for the next fiscal year.** Both Lower and Upper Houses unanimously rejected the proposed budget citing defects such as 'lack of attention' in the monthly wages of the disabled and families of victims of civil-wars.
- This follows the Lower House's previous rejection of a move by Mr. Karzai to secure power to appoint members of Afghanistan's election complaints commission.

US Civilian Surge:

- **The US Treasury Department** is sending more staff to Afghanistan to target the financial networks that provide money for the Taliban, a Treasury official said Wednesday.
- The boost in personnel in Kabul will be aligned with additional staff dedicated to the effort in Washington, and will form part of the civilian 'surge' to coincide with the increase in military troops heading to Afghanistan in coming months.
- The insurgency is largely financed through Afghanistan's narcotics trade and donations from international supporters.

In Quotes:

"[The insurgency in Afghanistan] has sufficient resources to sustain its recruiting and training infrastructure, conduct devastating attacks on Afghan civilians and present substantial resistance to our troops."

David Cohen, Assistant Treasury Secretary for terrorism and financial intelligence.

Italian Aid Workers Arrested

- Three Italian aid workers working at a charity hospital in Afghanistan have been accused of **plotting to kill Gulab Mangal, the governor of Helmand province.**
- Provincial Afghan authorities said that **explosive suicide vests, hand grenades and pistols were found at the charity's hospital**, in Lashkar Gar, the capital of Helmand. A spokesman for Gov. Mangal alleged that men planned to launch suicide bombings in Lashkar Gah and then kill the governor when he came to visit the wounded at the hospital.
- Emergency, the Milan-based charity that runs the hospital, said on Sunday that the arrests were "kidnappings" and an attempt to silence a "troublesome witness" of the suffering of civilians from the effects of military action in the country.

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