



Afghanistan Policy Page

A one-page brief from the [Afghanistan Congressional Communications Hub](#) on a major issue concerning U.S. policy and engagement in Afghanistan.

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Reconciliation and Reintegration

What is Reconciliation?

- Reconciliation aims to engage senior insurgents in order to achieve a settlement between all key parties and end the insurgency.
- Experts observe that reconciliation is one of the most difficult and complex challenges of the Afghan campaign.
- There are many opinions on how this process should be carried out. Amongst the issues that remain unclear are:
 - who should lead the process
 - what role the international community should play
 - whether the process involves a 'grand bargain' or should constitute informal, incremental steps towards building trust
 - what the expected timeframe should look like

What is Reintegration?

- Reintegration involves the process of low- and mid-level insurgents laying down their weapons and rejoining Afghan society.
- The process is targeted at local insurgent 'foot soldiers' who are often believed to only be fighting to earn money or because they feel there is no better option for them, with many operating on a part-time or seasonal basis.
- A Peace and Reintegration Program, funded by international donors, is still in development. It will be led by an Afghan official. Analysts observe that the nature of reintegration at the ground level may present issues for coordination of the process.
- U.S. officials have pointed out that a key component to the process – shared by the Afghan government and its international partners – is to provide protection and jobs for the former fighters in order to encourage more to join the trend.

Key Questions to be Answered

- Why do lower-level insurgents, the locally-recruited 'foot-soldiers', choose to join the insurgency and fight?
- What is the precise nature of the Haqqani network and other key insurgent groups? How far does its influence reach in Afghanistan and what is its envisaged role in any reconciliation and reintegration process?
- What are the Taliban funding mechanisms that sustain its operations and support lower-level or part-time fighters?
- How are the various networks of insurgents that fall under the 'Taliban' interconnected? How would these connections affect the coordination of a reconciliation and reintegration process?
- Are there any reliable figures for the number of active Taliban fighters – given the significant disparity of estimates?

Key Issue: Reaching International Accord

- Despite the U.S. and international allies agreeing that reconciliation and reintegration is necessary, numerous official statements have indicated a lack of unity on what this process will entail and how soon it needs to happen.
- U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates [recently told](#) a House Appropriations Committee that it was too early to consider talks with the Taliban as they would be ineffective in persuading them to disarm.
- However, U.K. Foreign Secretary David Miliband [told an audience](#) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology last month that Britain (the U.S.'s top ally in Afghanistan) believes that now is the time to engage insurgents at all levels.

Who's Who:

Lieutenant General Sir Graeme Lamb

- Former British SAS commander, now Special Adviser to Gen. Stanley McChrystal, responsible for leading reintegration and reconciliation efforts.
- Previous role in helping Gen. David Petraeus to secure local support against al-Qaeda in Iraq and to set up the Iraqi "surge" and the Sunni Awakening in 2007.
- **In His Words:**
"We're not at a point of negotiation. We're at a point of improving our understanding. We're at the point of establishing early dialogue ... The result will be that we will be better placed to explore the boundaries and where the contested areas of interest lie... the enduring success of this initiative will then take a number of years."

Ongoing Activities

- **Peace Jirga:** President Karzai plans to hold a jirga (assembly) to promote reconciliation with insurgents on May 2.
- **Reintegration Fund:** Donor countries at the London Conference in January 2010 pledged more than \$140 million. Afghanistan says the program could require \$1 billion over the next 3 years.
- **Hizb-e-Islami Proposal:** The insurgent faction led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar has submitted a 15-point proposal for reconciliation to President Karzai.
- **Afghanistan's Neighbors:** Roles for regional players in either process are highly politicized, with complex links to the balance of power and influence in the region.
- **United Nations:** Ex-UN mission head, Kai Eide, reportedly held meetings with Taliban representatives in Dubai in January.

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