

In my statement to the House on 27 October, I said that the Government would update Parliament on developments in Afghanistan every month. This is part of our commitment to keep Parliament regularly informed. This first monthly report covers a range of issues: the Lisbon Summit, Afghanistan's Parliamentary Elections, governance and regional engagement. Future reports will update on progress in Afghanistan.

The Rt. Hon. William Hague MP  
Secretary of State for Foreign & Commonwealth Affairs

**Lisbon Summit**

Afghanistan was at the heart of the NATO Lisbon Summit on 19-20 November, demonstrating the high priority that NATO places on its efforts to build a secure and stable Afghanistan.

All 48 nations contributing to the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) reaffirmed their enduring commitment to Afghanistan's security and stability. They also welcomed the participation and support of other international partners at the Summit, including the United Nations, the European Union, the World Bank and Japan, with all of whom ISAF shares a common vision for a better Afghanistan.

The ISAF Commander, General David Petraeus, reported that progress had been made on several fronts: the momentum of the insurgency had been broadly arrested across Afghanistan though not in all locations and reversed in a number of key areas; the area under the Afghan Government's control continued to expand and the Afghanistan National Security Force (ANSF) was proving to be an increasingly effective force, having successfully provided security for two nationwide elections in 2009 and 2010.

ISAF partners agreed that they would work in partnership with the Afghan Government to deliver President Karzai's objective of transitioning lead security responsibility to the ANSF, in all provinces, by the end of 2014. Transition to Afghan lead security responsibility will be dependent on the conditions in each district and province. It will see ISAF's role evolve away from combat towards increased training, mentoring and support. The transition process is on track to begin in some provinces and districts in early 2011 following a joint Afghan and NATO/ISAF assessment and decision.

In advance of the Summit NATO asked ISAF partners to fill additional training positions that would help the NATO Training Mission to Afghanistan (NTM-A) continue to meet targets for expanding the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan National Police (ANP). The Summit reported a strong response from partners. The UK had already announced a contribution of approximately 320 additional trainers. Canada confirmed that it would deploy a training mission with approximately 700 military trainers, 200 support troops and 45 police; Italy pledged an additional 200 trainers; Portugal 42; Croatia 30; and Bulgaria three additional mentoring and training teams. Other countries confirmed that they were considering new pledges, which would be discussed at a Force Generation Conference at the end of November.

Although the NTM-A priority shortfalls have therefore been met, the UK will continue to press our international partners to ensure that NTM-A continues to have the resources to fulfil its mission.

Looking beyond ISAF's current mission, NATO and Afghanistan agreed at the Summit the framework of a long-term partnership. NATO agreed to provide sustained practical support for Afghanistan, while the Afghan Government affirmed that it would be an enduring partner to NATO and committed itself to carry out its responsibilities in a manner consistent with the commitments made at the London Conference of January 2010 and the Kabul Conference of July 2010. These would include measures to combat terrorism, address corruption and support regional security. NATO and the Afghan Government will now agree the details of a co-operation programme to take forward this partnership.

**Security**

ISAF operations are increasing the pressure on the insurgency. The significant uplift in troop numbers corresponds with an increase in military

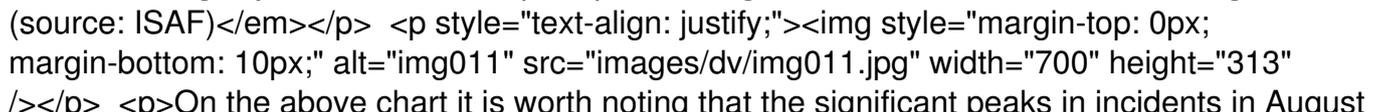
operations, particularly in those areas where insurgent activity is still strong. Although this has not caused a significant increase in civilian casualties, neither has it led to a decrease in ISAF casualties. The focus of ISAF operations over this period has been in the south, principally in Kandahar and Helmand provinces, where unprecedented pressure has reduced the effectiveness of the insurgency. As a result, there is cause for cautious optimism, but it must not be forgotten that there remains a significant insurgency to fight.

Figure 1 shows that the number of violent events recorded by ISAF has been declining since September (with the notable exception of the week of the Parliamentary elections). This is in line with seasonal trends seen in previous years.

It is worth noting that:

- the steady increase in the number of violent incidents recorded in 2010 was anticipated and reflects the insurgency's reaction to the significant increase in troop numbers and the accelerated tempo of operations, operations that are increasingly being undertaken by the ANSF but still with significant ISAF support;
- the nature of insurgent attacks is also changing in response to the increase in both the numbers and activity of Afghan and international forces, as witnessed by the sharp increase in the number of direct fire attacks; and
- violence is not evenly distributed across the country. Statistics reveal that, in the week to 12 November, 70% of all violence occurs in just four of Afghanistan's 34 provinces (Helmand, Kandahar, Kunar and Ghazni) with 40% occurring in just five districts.

**Figure 1: Violent incidents across Afghanistan** (source: ISAF)



On the above chart it is worth noting that the significant peaks in incidents in August 2009 and September 2010 occurred around the time of the Presidential and Parliamentary elections.

**Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF)**

Progress continues to be made in developing the ANA and the ANP. By mid November the ANA had reached a total establishment of around 144,000 – well on track to meet the agreed November 2011 final target of 171,600, as agreed at January's London Conference. Similar progress is being made in expanding the police. By mid November the ANP had reached a strength of around 116,000 and is also on track to meet the November 2011 agreed final target of 134,000.

Investment continues in the training of both the army and the police, particularly their leadership. Over the last year NTM-A reports an increase of around one third in the number of trained officers and a two-fold increase in the number of trained Non-Commissioned Officers. Over the same period ANP commissioned officer training has more than doubled.

The capability of both forces – measured in terms of their ability to progressively undertake operations without ISAF support - continues to develop.

As of the end of September NTM-A assessed that, of the ANA's 28 Brigades and Corps

- seven were capable of undertaking operations with minimal advice
- ten remained reliant on direct ISAF assistance to conduct operations
- nine remained at an early stage of development
- two were in the process of being assessed.

In terms of police capabilities at the provincial level, the NTM-A assessed at the end of September that, in the 20 provinces where NTM-A has undertaken detailed capability assessments, the ANP could operate:

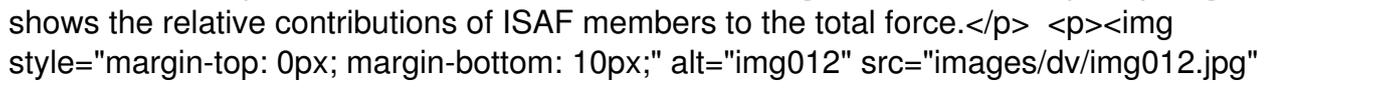
- independently of ISAF support in one province
- effectively with just advice from ISAF in six provinces (this includes Helmand)
- effectively with ISAF assistance in six other provinces
- successfully only with ISAF support in 7 provinces.

**The International Community's Military Contribution**

The surge in international forces agreed to by the international

community has now reached its peak of around 131,000. The number of troop contributing countries has expanded to 48 with the addition of a Tongan detachment.

Figure 2 shows the relative contributions of ISAF members to the total force.



**Civilian casualties**

It remains difficult to provide a full and accurate number of civilian casualties. However civilian casualties remain at an unacceptably high level with the majority caused by insurgent indiscriminate attack or intimidation. NATO continues to strive to minimise civilian casualties during its operations; despite the significant increase in military operations, casualties caused by ISAF have been kept low; deaths caused by insurgent activity have remained consistently higher.

**Parliamentary Elections**

On 1 December, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced the last of the results of Afghanistan's 2010 Parliamentary Elections. All 35 of the parliamentary constituencies have now been certified and winners declared. The election took place on 18 September and saw over 2,500 candidates compete for 249 Parliamentary seats. Whilst by no means free of irregularities or fraud, the 2010 elections were credible enough given the circumstances. Cases of malpractice were investigated, resulting in the disqualification of 1.3 million ballots (similar to the number excluded in the 2009 Presidential elections), leaving a total of 4.3million valid votes. Between the announcement of the provisional and the final results, decisions of the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) resulted in the disqualification of a number of candidates and ballots. In total, the ECC disqualified 24 candidates, 20 of whom had been included as winners in the preliminary results.

Final results indicate that Pashtun representation in the Lower House (Wolesi Jirga) of the National Assembly has decreased. In turn, Hazara and Tajik representation has increased. Approximately 60 percent of Parliamentarians are new to the Wolesi Jirga. Female candidates have done well with both of the two seats in Nimroz Province being won by women – the first time a woman has won a non-reserved seat. In Badakhshan Province a female candidate topped the overall list and her sister has won a seat in neighbouring Takhar Province.

**Governance**

The Kabul Conference communiqué set out a number of commitments aimed at accelerating Afghanistan's ability to govern itself, reduce dependence on the international community, enhance Afghanistan's security forces and provide better protection for the rights of all its citizens. At the Joint Coordination Monitoring Board (JCMB) meeting on 15 November the Afghan Government reported that:

- The National Security Policy had been approved.
- Three international members of the new anti-corruption Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC) had been appointed.
- The Human Rights Support Unit in the Ministry of Justice had opened.
- The implementation plan for the Public Financial Management Roadmap had been launched and the Government was sourcing a company to make Public Financial Management (PFM) assessments in seven Ministries.

International partners welcomed the progress thus far. They urged the Afghan Government to agree a new IMF programme quickly and to accelerate progress on governance - particularly in the areas of rule of law and anti-corruption.

**Regional Engagement**

The fourth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA), held in Istanbul, Turkey, on 2-3 November, was an important example of the region's commitment to supporting Afghanistan. The RECCA process places Afghanistan at the centre of efforts to foster regional economic integration and increases the Afghan Government's capacity proactively to reach out to its neighbours.

This year's

Conference focused on four major themes: infrastructure; economic development; trade and transit; and human resources development. Twenty-six countries and thirty international organisations attended, including neighbours, near neighbours, principle international donors, Saudi Arabia and Egypt. The UK was central to establishing the RECCA process in 2005, and this year funded the establishment of a Centre for Regional Cooperation at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Kabul.

On 29 October, Afghanistan and Pakistan finally signed the long awaited Afghan-Pakistan Transit Trade Agreement between the two states. This agreement is designed to improve trade links for Afghanistan by facilitating imports and exports across Pakistan's land routes to its coast and India. Enabling these shipments to reach Pakistani ports and the border with India will provide a significant boost for Afghan trade.

**Conclusion**

The Lisbon Summit set out the timetable for transition of lead responsibility for security from international to Afghan forces by the end of 2014. The UK will continue to work closely with our international partners and with the Government of Afghanistan to ensure that Afghanistan is able to make the necessary progress towards achieving that goal.