

# **Bussiness and Politics in Muslim World**

## **Afghanistan This Week**

**Report # 139**

**Week: 25 September-1 October, 2010**

**Mohammad Amin**

**Business and Politics in Muslim World**  
**Report#: 139**  
**Week: 25 Sept-1 Oct 2010**  
**Mohammad Amin**

---

**Contents**

<b>POLITICAL HEADLINES SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>SOCIAL HEADLINES SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>BUSINESS HEADLINES SUMMARY .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>POLITICAL HEADLINES .....</b>	<b>6</b>
AFGHANS STAGE ANTI-US DEMONSTRATION.....	6
US-LED FORCES KILL TWO AFGHAN CIVILIANS .....	6
KABUL WARNS OF RISING TERRORISM THREAT .....	7
BLAST KILLS AFGHAN OFFICIAL, 5 CIVILIANS.....	8
'MILITARY NO SOLUTION TO AFGHAN CRISIS' .....	8
KARZAI BLAMES US FOR AFGHAN VIOLENCE.....	9
US SOLDIER ADMITS KILLING AFGHANS FOR FUN.....	10
CLASHES FORCE 1000S OF AFGHANS TO FLEE .....	11
SEVEN US-LED TROOPS DIE IN AFGHAN WAR .....	12
CAR BOMB KILLS 4 AFGHAN CIVILIANS .....	12
3 US-LED TROOPS KILLED IN AFGHANISTAN .....	13
NATO DRONE 'SHOT DOWN' IN AFGHANISTAN .....	13
US-LED STRIKE KILLS 4 AFGHAN CIVILIANS.....	14
SIX US-LED TROOPS DIE IN AFGHAN WAR .....	14
4 US-LED SOLDIERS KILLED IN AFGHANISTAN .....	15
US-LED AIRSTRIKE KILLS 15 IN AFGHANISTAN .....	15
'US TAX MONEY GONE TO TALIBAN MILITANTS' .....	16
VIOLENCE KILLS 100 AFGHAN POLICE EVERY MONTH: GOVT .....	16
KARZAI WANTS PRIVATE SECURITY FIRMS DISBANDED .....	18
AFGHAN GOVERNMENT APPOINTS 70-MEMBER PEACE COUNCIL.....	18
<b>SOCIAL HEADLINES .....</b>	<b>20</b>
20 % INCREASE IN BIRTH DEFORMITIES IN AFGHANISTAN .....	20
<b>BUSINESS HEADLINES .....</b>	<b>21</b>
WITH SECURITY, BUSINESS BOOMS IN MAZAR-E SHARIF .....	21

## **Political Headlines Summary**

### **Afghans stage anti-US demonstration**

Press TV: Afghans have held several rallies to protest the killing of civilians by US-led troops over the past months.

### **US-led forces kill two Afghan civilians**

Press TV: NATO troops have killed two civilians in the southern Afghan province of Helmand, the US-led alliance has confirmed.

### **Kabul warns of rising terrorism threat**

Press TV: Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Zalmi Rassoul cautions about the rising terrorist threats in the region despite the deployment of 150,000 foreign troops across Afghanistan.

### **Blast kills Afghan official, 5 civilians**

Press TV: At least six people, including an Afghan official, have been killed after a bomber on a motorcycle targeted a car in Ghazni province in eastern Afghanistan.

### **'Military no solution to Afghan crisis'**

Press TV: A US analyst believes fighting corruption and solving the economic crisis are the real solutions to Afghanistan's problems, stressing that ending the country's impasse takes more than military operations.

### **Karzai blames US for Afghan violence**

Press TV: Afghan President Hamid Karzai speaks during an event marking the International Literacy Day in Kabul September 28, 2010.

### **US soldier admits killing Afghans for fun**

Press TV: Jeremy Morlock is accused of killing Afghan civilians for fun and collecting their body parts as trophies.

### **Clashes force 1000s of Afghans to flee**

Press TV: Thousands of Afghan civilians have been forced to flee and hundreds of families have been displaced due to fierce clashes in southern Afghanistan.

### **Seven US-led troops die in Afghan war**

Press TV: Seven servicemen with the US-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) have lost their lives in a militant attack in volatile southern Afghanistan.

### **Car bomb kills 4 Afghan civilians**

Press TV: At least four civilians have been killed and nine others injured in an explosion which rocked the southern Afghan province of Kandahar.

### **3 US-led troops killed in Afghanistan**

Press TV: Three US-led soldiers have been killed in separate attacks in the restive southern Afghanistan amid an increase in the number of such incidents in the war-battered country.

### **NATO drone 'shot down' in Afghanistan**

Press TV: Taliban militants say they have shot down an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) operated by NATO in the eastern Afghan province of Khost, near the border with Pakistan.

### **US-led strike kills 4 Afghan civilians**

Press TV: The US-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) says four Afghan civilians were killed and three others wounded during an operation in Ghazni province.

### **Six US-led troops die in Afghan war**

Press TV: NATO confirms six more US-led forces have been killed in Afghanistan as militants step up their attacks against foreign forces in the country.

### **4 US-led soldiers killed in Afghanistan**

Press TV: A mine explosion has claimed the lives of four more US-led soldiers in southwestern Afghanistan, amid concerns of the rise of such incidents in the war-torn country.

### **US-led airstrike kills 15 in Afghanistan**

Press TV: A US-led airstrike has killed at least 15 people in northeastern Afghanistan amid growing discontent over the rising number of civilian deaths in the war-torn country.

### **'US tax money gone to Taliban militants'**

Press TV: A probe finds that a US contractor in Afghanistan may have 'inadvertently' funneled millions of dollars in American taxpayer money to Taliban militants.

### **Violence kills 100 Afghan police every month: govt**

KABUL – Almost 2,000 Afghan police officers have been killed or injured by insurgents in the past six months as many are forced onto the frontline in the war against the Taliban, an official said Sunday.

### **Karzai wants private security firms disbanded**

Kabul - President Hamid Karzai, reiterating his stance, on Sunday directed the Ministry of Interior to use all available resources to ensure the disbandment of private security companies.

### **Afghan government appoints 70-member peace council**

KABUL – The Afghan government on Tuesday announced who will sit on a 70-member peace council, formalizing efforts already underway to reconcile with top Taliban leaders and lure insurgent foot soldiers off the battlefield.

### **Social Headlines Summary**

#### **20 % Increase in Birth Deformities in Afghanistan**

Officials in the Ministry of Public Health say the malformation of babies during child birth has increased 20 percent in the country.

### **Business Headlines Summary**

#### **With Security, Business Booms In Mazar-e Sharif**

MAZAR-E SHARIF - As the heat of the day subsides at dark, hundreds of families gather in a large amusement park on the outskirts of Mazar-e Sharif.

## **Political Headlines**

### **Afghans stage anti-US demonstration**

Sat Sep 25, 2010 4:10PM

Press TV: Afghans have held several rallies to protest the killing of civilians by US-led troops over the past months.

Hundreds of Afghans have taken to the streets to voice their anger over a US-led attack that killed dozens in the volatile eastern parts of the country.

The deadly US-led attack, which took place on Friday, prompted hundreds of people to stage an anti-US demonstration in Afghanistan's eastern Laghman Province on Saturday.

Several protesters have reportedly been injured after police fired warning shots to disperse the crowd.

The protest comes as, according to local sources, 30 civilians including women and children lost their lives in the US-led military operation in the province.

NATO officials, however, said gunmen were the target of the attack.

The protesters argue that Afghan civilians mainly fall victim to such US-led military operations.

Hundreds of civilians have lost their lives in US-led airstrikes and ground operations in different parts of the war-ravaged country over the past months.

The loss of civilian lives at the hand of foreign forces has led to a dramatic increase of anti-American sentiments in Afghanistan.

### **US-led forces kill two Afghan civilians**

Sun Sep 26, 2010 4:43PM

Press TV: NATO troops have killed two civilians in the southern Afghan province of Helmand, the US-led alliance has confirmed.

The two men were on a motorbike as they were shot dead by NATO troops in the Musa Qala district in Helmand.

NATO has confirmed the deaths but claimed that its soldiers opened fire on civilians after they failed to stop at a security outpost.

The alliance is already under immense criticism over similar incidents in Afghanistan.

A US-led attack also killed dozens of civilians in Afghanistan's Laghman Province on Friday.

Hundreds of Afghans launched a protest rally to condemn the killing.

The loss of civilian lives at the hand of foreign forces has led to a dramatic increase of anti-American sentiments in Afghanistan.

### **Kabul warns of rising terrorism threat**

Tue Sep 28, 2010 5:57AM

Press TV: Afghanistan's Foreign Minister Zalmi Rassoul cautions about the rising terrorist threats in the region despite the deployment of 150,000 foreign troops across Afghanistan.

"Terrorism in our region is a growing threat to world peace and security. The audacity and geographic scope of extremist and terrorist groups harbored in our region continues to expand," Rassoul told the UN General Assembly on Monday.

According to the Afghan official, greater international cooperation is needed to defeat terrorism in the region.

"Terrorism remains a global challenge which can be defeated only through a concerted international effort," he went on to say.

"If our international partners and allies wish to win the global war on terrorism, they must look beyond villages in Afghanistan, and engage in a strategy that will effectively and decisively dismantle organizations and networks that continue with immunity to support terrorist and radical militants," Reuters quoted Rassoul as saying.

Violence has risen to its highest level across Afghanistan since the Taliban were ousted by US-led forces in 2001.

Military and civilian casualties have also reached a record high in the war-torn country this year.

Rassoul also hinted that the foreign troops in his country have been making numerous mistakes.

He also called on the international community to help the war-ravaged country in the fight against narcotics.

"To complement our efforts towards eliminating poppy production, we wish to see greater action to counter smuggling of precursors into our country and to reduce demand and consumption of drugs in other countries," he stated.

Afghanistan accounts for 90 percent of the world's illicit opium and heroin production, the UN drug monitoring body said in its 2010 report.

According to UN statistics, Afghanistan produced only 185 tons of opium per year under the Taliban. Since the US-led invasion, drug production has surged to 3,400 tons annually. In 2007, the opium trade reached an estimated all-time production high of 8,200 tons.

Afghan and Western officials have blamed Washington and NATO for the drastic surge, saying the allies have 'overlooked' the drug problem since they have invaded Afghanistan.

### **Blast kills Afghan official, 5 civilians**

Tue Sep 28, 2010 7:24AM

Press TV: At least six people, including an Afghan official, have been killed after a bomber on a motorcycle targeted a car in Ghazni province in eastern Afghanistan.

According to a Press TV correspondent, Ghazni's Deputy Governor Mohammad Kazim Allahyar, his son and two bodyguards were killed during the attack in Ghazni city on Tuesday. Eight more people also were injured in the incident.

A senior Afghan police official also confirmed the death of Allahyar, Reuters reported.

"Allahyar was on his way to work when a suicide bomber on a motorbike targeted his car," said Delawar Zahid, police chief of Ghazni province.

"Allahyar, his son and two bodyguards were martyred," he went on to say.

Allahyar had survived a bombing attempt just two months ago.

Violence has risen to its highest level across war-ravaged Afghanistan since the Taliban were ousted by US-led forces in 2001.

Military and civilian casualties have reached record highs in the war-torn country this year.

### **'Military no solution to Afghan crisis'**

Tue Sep 28, 2010 2:38PM



Press TV: A US analyst believes fighting corruption and solving the economic crisis are the real solutions to Afghanistan's problems, stressing that ending the country's impasse takes more than military operations.

"When you are talking about solving [Afghanistan's] problems, you have got to do things that are going to take more than one year and do not involve the military at all. [They should] involve the basic things ... that make life better [such as] economic aid and ending corruption," Brent Budowsky from The Hill Newspaper told Press TV on Tuesday.

Budowsky went on to say that the US strategy in Afghanistan is not "coherent, organized and intelligent."

"With no strategy, no [amount of] troops will ever work, as long as the corruption around [Afghan] President [Hamid] Karzai is as extreme and aggressive and widespread as it is. So what the foreign minister said is true," he added.

"You cannot ignore making life better and making life more honest and ending the corruption and reducing the drug trade, because no matter how many troops you have, if you do not do those things it will not work," Budowsky said.

Touching on the fight with al-Qaeda, Budowsky added that "the Iraq war was a gigantic distortion of everything that we were trying to do after 9/11 and that is what has cost us our ability to deal with terrorism in other places."

He stressed that while the US was wasting its financial and human resources in Iraq, al-Qaeda was spreading throughout Asia and Africa and other parts of the world.

"We do not have the resources to do everything [to fight them], we spent far too much in Iraq and -- in my opinion -- we never should have done it in the first place," Budowsky concluded.

### **Karzai blames US for Afghan violence**

Tue Sep 28, 2010 7:11PM

Press TV: Afghan President Hamid Karzai speaks during an event marking the International Literacy Day in Kabul September 28, 2010.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has criticized the US-led foreign forces for the continual violence that is claiming the lives of civilians in the war-torn country.

Karzai said Afghans are caught up in between the goals of Western powers and militants backed by other countries and called on his people to unite for the sake of peace.

"Therefore come to your senses ... you are witnessing what is happening on our soil and only through our efforts can our homeland be ours," he said during a speech in Kabul.

Karzai says he is afraid of seeing the next generation, including his son Mirwais, flee the country and lose their Afghan identity.

"I do not want Mirwais, my son, to be a foreigner, I do not want this. I want Mirwais to be Afghan."

Karzai comments come as thousands of civilians have lost their lives either in US-led airstrikes or Taliban operations in different parts of the war-ravaged country over the past years.

The US and its allies have more than 150,000 troops stationed in Afghanistan. American and NATO forces have failed to bring peace to the violence-wracked country.

The loss of civilian lives at the hand of foreign forces has led to a dramatic increase in anti-American sentiments in Afghanistan.

### **US soldier admits killing Afghans for fun**

Wed Sep 29, 2010 5:46AM

Press TV: Jeremy Morlock is accused of killing Afghan civilians for fun and collecting their body parts as trophies.

A US soldier, accused of forming a group that killed 'for fun,' confesses to killing 3 innocent Afghans with a fellow soldier confirming that the killings were out of "pure hatred".

It is alleged that the Spc. Sgt. Jeremy N. Morlock, 22, along with 3 other US soldiers led by Staff Sgt. Calvin R Gibbs, killed Afghan civilians as a sport and collected body parts as trophies in yet another one of the most shocking stories told on assaults committed by US military personnel.

The allegations detail some of the cruelest acts carried out by US troops since their invasion of Afghanistan began in 2001.

Investigators at a pretrial hearing in a military courtroom in Washington heard Morlock, a member of the 5th Stryker Combat Brigade, admitting his involvement in the killings that took place in Afghanistan's Kandahar province between January and May, The Washington Post reported.

Morlock sought to shift the blame for the killings to his senior in command, Gibbs, claiming that it was his idea and that he had planted the thought of killing innocent Afghans as a "sport."

Morlock is also quoted as saying in a press-release statement that "Gibbs had pure hatred for all Afghans and constantly referred to them as savages."

The defense attorney for the American soldier has tried to acquit his client, arguing that the heavy medication he was taking for a brain injury in May 2010 prompted him to offer the confessions at his pretrial hearing. Morlock's statements, meanwhile, are considered as key evidence that could prove vital in legal cases against his fellow co-defendants.

However, the notion that Morlock was influenced by medications while making his statements was rebutted by Anderson D Wagner, a special agent with the US Army's Criminal Investigation Command. He emphasized that Morlock's statements were verified up by other members of his unit and that he did not believe Morlock was unduly influenced by medications.

Morlock and the other US soldiers charged in the killings are facing potential death sentences for war crimes if convicted. The ongoing hearing and the subsequent ones scheduled for Morlock's accomplices will determine whether the cases will proceed to a court martial.

In a related development, Australia's chief military prosecutor has said that 3 Australian soldiers will face charges, including manslaughter, over a raid they carried out in Afghanistan in which five Afghan children were killed.

### **Clashes force 1000s of Afghans to flee**

Thu Sep 30, 2010 5:15AM

Press TV: Thousands of Afghan civilians have been forced to flee and hundreds of families have been displaced due to fierce clashes in southern Afghanistan.

The latest US-led strikes took place on Wednesday around Kandahar city and are part of Operation Dragon Strike that began last week with more than 7,000 NATO and Afghan troops being deployed in a major military offensive that targets militants hiding out in Kandahar.

"More than 900 families have arrived from Arghandab and Zhari districts to Kandahar city in the past month," said Mohammad Azim Nawabi, the director of Kandahar's refugee department.

Dragon Strike is thought to be the latest phase in a final effort trying to eliminate the Taliban from Kandahar and the surrounding areas of Zhari, Panjwayi and Arghandab.

Clearing Kandahar of militants is seen as pivotal to the strategy of countering insurgency in Afghanistan, as top US military Commander in Afghanistan General David Petraeus describes current operations as being a "comprehensive civil-military campaign."

Petraeus also said that these areas have been "safe havens for the Taliban for over five years."

If fighting continues, the Afghan Red Crescent Society predicts that the flow of refugees could increase.

The Society's international affairs adviser Ahmadullah Ahmadi said "We predict that if the military operations continue, thousands more families will leave their areas and come to Kandahar city."

US President Barak Obama's deadline of July 2011 to begin withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan is again under scrutiny as the president recently emphasized that this is not a pullout date.

### **Seven US-led troops die in Afghan war**

Thu Sep 30, 2010 11:36AM

Press TV: Seven servicemen with the US-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) have lost their lives in a militant attack in volatile southern Afghanistan.

The ISAF service members were killed following an attack in Afghanistan's southern province of Kandahar, a Press TV correspondent reported on Thursday.

Roadside bombs, or Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), are by far the most lethal weapon Taliban militants use against foreign troops, Afghan forces as well as civilians.

The latest deaths bring to 59 the number of fatalities among foreign troops in war-ravaged Afghanistan this month. June, nonetheless, remains the worst month for foreign military casualties with a death toll of 103. A total of 549 foreign soldiers have been killed in the Afghan war so far this year.

The American army has lost 1,307 soldiers since October 2001 when Washington unleashed the US-led invasion of Afghanistan to overthrow Taliban militants. Thousands of civilians have died and many others sustained injuries in US-led operations in Afghanistan.

### **Car bomb kills 4 Afghan civilians**

Thu Sep 30, 2010 1:39PM

Press TV: At least four civilians have been killed and nine others injured in an explosion which rocked the southern Afghan province of Kandahar.

An attacker, driving an explosives-laden vehicle, targeted a US-led convoy in the Daman district of Kandahar.

Three children were among those killed by the explosion, officials told Press TV on Thursday.

The blast damaged nearby buildings and left a huge crater in the highway leading to Kandahar Airport.

Despite the presence of thousands of US-led forces, the southern province of Kandahar has been the scene of growing insecurity.

The International Committee of the Red Cross has voiced concerns about the increasing number of civilian victims received at Mirwais Hospital in Kandahar city.

### **3 US-led troops killed in Afghanistan**

Thu Sep 30, 2010 4:51PM

Press TV: Three US-led soldiers have been killed in separate attacks in the restive southern Afghanistan amid an increase in the number of such incidents in the war-battered country.

A soldier with the US-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was killed on Thursday in an explosion caused by an improvised explosive device in Afghanistan southern province of Kandahar.

Another ISAF soldier died when a roadside bomb targeted the vehicle he was aboard, the alliance said in a separate statement. The third lost his life in a fierce firefight with militants.

The latest deaths bring to 62 the number of fatalities among foreign troopers in war-ravaged Afghanistan this month. June, nonetheless, remains the worst month for foreign military casualties with a death toll of 103. A total of 552 foreign soldiers have been killed in the Afghan war so far this year.

The US Army has lost 1, 307 soldiers since October 2001 when Washington unleashed the US-led invasion of Afghanistan. Thousands of civilians have died and many others sustained injuries in US-led operations in Afghanistan.

Earlier on Thursday, a Press TV correspondent reported that seven ISAF servicemen had lost their lives in a militant attack.

### **NATO drone 'shot down' in Afghanistan**

Thu Sep 30, 2010 6:17PM

Press TV: Taliban militants say they have shot down an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) operated by NATO in the eastern Afghan province of Khost, near the border with Pakistan.

A recovery force was immediately sent to retrieve the UAV.

The Taliban claimed they targeted the remotely piloted aircraft in the mountainous areas of Khost on Thursday, Afghan Islamic Press reported.

However, the US-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) said the drone crashed due to a technical glitch.

Taliban militants claim to have shot down several NATO helicopters and drone aircrafts in different parts of Afghanistan over the past months.

### **US-led strike kills 4 Afghan civilians**

Thu Sep 30, 2010 7:17PM

Press TV: The US-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) says four Afghan civilians were killed and three others wounded during an operation in Ghazni province.

"We deeply regret that our operation resulted in civilian loss of life and we express our sincerest condolences to the families," ISAF director of communication, Rear Admiral Greg Smith, said on Thursday.

The tragic incident occurred on Wednesday after a missile -- fired in an attempt to protect the Afghan and ISAF troops from a militant attack -- struck a group of unarmed civilians in Andar District of Ghazni province, killing four and injuring three others.

The US-led NATO force has been responsible for scores of civilian deaths, many of them killed during air raids aimed against militants.

### **Six US-led troops die in Afghan war**

Thu Sep 30, 2010 9:55PM

Press TV: NATO confirms six more US-led forces have been killed in Afghanistan as militants step up their attacks against foreign forces in the country.

NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) announced that three soldiers have been killed by a bomb explosion and another three died in separate attacks.

ISAF says the attacks happened in the country's troubled south but has not yet disclosed the nationalities of the soldiers.

About 550 foreign soldiers have been killed in the Afghan war so far this year.

ISAF has also announced that one of its air weapons teams has accidentally struck a group of civilians in Ghazni province killing four and injuring three others.

The loss of civilian lives at the hand of foreign forces has led to a dramatic increase in anti-American sentiments in Afghanistan.

A recent UN report revealed that civilian deaths have jumped by 31 percent in the first half of 2010.

The recent surge in fighting between US-led coalition forces and Taliban militants has made 2010 the deadliest year for the foreign troops since the invasion of Afghanistan began in 2001.

#### **4 US-led soldiers killed in Afghanistan**

Fri Oct 1, 2010 11:22AM

Press TV: A mine explosion has claimed the lives of four more US-led soldiers in southwestern Afghanistan, amid concerns of the rise of such incidents in the war-torn country.

In a statement issued on Friday, Georgian Defense Ministry said that four of the country's nationals with the US-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) were killed in the Helmand province while they were on patrol, AFP reported.

The ministry released the names of the soldiers as Col. Ramaz Gogiashvili, Sergeant Davit Tsetskhladze, Corporal Giorgi Kolkhitashvili and Corporal Nugzar Kalandadze.

However, it was not clear whether the Georgians were among the six international soldiers that on Thursday NATO declared dead.

The ministry expressed condolences to the soldiers' families and said that it would return their bodies to home as soon as possible.

The increasing number of troop casualties in Afghanistan has sparked widespread anger in the US and other NATO member states, undermining public support for the continuation of the Afghan war.

#### **US-led airstrike kills 15 in Afghanistan**

Fri Oct 1, 2010 2:39PM

Press TV: A US-led airstrike has killed at least 15 people in northeastern Afghanistan amid growing discontent over the rising number of civilian deaths in the war-torn country.

The US-led military alliance says the airstrike took place in Kunar Province, near the border with Pakistan.

Afghan officials have repeatedly asked US-led forces to end air raids that mostly inflict civilian casualties. US-led forces, however, maintain that they are targeting militants.

The loss of civilian lives at the hand of foreign forces has led to a dramatic increase in anti-American sentiments in Afghanistan.

The US-led force has stepped up attacks in Afghanistan under Washington's new war strategy, which aims to reduce its military presence next year.

### **'US tax money gone to Taliban militants'**

Fri Oct 1, 2010 4:29PM

Press TV: A probe finds that a US contractor in Afghanistan may have 'inadvertently' funneled millions of dollars in American taxpayer money to Taliban militants.

A year-long probe into the US Agency for International Development (USAID) found that the funds were probably paid in the form of bribes and protection money.

The suspected payments were allegedly made by subcontractors of a company based in the state of Maryland.

USAID carries out reconstruction projects in some of Afghanistan's most remote and risky war zones.

The US invaded Afghanistan with the aim of toppling the Taliban regime and dismantling al-Qaeda network.

The war has left hundreds of thousands of Afghans as well as over two thousand US-led foreign troops dead.

The loss of lives has dramatically reduced support for the Afghan war.

### **Violence kills 100 Afghan police every month: govt**

AFP

09/26/2010



KABUL – Almost 2,000 Afghan police officers have been killed or injured by insurgents in the past six months as many are forced onto the frontline in the war against the Taliban, an official said Sunday.

Taliban-style bomb attacks, suicide bombings, direct clashes and military operations had killed 595 police officers and wounded another 1,345, said Zemarai Bashary, spokesman for the interior ministry.

"In the past six months 595 policemen were martyred and another 1,345 were wounded," he said.

Afghanistan's police force has long been asked to fight the spreading insurgency alongside soldiers, despite lacking the training and equipment of the army.

At the same time, the force is generally regarded by ordinary Afghans as ill-disciplined, predatory and corrupt, though a massive recruitment and training programme is boosting numbers and competence.

The United States is bankrolling the programme to build Afghanistan's army and police so they can take over responsibility for security by 2014, as pledged by President Hamid Karzai. It is spending 9.2 billion dollars in the fiscal year 2010.

The NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan has so far trained more than 136,000 Afghan soldiers and over 119,600 police, it said, and aims for 171,600 soldiers and 134,000 police by November 2011.

Building Afghanistan's security forces is pivotal to US President Barack Obama's plan to start drawing down American troops by July 2011.

The United States and NATO have around 150,000 troops in Afghanistan fighting the Taliban-led insurgency now dragging towards its 10th year.

To fill the immediate gap the interior ministry said in July it would establish the Afghan Local Police (ALP), which has raised concerns that these armed village constabularies could morph into militia groups.

Bashary said the ALP would eventually total 10,000 nationwide, comprised of armed villagers with the support of local councils and tribal elders.

They would receive three weeks' training, be paid 60 percent of a normal police salary and act purely as a defensive force against the Taliban, he said.

The Taliban presence has spread in the past year to most of the country, straining the capacity of the NATO and US military presence.

## **Karzai wants private security firms disbanded**

Pajhwok

09/26/2010

By Syed Abbas Sadaat

Kabul - President Hamid Karzai, reiterating his stance, on Sunday directed the Ministry of Interior to use all available resources to ensure the disbandment of private security companies.

Karzai issued the directives at a meeting, attended by ministers of interior and defence, his national security advisor, intelligence chief, US Ambassador Karl Eikenberry and NATO commander Gen. David Petraeus.

The Presidential Palace said Karzai ordered the authorities concerned to investigate reports about the existence of illegal armed groups in Afghanistan's north and northeast and disarm them at the earliest possible.

He also asked security officials to keep the Presidential Palace posted on the issues of disbanding private firms and disarming irresponsible groups, his office said in a statement.

Earlier in the day, a spokesman for the Ministry of Interior (MoI) said they had sent a plan for dissolving private security firms to the National Security Council (NSC) for a review and approval.

In August Karzai ordered the disbandment of all private security companies in the country by the end of the current year, saying the companies ran a parallel security system.

Addressing a press conference, Zmaray Bashari said the security firms without operating licences would be disbanded and the vacuum thus created would be filled by Afghan security forces.

Half of the 52 private security companies, which have employed 40,000 guards, are domestic and the rest foreign, according to the official.

## **Afghan government appoints 70-member peace council**

The Associated Press

09/28/2010

KABUL – The Afghan government on Tuesday announced who will sit on a 70-member peace council, formalizing efforts already underway to reconcile with top Taliban leaders and lure insurgent foot soldiers off the battlefield.

While opposed by some factions within Afghanistan, talking with the Taliban is gaining traction as thousands of U.S. and NATO reinforcements seek to reverse the insurgents' momentum. Neighboring Pakistan and other nations have begun to stake out their positions on possible reconciliation negotiations, which could mean an endgame to the nearly 9-year-old war.

Waheed Omar, spokesman for Afghan President Hamid Karzai, told reporters that the new High Council for Peace will guide contacts with Taliban leaders who have reached out directly or through back channels to the highest levels of the government.

"In the past there have been no negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban — only there were some contacts and some signs from both sides," Omar said, adding that any future contacts, talks or negotiations will be handled through the peace council.

The council comprises jihadi leaders, former Taliban, former members of the communist regime, civil and religious leaders and representatives of women and ethnic groups from across the nation. The council will hold its first meeting soon in Kabul, Omar said. He read the names of 69 members, saying two more still must be named to the group, which will choose its own director.

Karzai has long said that he will talk to insurgents if they renounce violence, sever ties to terrorists and embrace the Afghan constitution. Publicly, the Taliban have said they won't negotiate until foreign troops leave Afghanistan, yet there are many indications that backdoor discussions have occurred.

"There are very high-level Taliban leaders who have sought to reach out to the highest levels of the Afghan government and indeed have done that," Gen. David Petraeus, the commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, told reporters on Monday.

Reconciling with Taliban leaders is being "pursued by the Afghan leadership at the very highest levels," Petraeus said.

In an interview with The Associated Press and other news agencies in late August, however, Petraeus said that Karzai's efforts to reconcile with top Taliban leaders were "beyond the surface, but they are certainly in the early stages."

"He is the one who is pursuing this, but there have been some ways that we have facilitated some of the contact," Petraeus said.

## Social Headlines

### **20 % Increase in Birth Deformities in Afghanistan**

Tolo News  
09/26/2010

Officials in the Ministry of Public Health say the malformation of babies during child birth has increased 20 percent in the country.

Doctors in Indra Gandhi Child Healthcare Hospital say the use of unprescribed medicines by pregnant women, poverty, the chemical impact of weapons used during the war and lack of a family planning are among the main causes of increase in malformation of babies.

These doctors warn that if the government does not care about this issue, the number of disabled children will increase in the country.

"We have registered 400 cases of birth deformities that included foot and hand malformations, and one rare case in which a baby's heart was totally out of its body," Dr Abdul Qadir Hajir, a specialist in Indra Gandhi Child Healthcare hospital told TOLONews reporter.

The Afghan Ministry of Public Health has also cited lack of proper healthcare and pregnant women's negligence to go for vaccination on time among the main reasons for such incidents.

"We have so far registered 15 cases of birth deformities, most of them in southern provinces and only one such case in northern areas," Kargar Noor Oghli, a spokesman for the Ministry of Health told TOLONews reporter.

Kabul residents are also concerned about this issue.

"Severe stress, poverty, less weight and lack of proper feeding among pregnant women are the reasons that women give birth to unhealthy and weak children," an old woman who had come to the hospital told TOLONews reporter.

Afghanistan is one of the few countries in the world that has the highest rate of child and mother's death rates.

Poverty, the three decades of continuous war, unemployment and lack of proper healthcare throughout the country, especially in the remote regions are cited among the main reasons for the spread of different kinds of diseases, especially among women and children.

## **Business Headlines**

### **With Security, Business Booms In Mazar-e Sharif**

RFE/RL

09/26/2010

By Charles Recknagel

MAZAR-E SHARIF - As the heat of the day subsides at dark, hundreds of families gather in a large amusement park on the outskirts of Mazar-e Sharif.

There is a Ferris wheel, a spinning carrousel of swings filled with jubilant teenagers, and a child-sized train that chugs around the perimeter. A large video screen shows Afghan music videos in one corner.

The women lift the burqas that cover their faces on the street during the day and picnic with their families on the grass. And in the colorful, neon-lit night, everyone enjoys that rarest of commodities in Afghanistan: a sense of security.

Mazar-e Sharif, close by the Uzbek border, is one of Afghanistan's safest cities in a region where the Taliban is rapidly reviving. While most of Balkh Province around Mazar-e Sharif is peaceful, the neighboring province of Konduz to the east is riddled with conflict zones where people fear to go.

The city's good security is widely attributed to Mohammad Atta Noor, a former Northern Alliance (aka United Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan) commander who shaved his beard, shed his mujahedin fatigues, and today wears a business suit and ties.

Like elsewhere in Afghanistan where militia leaders came to power, he and his fellow commanders have grown immensely rich. Their homes, the size of palaces, rise up around Mazar-e Sharif with fantastic Bollywood architecture. Ordinary people whisper the homes were built with pocketed aid money and that the ruling party, the Jamiyat Islami, monopolizes the province's richest business activities.

#### **Attracting Business**

But the security the governor provides has also made Mazar-e Sharif a magnet for foreign businesses and even Afghan companies from less stable parts of the country. And that attraction is helping fuel an economic boom that is lining the main streets with new buildings under construction and small shops of all kinds.

"Turkish companies have come from Turkey to invest in Balkh Province in food products, and the production of oil and pasta," Ahmad Tamim Sediqi, a professor of economics at Aria Institute of Higher Learning, the city's private university, says. "And some petroleum companies from Uzbekistan have come to prepare [for oil production],

and some fertilizer companies have come from Russia to produce fertilizer because Afghanistan needs more fertilizer for agricultural activities."

The good security has also encouraged a motorcycle-assembly business from Herat -- another wealthy but less stable corner of the country -- to expand its operation to the north. The business assembles motor rickshaws out of parts from Iran and is flooding the streets of Mazar-e Sharif with cheap transport for passengers and cargo.

More importantly, Mazar-e Sharif's security makes it the highly profitable hub for trade across the Uzbek border. That trade supplies half of Afghanistan's imports, according to the Asian Development Bank. To send the imported fuel, building equipment, and grain on to points across Afghanistan, Mazar-e Sharif has warehouses, truck parks, and a growing banking and service sector.

Sediqi says that the income of Balkh Province has jumped from some \$5 million in 2004 to some \$115 million this year, thanks largely to the border trade. It is likely to only grow further as a recently completed railroad linking Uzbekistan to Mazar-e Sharif via the Hairaton border crossing becomes operational in the coming months.

#### Not Without Obstacles

Still, the growth in income is a fraction of what it could be if the rest of Afghanistan, too, were secure.

Sayeed Satar Moosavi, another professor of economics at Aria, says that since 2006 as the Taliban has gained strength, so has the outflow of capital from the country. It is only in a handful of cities such as Mazar-e Sharif and Kabul that the security is strong enough to encourage businesses to reinvest at home instead.

The relative success of Mazar-i-Sharif can't help but raise larger questions about what creates economic growth in Afghanistan and at what price.

Here a big part of the price is clearly the cornering of the most lucrative forms of business -- especially the import of fuel -- by big traders with ties to the governor's powerful party.

Moosavi says the traders can, and do, set fuel prices at will simply by slowing down distribution to reduce supply.

"A number of merchants have created a kind of monopoly or we can even say a kind of oligopoly in Afghanistan. So they import a few products and they distribute them to the market per their own [profit] expectations," Moosavi says. "I mean, whenever they want, they can increase the prices; and whenever they want, they can decrease them. But they never decrease; we haven't seen that, they usually increase the prices."

#### Militia Rule

Another part of the price for the security in Mazar-e Sharif seems to be the limited space for political challengers left by its powerful ruling party. Many observers say the only other political parties able to survive at all in the city are those of other former militias. The ruling Jamiyat Islami denies the charge, but the city remains clearly in its hands.

But many people in Mazar-e Sharif also say that the security the city enjoys is worth the high price the city's power holders exact. Governor Noor by many accounts is popular enough to win an election even though he has never run in one.

Instead he became governor through a local power struggle and has kept the post despite the fact governors are supposed to be appointed by Afghan President Hamid Karzai. Now, he is the only governor in the country not appointed by the president and the only one strong enough to have defied Karzai and not be removed.

Why would anybody in Mazar-e Sharif support such a leader?

The answer lies in the city's booming economy, which makes the rich and powerful grow still more so but also benefits the smaller businesses on the city's streets. It may be an imperfect success story by most standards, but it's still more than what insecure cities offer.