



AFGHANISTAN REVIEW

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This document is intended to provide an overview of relevant sector events in Afghanistan from 24 February - 02 March 2010. More comprehensive information is available on the Civil-Military Overview (CMO) at www.cimicweb.org. Hyperlinks to original source material are highlighted in blue and underlined in the embedded text.

ECONOMIC STABILIZATION

Matthew Hall, matthew.hall@cimicweb.org / +1 757-683-5273

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Indication of the increasing importance that agricultural alternatives to poppy production play in International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) strategy has been highlighted by several recent events. According to *The Times*, in areas cleared during [Operation Moshtarak](#), international and local actors plan to provide extensive development assistance to local residents, including vegetable, maize and alfalfa seeds for thousands of [local farmers](#) whose livelihoods depend on poppy cultivation. Similarly, *Pajhwok Afghan News* reports that USAID will provide 250,000 [fruit and non-fruit](#) saplings to 4,400 farmers in the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman. The seedlings were purchased from local nurseries in response to concerns expressed by local farmers that they were losing business to imports from Pakistan. *Pajhwok* also reports that the Governor of Helmand has asked local farm-

ers to [register to receive](#) vegetable, fruit and legume seeds, fertilizer and follow-up technical assistance as part of the latest stage in the province's Food Zone Programme. This stage of the programme will benefit 27,000 farmers, bringing the total number of farmers who have been assisted by the programme thus far to almost 66,000.

According to *Pajhwok*, the 26 February [terror attacks](#) on Kabul caused as much as USD 2.5 million in damage to the Kabul City Centre shopping complex. The owner of the Centre reported significant damages to glass, windows, doors and other systems with shopkeepers also complaining of extensive losses and looting. ([Comments? Click here](#))

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GOVERNANCE & PARTICIPATION

Ann-Kristin Otto, ann-kristin.otto@cimicweb.org / +1 757-683-4368

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According to *Pajhwok Afghan News*, [a dispute](#) between Ghazni Provincial Council (PC) members was resolved with the help of international forces on the ground. The PC members had reportedly split into two groups over the election of the council chief and his deputy in December last year. Former Ghazni PC member Ahmad Ali Nasiri was quoted thanking the US and Polish forces who assisted in resolving the

dispute through arbitration.

Following the attacks on two guesthouses in Kabul on 26 February, the Afghan Ministers of Interior and Defence, as well as the Commander of the National Security Department, [were summoned](#) by the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of Parliament) to answer questions about the security situation in Kabul, local

Tolo TV reports. According to another *Tolo TV* news-cast, three senior police officials [submitted their resignation](#) to the Afghan Ministry of Interior as a result of the attacks. The three resignations included that of Kabul Police Chief Abdul Rahman Rahman, the Head of Operations Abdul Khalil Diastar and the Head of the Criminal Investigation Department at the Kabul Police Command Abdul Ghafar Sayedzada, who reportedly turned in their resignations in [response to public criticism](#) of the security institutions in the capital city. While *Tolo TV* said it was unclear whether the Ministry had accepted the resignations, local *Shamshad TV* quoted a Ministry of Interior spokesman saying the Minister [declined](#) the resignations. *Shamshad TV* also described the reactions of several MPs towards the resignations as positive, with many claiming it is a good step towards accountability.

The Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS), Kabul's intelligence agency, has [announced a ban](#) on news coverage on Taliban attacks, *Reuters* reports. According to NDS spokesman Saeed Ansari, journalists will only be allowed to cover the aftermath of attacks if granted permission by the NDS. Ansari reasoned that live coverage of terrorist attacks benefits the insurgency. The ban was criticised by Afghan journalists and the international media, including the *Associated Press (AP)*, who argue that it [makes it difficult](#) to provide up-to-date information

on security incidents in Afghanistan. *AP* Senior Managing Editor for International News John Daniszewski said such a broad, pre-emptive ban was inconsistent with a democratic society. However, on 02 March, spokesman of the Presidential Palace Waheed Omar told journalists that the government was [only developing guidelines](#), not restrictions, for the coverage of attacks. Omar said he would meet with the spokesmen of all Afghan ministries on 03 March to discuss the guidelines.

The Afghan Ministry of Communications and Information Technology and the Ministry of Information and Culture have jointly [announced they will block](#) all "immoral" websites on the internet, *Pahjwok Afghan News* reports. Speaking at a press conference in Kabul, the Ministers announced that the ban would be put into effect from 21 May onwards, and that private internet providers would be asked to utilise software capable of filtering the respective sites. Internet companies could face legal action if they do not comply, acting Minister of Communications and Information Technology Amerzai Sangin told *Pahjwok*. According to local *Noor TV*, the [ban would include](#) websites displaying pornographic content, violence and gambling. **(Comments? [Click here](#))**

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Valeria Davanzo, valeria.davanzo@cimicweb.org / +1 757-683-4271

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In a press release issued by the European Commission (EC), the organisation announced that a series of decisions related to humanitarian funding were adopted in February, resulting in more than USD 375 million dedicated to operations in Asia, Africa and South America. Afghanistan was placed fourth on the list of countries to be assisted by the funding, behind Sudan, the Middle East and the Democratic Republic of Congo, with [USD 33 million](#) dedicated for the delivery of humanitarian assistance. EC-funded humanitarian projects are implemented at the field-level by NGOs, UN agencies and Red Cross/Red Crescent Societies.

Progress in securing Marjah and the Nad Ali district in Helmand province under [Operation Moshtarak](#) has allowed Afghan authorities to [reopen some schools](#) and government offices in the area. An official statement from the Office of the President states that in a meeting attended by several military and government officials, Commander of US and NATO troops General Stanley McChrystal revealed that 25 schools had already been reopened. Meanwhile, the British

Department for International Development (DFID) reports that the Governor of Helmand province has [laid out his plans](#) for the long-term stabilisation and rebuilding of Nad Ali district. The plan consists of both short-term projects with immediate results such as cash-for-work projects, and longer-term programmes that will build capacity while generating income. Under the plan, the Ministry of Education has started sending teachers to schools in the area, with DFID stabilisation experts providing practical assistance and materials such as a blackboard, chalk, ruler, notebooks and some materials for the teacher known as "schools in a box."

According to the *BBC*, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has expressed concern over the rising number of [Afghan children migrating](#) across Europe without parents. The latest UNHCR figures reveal that in 2009, the number of asylum seekers under the age of 18 jumped from 3,800 to over 6,000; a 64% increase from the year before. Additionally, these figures are believed to represent only a fraction of the total number of

child migrants, since many do not formally seek Asylum out of fear or simple ignorance of the process. A representative from UNHCR told journalists from the *BBC* that each country has its own policies and standards for assistance. The lack of coherent policies within the European Union (EU) was criticized, the

argument being that different policies and standards contribute to the difficulties faced by young migrants, ultimately benefitting smugglers. **(Comments? [Click here](#))**

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INFRASTRUCTURE

Matthew Hall, matthew.hall@cimicweb.org / +1 757-683-5273

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A proposal submitted for the [extraction of petroleum](#) from the Kashkari Petroleum Mine in the Dasht-e Kashkari district of Sar-e Pul province underwent assessment by the Ministry of Mines on 23 February, reports *National TV Afghanistan*. The proposal, submitted by Oriol International Petroleum Company of Pakistan, and a company from the United Arab Emirates (UAE), must meet the required standards in accordance with the laws of the country, said Minister of Mines Wahidullah Shahrani. Shahrani estimates the petroleum reserve could yield some USD 100 million per year. According to the article, recent assessments reveal that Afghanistan has five petroleum blocks in the country, with many otherwise untapped. The Afghan government has opened an [official bidding process](#) for three of these blocks: [Jangalikalan](#), [Juma](#), and [Kashkari](#). The Kashkari bid appears to be the only bid accepted to date. The announcement of the bidding results is scheduled for 14 March 2010.

Pajhwok Afghan News reports that [thirty uplift schemes](#) have been completed in Sar-e Pul province. The schemes cost AFN 18 million (approx. USD 380,000) and include a variety of construction projects, which will reportedly benefit 5,500 families. According to local officials, 1,300 of the 1,628 planned projects have been completed in the province to date. Three projects in the Aab-e Kamari dis-

trict of Bagdhis province worth USD 740,000 were also completed. The projects are designed to [provide irrigation](#) for 2,500 acres of farmland, said *Pajhwok*. According to the same article, two projects including the construction of a school for 400 students and water well for 150 families were completed in Jowzjan province. A World Bank-funded AFN 5 million (approx. USD 100,000) [education department building](#) was completed in Zabul province, reports *Pajhwok*. Until now, the education department has been renting a building in a local market. A [hostel](#) for high school students in Qalat, the capital of Zabul province, was also opened this week. The USD 385,000 project will house 400 of Sheikh Mati High School's 2,000 students; the additional housing was required for students from insecure areas.

According to *Pajhwok*, a [supporting wall](#) will be built on the banks of the Kunar River in Kunar province. The US Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) funded the USD 29 million project, which will provide more than 1,000 jobs and create thousands of acres of arable land in the districts of Noor Gal, Saukai, Khas Kunar and Sarkanno. **(Comments? [Click here](#))**

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JUSTICE & RECONCILIATION

Ann-Kristin Otto, ann-kristin.otto@cimicweb.org / +1 757-683-4368

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A Pakistani Court has [blocked the handover](#) of captured Taliban members, including Taliban leader Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, to Afghan authorities, reports the website *Arab News*. A panel of the Lahore High Court [halted the deportation](#) of the seized Taliban members on 26 February after a human rights activist filed a petition to try the arrested Taliban under Pakistani laws, according to the *Wall Street Journal (WSJ)*. The petition included the names of four other Taliban leaders and the court decided that none of the individuals should be handed over to any foreign country. The next hear-

ing of the case is expected to take place on 15 March, but according to the *Asia Times*, the Pakistani government was not intending to appeal the decision. Afghan *Tolo TV* had previously reported that the Afghan and Pakistani Ministers of Interior agreed on the [handover of Baradar](#) to Afghan authorities and *Arab News* reported that the Ministers as well as the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) Director Robert Mueller had discussed the details of a possible handover in Islamabad on 24 February. Contradicting these reports, the *Asia Times* writes that Pakistani Minister of Interior Rahman Malik [rejected](#)

[US requests](#) for the transfer of Baradar to the US-run detention centre at Bagram Airbase in Afghanistan and remained non-committal about extradition to Afghanistan. The *WSJ* quotes Afghan President Hamid Karzai saying that the detained Taliban were Afghan citizens and their future should be decided in Afghanistan.

The *Associated Press of Pakistan* reports that 106

Afghan nationals [were released](#) from prison after serving a 45-day sentence for travelling without valid documents in Pakistan. Jail authorities said the Afghans were taken to the Afghan-Pakistani border crossing of Chaman where they were to be handed over to the Afghan authorities. **(Comments? [Click here](#))**

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SECURITY

Leendert Nijssen, leendert.nijssen@cimicweb.org /+1 757-683-4302

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According to the *Washington Post*, both Afghan Vice President Karim Khalili and Commander of US and NATO Forces in Afghanistan General Stanley McChrystal [visited the city of Marjah](#) on 01 March to reiterate the focus on governance. While [Operation Moshtarak](#) has moved into the second phase of rebuilding government institutions and providing services to the population, the *Associated Press (AP)* reports that [Afghan troops and US marines](#) will remain in the area for the foreseeable future to avoid a resurgence of the Taliban and promote conditions for governance-building.

Operation Moshtarak is part of a larger ANSF/ISAF operation known as [Operation OMID](#) ('Hope' in Pash-tun), which aims to clear insurgents from areas where the Taliban have a foothold. Once removed, primarily Afghan soldiers will hold these areas to allow for local governance building and normal day-to-day activities to resume. Once the areas have achieved an acceptable level of security, the Afghan National Police (ANP) will take over and support the

building activities, based on the Counter-Insurgency Operation (COIN) concept of "Clear – Hold – Build." *Operation OMID* is scheduled for the next 12-18 months and will focus on supporting the Afghan government extend its reach into areas previously off-limits. The main focus is to protect Afghans and provide a secure environment for sustainable peace. An important aspect of these efforts is the combination of the NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A) with the Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan (CSTC-A), meant to ensure that the ANSF receive the highest level of expertise through training and support. According to the *Washington Post*, NATO spokesman [James Appathurai](#) revealed that member nations have pledged another 600 trainers, complementing the 100 committed in December of 2009. The total NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan is approximately 39,500 trainers. **(Comments? [Click here](#))**

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SOCIAL WELL-BEING

Valeria Davanzo, valeria.davanzo@cimicweb.org /+1 757-683-4271

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The Afghan Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) has announced the inauguration of the first [National Public Health Association](#) in Afghanistan. The association is a non-governmental, apolitical, non-profit independent body that will finance itself through membership fees and further assistance from members and donors. The association was established by public health specialists and is meant to support researchers on public health matters and provide technical assistance to the MoPH. Acting Minister of Public Health Suraya Dalil described the establishment of the association as a significant step towards the improvement of the health system in the country.

Pajhwok Afghan News reports that the Canadian

government has promised to pledge an additional USD [25 million](#) to the MoPH to improve the delivery of healthcare services in Afghanistan. The organisation [Health Partners International Canada](#) will use the funding to develop a five-year programme through which they will provide medical equipment and technical support in building capacity within the medicine and pharmaceutical sector. In addition, the MoPH recently signed an AFN 7 million (USD 150,000) agreement with nine local radio and TV channels to broadcast health-related advertisements for one year. Funding for the initiative will be provided by the [Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation](#) (GAVI).

An environmental drive has been initiated in Afghanistan by the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL), NGOs and other private entities to plant [25 million tree seedlings](#), mostly around urban centres. Representatives of the MAIL told *IRIN News* that the seedlings will help combat soil erosion and desertification, as well as improve air quality in urban areas. In 2009, the MoPH warned that air pollution could be directly responsible for the deaths of more than [3,000 people](#) in Kabul every year. This initiative hopes to assist in refurbishing the green areas in a country that has lost up to 80% of its forests over the past three decades. The MAIL has warned, however, that 45-50% of planting efforts may not succeed due to lack of water and/or care.

The Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) told *IRIN News* that the number of civilian deaths caused by the conflict has slightly decreased in the first two months of 2010, despite the recent [military operation](#) in Marjah and the Nad Ali district of Helmand province. According to AIHRC, [163 civilians died](#) in violent incidents in Afghanistan in January and February of this year, while the same period last year saw 201 deaths. AIHRC claims that 92 of the civilian deaths in January and February are attributable to anti-government elements (AGEs), while 71 can be linked to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and ISAF forces. **(Comments? [Click here](#))**

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