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AFGHANISTAN REVIEW

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This document is intended to provide an overview of relevant sector events in Afghanistan from 18 February - 23 February 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

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Local Afghan *Tolo TV* reports that [factory owners](#) are concerned that high taxes, cheap imports and limited aid from the government may force many out of business. According to the interviews, factory owners in Kandahar province say the majority of the existing 330 facilities have already been shut down. The Ministry of Commerce and Industries told *Tolo TV* that a new strategy has been drafted which will take into account the owners' concerns.

According to Tajikistan's *Avesta News Agency*, the Chairman of the Tajik Chamber of Commerce and Industries (CCI) and the Herat provincial CCI met in Dushanbe to discuss the possibility of holding a [2010 economic exhibition](#) in Tajikistan. The exhibition is expected to be similar to that held in 2009, and will be designed to encourage trade between the two nations.

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has launched a campaign providing

vegetable seeds, fertilizers and technical training to [farmers](#) in Nangarhar, Kunar and Laghman provinces, reports *Pajhwok Afghan News*. The week-long programme will take place in 33 districts of the three provinces, covering more than 2,000 hectares of farmland owned by 18,000 families. According to USAID, the programme is expected to produce more than 110,000 metric tonnes of high-quality vegetables.

As reported by local *Arzu TV* and in response to recent complaints, Minister of Commerce and Industries Gholam Mohammad Ailaqi declared that there is no [poor-quality fuel](#) being imported from Uzbekistan into the border town of Hayratan in Balkh province. The Minister and other government officials travelled to Hayratan to investigate the allegations, and the announcement was made based on their findings. [\(Comments? Click here\)](#)

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GOVERNANCE & PARTICIPATION

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The *Christian Science Monitor* (CSM) reports that a [new sub-district governor](#) has taken office in Marjah less than two weeks after the beginning of *Operation Moshtarak*. International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) officials have repeatedly stressed that governance initiatives are [at the forefront](#) of the operation, and success will be determined by their abil-

ity to provide the Afghan population with basic services. According to the article, Governor Haji Zahi was brought into Marjah just ten days after the fighting began and immediately initiated a *shura* with local elders. The rapid installation of the new governor reflects ISAF's intention to demonstrate to the local population that the central government

can deliver basic services as a viable alternative to the Taliban, a Ministry of Foreign Affairs official told CSM. The article also cites analysts critical of the idea of rapidly installing government institutions and officials, saying that Afghans want local leaders they can trust, something that cannot be delivered overnight.

Afghan President Hamid Karzai opened a [new legislative year](#) on 20 February, stressing both the political achievements and difficulties faced over the past four years. According to local *Noor TV*, while addressing the National Assembly, Karzai highlighted national reconciliation and reintegration initiatives as the [top priority](#) of his administration. Karzai's cabinet still lacks eleven ministers, as several of his candidates failed to receive parliamentary approval during the first two confirmation hearings before the winter recess. *Pajhwok Afghan News* reports that during the opening session, several Members of Parliament (MPs) [urged Karzai](#) to introduce his new candidates

as swiftly as possible.

The fate of the Chairman of the *Meshrano Jirga* (Upper House of National Assembly) Sibghatullah Mujaddedi was under intense discussion following Parliament's returned from its winter recess. Mujaddedi asked President Hamid Karzai to [accept his resignation](#) during the joint Upper and Lower House session on 20 February. According to *Pajhwok*, his resignation was in reaction to the government's inefficiency in fighting administrative corruption; Mujaddedi has accused the Karzai administration of protecting several graft-tainted officials. Kabul-based *Ariana TV* reports that Mujaddedi [withdrew his resignation](#) the next day, saying that several *Meshrano Jirga* members asked him to reconsider and remain in office for the next five years. **(Comments? Click here)**

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HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

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Those inhabitants of Marjah who opted not to flee prior to the launch of [Operation Moshtarak](#) are [facing food shortages](#), according to *Pajhwok Afghan News*. Locals arriving in Helmand's provincial capital Lashkar Gah complain that food prices have increased dramatically due to a shrinking supply. [Rights groups](#) tell *Agence France-Presse (AFP)* that the remaining population has little access to food or healthcare supplies, and due to the security situation are unable to perform daily tasks such as farming. *Pajhwok* claims that the delivery of relief items to families trapped in Marjah is becoming an urgent necessity as the operation continues. Afghan and NATO commanders told *AFP* that it could be another three weeks before the area is fully under their control. *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL)* reports that less than [10%](#) of the 100,000 residents in the area have left. There are discrepancies, however, as *IRIN News* was reportedly informed by a spokesman of the Helmand Governor that some [22,000](#) displaced from the conflict areas have reached Lashkar Gah; the Afghan Red Crescent Society believes some 60,000 people have fled Marjah.

The *Associated Press* reports that the United Nations

Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative, Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator in Afghanistan Robert Watkins announced that the [UN will not participate](#) in NATO's reconstruction efforts in Marjah. Watkins gives the reasoning that the UN does not want the humanitarian assistance they deliver to be linked or associated with military activities. While NATO officials have revealed a strategy to assist in development aid and government services as soon as the town is secured, the UN claims that the 'militarisation of aid' puts the work of humanitarian agencies at risk.

Pajhwok reports that the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), together with the Government of Afghanistan, has presented the [2010 Humanitarian Action Plan](#) (HAP), expected to benefit some seven million Afghans. According to Robert Watkins, the new HAP, budgeted at USD 870.5 million, requires urgent and dedicated support to improve the planning and [delivery of humanitarian assistance](#). **(Comments? Click here)**

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INFRASTRUCTURE

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The *Associated Press* reports that US Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Richard Holbrooke [visited Kazakhstan](#) as part of a tour promot-

ing regional assistance in Afghan stabilisation efforts. According to the wire, Holbrooke stressed the need for improving electricity and transportation

networks between Afghanistan and its Central Asian neighbours. Kazakhstan was the final stop on the tour that took Holbrooke to Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan. As evidence of increasing regional support for Afghanistan, Tajikistan signed an accord for bilateral cooperation on [energy-related projects](#) with the Afghan Ministry of Energy and Water, specifically related to power lines connecting the two countries, according to the Dushanbe-based *Tajik Television First Channel*.

[Sixteen uplift schemes](#) have been completed in the northern part of Jowzjan province under the National

Solidarity Programme (NSP). Provincial Director of Rural Rehabilitation and Development Mohammad Yousuf Awraz told *Pajhwok Afghan News* that the projects will benefit 3,000 families and cost AFN 12 million (approx. USD 250,000). According to NSP officials, of the 1,396 planned projects in Jowzjan, 1,265 have now been completed. In other news from *Pajhwok*, a new USD 350,000 [police headquarters](#) funded by the US Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) was opened in the Badghis provincial capital Qala-e Naw. **(Comments? [Click here](#))**

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JUSTICE & RECONCILIATION

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Pajhwok reports that the Attorney General's office has announced that [17 presidential candidates](#) from the 2009 presidential elections who failed to reach the threshold of 10,000 votes, a legal requirement for candidature according to [Article 44](#) of the Afghan Electoral Law, will face legal consequences. Without going into detail, Deputy Attorney General Fazal Ahmad Faqiryar told reporters in Kabul that all candidates who did not reach the threshold will be summoned and punished according to Afghan law. Following the announcement, *Pajhwok* reported that some of the candidates facing prosecution have asked the Attorney General to [conduct a probe](#) into the decision made by the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) to reject 1.5 million votes under suspicion of fraud. Candidates claim that if the rejected votes had counted, they would have reached the required threshold.

In an [interview](#) with *Reuters*, opposition leader and former presidential contender Abdullah Abdullah repeated statements highlighting his scepticism towards the Afghan government's new reconciliation and reintegration initiatives. Abdullah told *Reuters*

that the new plans risked alienating the peaceful elements of the population by rewarding those who used violence to reach their goals. On the sidelines of meetings with French officials and activists in Paris, Abdullah told *Reuters* that [Operation Moshtarak](#) could push some Taliban foot soldiers towards peace talks, but would fail to convince higher ranks as long as they continued to receive support from Pakistan.

Four [legal aid centres](#) have been inaugurated by the Balkh Provincial Legal Department and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) in Mazar-e Sharif. The centres will deliver free legal assistance and consultation with hopes of providing guidance in navigating the Afghan legal system. Deputy Minister of Women Affairs Palvasha Kakar expressed hope that the new centres would help raise women's awareness of their rights and the legal instruments available to them. **(Comments? [Click here](#))**

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SECURITY

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According to the *New York Times*, following the [collapse of the Dutch government](#), it is expected that Netherlands forces will pull out of Afghanistan before the end of the year. Dutch troops have led in Uruzgan province since 2006, and their initial two-year commitment was extended in late 2007. NATO has attempted to persuade the Dutch government to extend its deployment beyond 2010, going as far as a formal request in early February, but the coalition government was unable to overcome opposing internal opinions. According to the

Washington Independent, NATO Secretary General [Anders Fogh Rasmussen](#) denies that the Dutch decision will impact political processes and decisions in other NATO countries. There are fears, as reported by the *Canadian Press*, that the Taliban may use the pullout [as a propaganda tool](#) to demonstrate the lack of NATO resolve in Afghanistan. According to the Dutch news agency *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant (NRC) Handelsblad*, American soldiers will most likely [fill the gap](#) and take on responsibility for the Dutch Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). Australian

Foreign Minister Stephen Smith has already announced that Australian troops, who currently operate a small force in Uruzgan, will not take over the leading role. Governor of Uruzgan province Asadullah Hamdam has expressed concern that the Dutch withdrawal will leave the area open to a large power vacuum that he fears will be filled by the Taliban.

While speaking at Georgetown University in Washington D.C., NATO Secretary-General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said he expects ISAF to [hand over some security responsibilities](#) to Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) as early as the end of the year, ahead of the timeline set by the US President. The *Washington Independent* reports that within a few weeks, the Commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan General Stanley McChrystal, NATO's new Senior Civilian Representative Ambassador Mark Sedwill, and the Afghan government will complete a set of criteria to determine when a given

area is ready for transfer.

While briefing the Foreign Office in London, British Commander [Major General Gordon Messenger](#) explained that increased resistance in Marjah over the past few days is not an indication of the growing strength of the Taliban. According to the *BBC*, he stated that greater resistance was expected once insurgents were able to regroup. However, he said Taliban resistance is still uncoordinated. According to *Reuters*, [Afghan police have been deployed](#) to Marjah in an attempt bring all areas of the country under government control following the international clearing operation. Almost 200 Afghan National Civil Order Police from 34 different provinces have arrived in Marjah, and *Reuters* suggests they have been positively received by the local population. **(Comments? [Click here](#))**

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SOCIAL WELL-BEING

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The *New York Times* reports that a spokesman of the Afghan Ministry of Interior announced that [27 civilians](#) were killed in a NATO airstrike near Khotal Chowzar, a mountain pass connecting Dai Kundi province to Uruzgan in central Afghanistan. The group was reportedly killed after being mistaken for Taliban fighters. According to a statement released by ISAF, the airstrike hit a suspected insurgent convoy. Ground forces later found a number of civilians who were either killed or wounded, including women and children. According to the statement, the wounded were immediately transported to medical facilities for treatment. Commander of US and NATO forces in Afghanistan General Stanley McChrystal [has reportedly apologized](#) to Afghan President Hamid Karzai and ordered an investigation into the incident.

The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) informed *Agence France-Presse* (AFP) that it has been forced to close the only [first-aid post](#) in Marjah due to fighting and heavily-mined roads in the area, impeding access to medical services for the wounded or sick. Meanwhile, ICRC personnel have been treating patients in their homes, while

those requiring life-saving treatment have been evacuated to hospitals in the provincial capital Lashkar Gah and neighbouring Kandahar province via alternative routes.

In a press release issued on 17 February, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) announced that it has launched a joint project with the Italian government to promote the capacity development of the [Educational Radio and Television of Afghanistan](#) (ERTV). UNESCO and the Italian government have been supporting the education, culture, communication and information sectors in Afghanistan since 2003. In late 2008, the first phase of the joint programme led to the creation of educational radio and a TV production house that began broadcasting 24 hours of radio and 12 hours of television daily. The second phase, conducted in close collaboration with the Teacher Education Department of the Ministry of Education, will involve USD 1 million that will be used to enhance ERTV distance learning initiatives through the use of audio-visual technology. **(Comments? [Click here](#))**

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