

(1) Trump Hedges

saying, "I want to find out why we've been there for 17 years."

The Pentagon wants to send almost 4,000 more American forces to expand training of Afghan military forces and beef up U.S. counterterrorism operations against al-Qaida, a growing Islamic State affiliate and other extremist groups. But the troop deployment, which would augment an already existing U.S. force of at least 8,400 troops, has been held up amid broader strategy questions, including how to engage regional powers in an effort to stabilize the fractured nation.

These powers include U.S. friends and foes, from Pakistan and India to China, Russia and Iran. Pentagon plans aren't calling for a radical departure from the limited approach endorsed by former President Barack Obama, and several officials have credited Trump with rightly asking tough questions, such as how the prescribed approach might lead to success.

Trump hasn't welcomed the military's recommendations with "high-five enthusiasm," a senior White House official said. Several meetings involving Trump's National Security Council have been tense as the president demanded answers from top advisers about why American forces needed to be in Afghanistan.

Another U.S. official with knowledge of the conversation reported Trump being less interested in hearing about how to restore Afghanistan to long-term stability, and more concerned about dealing a swift and definitive blow to militant groups in the country.

The White House has even offered its own, outside-the-box thinking. Officials said Trump's chief strategist, Steve Bannon, and his son-in-law and adviser, Jared Kushner, have been pushing a plan to have contractors fight the war in Afghanistan instead of U.S. troops. Blackwater Worldwide founder Erik Prince, the brother of Education Secretary Betsy DeVos, was approached by Trump's top advisers to develop proposals to gradually swap out U.S. troops and put military contractors in their place, a military official said.

The military has frowned on such proposals. It believes boosting troop levels will accelerate progress in training Afghan troops and its air force, and help counterterrorism teams pursue targets even more aggressively. They point to improvements among Afghan forces and in anti-corruption efforts. Military leaders - including McMaster, Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Gen. Joseph Dunford, the Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman - are all said to be on the same page, as is Secretary of State Rex Tillerson.

Military officials also have defended Nicholson, saying any punishment of him would be unfair because he hasn't been given the forces he says he needs. His possible firing was first reported by NBC News.

The White House, which declined multiple requests to comment, may shift itself on Afghanistan now that retired Marine Gen. John Kelly is Trump's new chief of staff. Kelly hasn't spoken about Afghanistan, however, since his appointment this week.

Lawmakers are growing weary. In June, Mattis faced tough questions from Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John McCain, who told him, "It makes it hard for us to support you when we don't have a strategy." Mattis conceded, "We are not winning in Afghanistan right now" and vowed to "correct this as soon as possible."

Doing so requires the president on board. While Trump has been keen to give military officials carte blanche on troop levels and other military affairs, his approach to Afghanistan has grown increasingly assertive. In some ways, his scrutiny of military plans has evoked that of Obama, whom Trump derided as a candidate for not heeding his generals' advice. Republican lawmakers Thursday urged Trump to listen to his national security advisers on Afghanistan.

"Every soldier over there is an insurance policy against our homeland being attacked," Sen. Lindsey Graham, a leading hawk, told reporters. "My biggest fear is that if you don't listen to the generals and you try to make this up as you go like Obama and Biden did, you're going to wind up losing Afghanistan like you did Iraq and the consequences to America are worse."

U.S. indecision is causing Afghanistan's neighbors to hedge their bets, Sen. Bob Corker, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee chairman, said.

As long as they believe Washington is "six months away from stepping out, six months away from giving up," they will continue to do so, Corker said. (AP)

(2) Georgian Soldier

"The commitment of Georgia as our largest non-NATO contributor is vital to our mission and we are honored to stand beside them under these difficult circum-

stances," said the top NATO commander in Afghanistan, Gen. John Nicholson.

A suicide bomb attack in Afghanistan killed two American troops on Wednesday as they traveled in a convoy near the airport in southern Kandahar city, the U.S. military said, in a strike claimed by the Taliban insurgency.

The attack was seen as a reminder of the dangers posed to the 8,400 U.S. service members in Afghanistan as President Donald Trump weighs sending thousands more troops to fight America's longest war.

U.S. military commanders in Afghanistan have asked for several thousand additional troops, but the request is stalled in Washington, where Trump has expressed skepticism over extending the American commitment. (Reuters)

(3) Attack on

The attack on US forces in Kandahar took place on Wednesday as their convoy was leaving a military base close to Kandahar city.

The NATO-led Resolute Support mission in a statement confirmed that two US soldiers lost their lives and four others were wounded in the attack.

NATO plays key a role in the training, advise, and assist of the Afghan national defense and security forces since they concluded their combat mission in Afghanistan.

The alliance's major role includes training and advise of the Afghan ground and air forces as efforts are underway to bolster the capabilities of the Afghan forces to ensure security for the country. (KP)

(4) Afghan

theoretical training and practical work. Each year, some 800,000 young people flood onto the labor market. They are highly motivated to learn a profession and excel in their jobs. Most of them become apprentices in one of the 500,000 or so craft and commercial enterprises in Afghan bazaars, where they receive on-the-job training. However, many apprentices are missing an essential part during the apprenticeship: Profound theoretical background in their profession that would allow them to take their businesses forward - and make a difference.

The Ostad-e-Shagerdi (Student-Teacher) program that was developed with the support of the Afghan-German Cooperation, will close that gap.

About 80 state officials and school managers from twelve Afghan provinces attended today's ceremony in Kabul.

"Ostad-e-Shagerdi has great added value for Afghan apprentices," says electronics teacher Gawsudein Fazli. "We are helping them to better understand the theoretical background of their professions. They will become real professionals that are able to produce quality products and to embrace innovations."

The program is open for apprentices that have already completed their 9th grade. The enrolled apprentices will attend classes at TVET schools three days a week. After successfully completing three years of Ostad-e-Shagerdi, the apprentices can apply for 12th grade degrees. This allows many young people to attain secondary education, who would otherwise not have had the chance to do so.

Ostad-e-Shagerdi is currently available at three vocational schools: two in Kabul, one in Mazar-e Sharif. Up to 16 additional schools in twelve Afghan provinces will offer Ostad-e-Shagerdi next year. For now, the program is limited to apprentices in the field of electrical and automotive engineering as well as tailoring and beautician. In the upcoming years, the system will expand to additional provinces and professional fields.

The modernization of traditional apprenticeships and its countrywide expansion is another step towards improving training for skilled workers in Afghanistan. Additionally, it has the potential to save the public sector up to AFN 520 billion in investment costs for vocational college buildings and equipment that becomes obsolete.

In close cooperation with the Afghan Ministry of Education, the German-financed TVET program promotes technical and vocational education and training in Afghanistan by establishing quality and sustainable, formal vocational school system. The goal is to help as many young Afghans as possible to acquire skills that will improve their chances of finding a job and earning a regular income. (Wadsam)

(5) Father of Robotics

Ali Ahmad Mohammadi was another Herat resident who lost his life in the attack. He had just received his passport to leave for Hajj in Saudi Arabia. But the suicide attackers snatched the chance from him.

"I saw three or four people who had been cut from the chest toward the head," said the victim's father Ali Mohammad.

Mohammadi's mother was also at the mosque at the time of the attack but she survived.

"He has three children; the elder son is

only 13 years old, he has a seven-year-old daughter and a five-year-old son. My son wanted to go to Mecca," said the victim's mother. (Tolonews)

(6) Afghan Military

mechanism," a statement from Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) said.

Pakistan has already begun fencing the Pakistan-Afghanistan border in an effort to improve the security situation along the international boundary.

"Both sides concluded that peace and stability can best be achieved through complementary efforts and enhanced cooperation," according to ISPR.

"Both sides reaffirmed their resolve to continue their fight against terrorism." The meeting was also attended by Director General Military Operations (DG-MOs) of both Pakistani and Afghan armies. (Agencies)

(7) Those Linked

to meet people outside the city and have a look at how they are living, people who have been displaced because of the conflict and also to have the opportunity to visit the regional hospital yesterday," said Lanzer.

The majority of those wounded in the suicide attack were taken to the Herat zonal hospital.

All staff were called in to work on Tuesday night in the wake of the bombing and according to officials more than 30 surgeries were carried out that night.

Daesh attackers killed over 30 people and wounded more than 60.

"As per need, all cases were handled professionally and all basic services were provided," said Arif Shahram, the hospital chief.

Before leaving Kabul for Herat, Lanzer announced a \$35,000 pledge for the expansion of the emergency ward at Herat hospital.

Meanwhile, former Jihadi leader Mohammad Ismail Khan has asked the Afghan government to respond to the needs of the families of Herat victims

"How is it possible that two people from far away enter Herat city and carry out a major tragedy, naturally there were some elements who guided and cooperated with them (terrorists), because of this, the people do not feel they are a partner in security," said Khan.

In addition to this, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) has also labeled the attack a war crime. (Tolonews)

(8) 'Green Zone'

President Ghani said the government would also contribute to the execution of the green zone plan, which he called as effective in bringing about change in social living and improving security of the foreign diplomatic missions.

The plan is being executed after insurgents used a truck in carrying out a massive suicide bombing that killed and wounded many people and damaged buildings in Kabul about two months ago. (Pajhwok)

(9) Killers and cultural complex in memory of the victims.

He also suggested registration of the affected families with the Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled (MoLSAMD). Hussain sought jobs for the victims' children.

Ghani accepted demands of the victims' families, but he hastened to explain meeting them would take time. He wished the injured a swift recovery.

He ordered the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum to regularly visit the victims' families and cooperate with them in resolving their problems. Ghani also distributed medals and appreciation letters to heirs of the victims. (Pajhwok)

(10) Progress in

and strengthen product quality standards.

Participants used the meeting to plan activities for the year ahead. "Finalizing a national export strategy will be a top priority, to be followed by the implementation of its recommendations for reforms to catalyse export-led growth and job creation in promising sectors," said George Cunningham, Deputy Head of the EU Delegation in Afghanistan.

IITC will support the development and implementation of the national export strategy, together with a national trade policy, and a strategy on trade facilitation.

The project will also assist the secretariat of the WTO Inter-Ministerial Committee, which operates under the leadership of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, to develop a detailed trade-facilitation action plan.

The action plan will guide the reform process as Afghanistan implements the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement over the upcoming years.

Additionally, IITC is assisting Afghanistan in the organization of regular bilateral consultations with other countries in the region to enhance bilateral trade through addressing issues related to tariffs and non-tariffs barriers.

The project steering committee was established to support the project's activities; monitor its implementation and progress; ensure that the project outputs respond to the country's priorities; and advice on next steps.

The body comprises representatives of relevant ministries and state agencies, the EU, ITC and multiple business groups, such as the umbrella Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) and the sector-specific Afghan Women Handicraft Commercial Association and the Afghan Women's Saffron Association (AWSA). The committee is jointly chaired by the Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MoCI) and the ACCI.

"The progress of the project is promising and MoCI will certainly provide its full support to ensure that this project contributes to enhance the competitiveness of Afghanistan within the region," said Humayoon Rasaw, Afghanistan's Minister of Commerce and Industry.

According to Jean-Sébastien Roure, who is managing the AAT project for ITC, one key accomplishment during the project's first eight months had been multiple rounds of stakeholder consultations on the content of the future national export strategy, which had fostered broad consensus on key issues and sector-specific priorities.

He said important steps had also been taken towards developing an Afghanistan National Trade Policy (2017-2022) to guide the direction of the country's trade policy for the next five years.

He also highlighted the technical support provided to assist the Afghanistan's WTO Inter-Ministerial Committee to progress in complying with its obligation to notify its trade facilitation commitments and technical assistance needs to the WTO secretariat, which Afghanistan is aiming to do by February 2018, in line with the deadline stipulated in the agreement.

In the coming months, the project will support provincial consultations with business representatives in Herat and Kandahar on the content of the national export strategy; these will feed into a subsequent national consultation in Kabul, paving the way for the finalization of the document.

Over a two-year period, the New Delhi-based Centre for WTO Studies will train Afghan government officials, mainly from the MoCI, so as to build a cadre of experts in trade issues ranging from trade policy formulation and implementation to trade facilitation, investment, trade in services, regulatory reform and trade negotiation. Assistance will be provided to strengthen the skills of national enquiry points and the national notification authority on issues related to technical barriers to trade (TBT) and sanitary and phytosanitary standards (SPS), which will include training on the development, adoption and promotion of standards and other technical regulations.

Background The Advancing Afghan Trade project is funded by the European Union and implemented by the International Trade Centre under the leadership of Afghanistan's Ministry of Commerce and Industries (MoCI).

The project responds to the Afghan government's efforts to use trade as driver of economic growth, regional cooperation and stability. Afghanistan acceded to the World Trade Organization (WTO) in July 2016 and has placed trade and regional economic cooperation at the heart of its development strategy. Its first action after acceding to the WTO was to ratify the body's Trade Facilitation Agreement.

To ensure local ownership and sustained impact, IITC will be working with a range of Afghan partners from the private sector, non-governmental organizations, academia and civil-society organizations. (Pajhwok)

(11) Musharraf:

countries witnessed progress due to dictators. He said in Pakistan whenever a marshal law was imposed, it was the need of the hour. (Pajhwok)

(12) Afghanistan

the sector in Afghanistan. This sector (livestock) has been left untouched in the past two decades," Zamir added.

At the same event, Czech Republic's Agriculture Minister Marian Jurečka, who was on a visit to Kabul, said his trip was aimed at improving cooperation with Afghanistan's agriculture sector.

"On behalf of the Czech government and on behalf of the ministry of agriculture I would like to say that our task is to support not only in the area of security and education but also in the area of development of agriculture projects and this is precisely the purpose of my visit today," he said. He said he is looking forward to opportunities in which the Czech Republic could partner with Afghanistan.

According to MAIL, the Czech Republic has implemented a number of livestock projects in Afghanistan. (Tolonews)

(13) Zakhilwal, Gen.

on security situation and Durand Line management.

Wednesday's meeting was a follow-up to discussions between operation chiefs of Pakistani and Afghan militaries on May 11 in Rawalpindi. The commanders had agreed to make efforts for building cooperative relations.

US acting Assistant Secretary for South and Central Asia and acting Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Alice Wells is arriving in Islamabad on Thursday. Afghanistan is high on her agenda. (Pajhwok)

(14) McCain

warned that the United States was not winning in Afghanistan.

"The reason for this failure is a lack of successful policy and strategic guidance from Washington over many years, which has continued in the first several months of this new administration. Our commanders-in-chief, not our commanders in the field, are responsible for this failure," McCain said.

"I urge the President to resolve the differences within his administration as soon as possible and decide on a policy and strategy that can achieve our national security interests in Afghanistan and the region," he said. (Pajhwok)

(15) Mohib for Action

r to the United States.

Mohib said when countries began to use NSAs for the advancement of its policies, whatever that may be, whether foreign policies or trying to influence another nation, it breaks that world order.

"Hence, it's important to deal with those kinds of activities with strength. There has to be some punitive actions taken, in sanctions, or perhaps the declaration of States as state sponsored (of terrorism). Calling them for what they are, is perhaps the beginning of trying to find a solution to this," Mohib said.

"If one state is tolerated to use terrorism as a support to proxy non-state actors for its foreign policy, then what's stopping, or what would be our moral standing to prevent other states from doing the same thing? It's a very dangerous precedence," he said.

According to the Ambassador, Afghanistan is working on presenting its evidence to the UN Security Council over the use of terrorism in Afghanistan and their linkages with countries. He however, did not give much details about it. (Pajhwok)

(16) 'Taliban Fighters

claimed by the Taliban on Thursday night.

On Wednesday, two US soldiers were killed by a suicide bomber who targeted a convoy of foreign forces in the southern Kandahar province.

Dozens of people were killed in a suicide attack at a packed Shia mosque in the western province of Herat on Tuesday.

Earlier this week, a suicide bombing and gun attack claimed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL, also known as ISIS) group on the Iraqi embassy in the capital killed two Afghan employees.

A total of 2,531 Afghan security forces were killed and 4,238 wounded in the first four months of 2017, according to Special Inspector General for Afghanistan (SIGAR). (Aljazeera)

(17) Taliban and Haqqani

Ahmadzai further added that the Haqqani network has been identified as Haji Asad. In the meantime, the provincial government media office in a statement said the Afghan and US forces conducted airstrikes and ground operations in Rustam Khel and Yousuf Khel areas of Barak Barak districts of Logar at around 9 am on Tuesday, leaving at least ten militants dead belonging to Habib Akhundzada and Syed Rahim Shahab groups. (KP)

(18) Two Civilians

place close to Qarabagh Police Headquarters at around 8pm local time on Thursday. The Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan said in a statement that one coalition soldier was killed and six Resolute Support personnel including five troops and an interpreter were wounded in the attack. (Tolonews)

(19) Pakistan to

question, he said Pakistan wants to have sustained, meaningful and result-oriented dialogue with India that addresses all issues particularly the Jammu and Kashmir. Nafees Zakaria said peace in the region is not possible without resolving the Kashmir dispute. (IRNA)

(20) Afghan Family

young members of their family. "Those who do not allow their children, especially girls, to go to school are wrong. Because most of Afghanistan's problems are rooted in illiteracy. People must be educated to leave behind the challenges," said Abdul Hamid, father of Beheshta. "Fortunately, my family does not consider education negative for girls. I can go to school freely," Beheshta said. (Tolonews)