

(1) Decisions...

strategy for Afghanistan and the greater South Asia region. Finalizing a strategy has been delayed by internal differences.

Among the attendees were Vice President Mike Pence and Defense Secretary James Mattis.

Without offering hints, Mattis told reporters Thursday in Washington he anticipated a decision on the new approach to the war, the longest in U.S. history, would be made "in the near future.

Before a new strategy is adopted, the administration has said it would review its approach to the broader South Asia region, including Pakistan and India. Options include sending thousands of additional troops to the war-torn country or withdrawing them altogether, leaving private military contractors to help manage the country's tenuous security situation.

After years of extensive support from the U.S. and other NATO member nations, the Afghan military is still struggling to resist the Taliban, which recently made advances in Afghanistan and the Pakistan border region. U.S. generals have described the conflict as a "stalemate."

The U.S. Defense Department approved a plan months ago to send about 3,800 additional troops to assist the Afghan army, but some White House officials questioned whether more resources would be effective.

Trump authorized Mattis to determine troop numbers in Afghanistan, but several months later, allied troop levels remain unchanged. About 8,400 U.S. troops and an estimated 5,000 NATO troops are in the country, serving primarily in advisory and training capacities. The U.S. also maintains a force in Afghanistan that is tasked with fighting terrorist groups, including Islamic State and al-Qaida.

Mattis has said he would commit to troop level adjustments after the administration agrees on a coherent strategy for Afghanistan and the broader region, including Pakistan's dealings with terrorist groups.

Rand Corporation South Asian expert Jonah Blank said intelligence reports he has received suggests an increase in troops is the currently the administration's most favored option.

"It sounds like the administration is leaning towards a modest increase in troop levels, perhaps between 3,000 and 5,000 troops...without a termination date for their stay," Blank said.

Blank predicted a modest troop increase would not "change the overall trajectory of the war" given the failure of a collective effort to end the long-running conflict.

The founder of the Blackwater security firm, Erik Prince, and DynCorp owner Stephen Feinberg last month offered proposals to the White House to use contractors instead of U.S. troops.

But increasing numbers of influential Afghans are concerned private firms would not be accountable. They are concerned using contractors risks a reoccurrence of the heinous acts Blackwater Security Company guards committed in Afghanistan and Iraq about a decade ago.

The ability to reverse course in Afghanistan has been hindered by the government's struggles to stop Taliban advances without assistance. The Taliban now controls almost half the country, according to the latest report from the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.

Afghan forces are also fighting an IS affiliate that has gained a foothold primarily in eastern Afghanistan, presenting an additional challenge without prospects of a near-term solution. This week, a U.S. soldier was killed and nearly a dozen others injured in a clash with the IS affiliate.

Members of Congress have expressed frustration over the long-running war and the lengthy administration search for a new strategy to break the stalemate.

Republican Senator John McCain declared last week that "America is adrift in Afghanistan."

"Nearly seven months into President Trump's administration, we've had no strategy at all as conditions on the ground have steadily worsened," added McCain, who is chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee.

McCain has proposed an expansion of the U.S. counterterrorism operation and additional support for the Afghan military.

More than 15 years ago, the U.S. invaded Afghanistan and ousted the Islamist Taliban regime for giving al-Qaida a refuge to plot the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks against the U.S. There is no sign to the end of the war. U.S. intelligence agencies determined in May that conditions in Afghanistan would almost certainly worsen through next year, even if the U.S. and its allies provided a modest increase in military assistance. (VoA)

(2) DABs to Launch...

the plan but said that power shortage a major problem for them. "We have many problems, including lack of power. The solar power will help us to use all electric equipment at home," said Arab Shah, a resident of Kabul. "Many parts of Qasaba area in Kabul are faced with lack of electricity. We must have full access to electricity," another Kabul resident, Fazal said.

The project will be implemented in two phases: The first phase, which will be completed by the end of the next year, will cover minis-

tries and other government institutions and will produce up to 15 megawatts of power. And the second phase will cover the DABS customers across Kabul. (Tolnews)

(3) Peace Council ...

not allow fraud," he said.

He also lashed out at his political rivals who have formed an alliance called Coalition for Salvation of Afghanistan.

"They only managed to heap money, have royal palaces... This is their only achievement," he said.

Apparently referring to Dostum and Mohaqiq, Hekmatyar suggested that their parties are not multi-ethnic.

"If it is Hazara leader, there is no non-Hazara in his party, and if it is Uzbek leader, there is no non-Uzbek in his party, and if it is Panjshir, its members are all Panjshiris" he said.

Hekmatyar also accused late anti-Soviet commander Ahmad Shah Massoud of having links with Pakistan's intelligence agency. (ITV)

(4) Campaign Against ...

and we offer our deepest condolences to SSG Butler's family and loved ones," said the top US commander in Afghanistan.

Gen. John Nicholson added the wounded US and Afghan security personnel were receiving the best medical care possible.

"Despite this tragic event, we remain steadfast in our commitment to continue our campaign to defeat of ISIS-K so they are no longer a threat to the people of Afghanistan and our coalition." (Pajhwok)

(5) USAID Hosts...

Shura in Mazar-e-Sharif to increase knowledge of the opportunities for women to secure agricultural credit. This event focused on practical training for women to apply for and manage credit. This event brought together a number of top microfinance institutions in Afghanistan along with other financial experts to work with Shura attendees.

Topics included women's economic rights, the types of credit available - traditional and Islamic, and how credit could help them grow their business or farm. The participants also worked in group activities which included discussions about challenges women face in accessing credit and were able to discuss those challenges with women who have had experience with taking loans.

"This is a critical program in giving women the financial means to provide for their families, but also gain the educational skills to understand how credit works and why it's crucial to their success," said USAID Mission Director Herbie Smith. "We will continue to support women entrepreneurs in agriculture and provide them with the tools to improve their lives."

USAID's RADP-N is a five-year program focusing on wheat, high-value crops such as grapes and melons, and livestock. It helps producers, associations, traders, and agribusinesses to respond to market demand and help create market links between farmers and small, medium, and large businesses that allow the private sector to improve and grow.

The USAID Agricultural Credit Enhancement (ACE) project established and managed the Agricultural Development Fund (ADF) until it was transferred to the Afghan government in 2015. The follow-on project, ACE-II, seeks to build on results achieved by the previous program and expand access to agriculture-related credit to increase commercial viability of small and medium-size farms and agribusinesses as a necessary condition for a thriving agricultural economy.

USAID Hosts Women's Agricultural Credit Shura in Mazar-E-Sharif to Improve Livelihoods for Afghan Women Balkh, Afghanistan - When it comes to accessing credit for women farmers and women-owned agriculture-related businesses, challenges have often forced these operations to close because of a lack of understanding how credit works. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) wants to change that and help these women prosper in their businesses.

With that in mind, USAID's Regional Agricultural Development Program-North (RADP-N), in partnership with Agricultural Credit Enhancement Phase-II project (ACE-II), hosted the Women's Agricultural Credit Shura in Mazar-e-Sharif on Wednesday to increase knowledge of the opportunities for women to secure agricultural credit. This event focused on practical training for women to apply for and manage credit. This event brought together a number of top microfinance institutions in Afghanistan along with other financial experts to work with Shura attendees. Topics included women's economic rights, the types of credit available - traditional and Islamic, and how credit could help them grow their business or farm. The participants also worked in group activities which included discussions about challenges women face in accessing credit and were able to discuss those challenges with women who have had experience with taking loans.

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(6) Abu Dhabi...

economic growth and better living standards.

Mohammed Saif Al Suwaidi, director general of ADFD, said: "Under the strategic guidance of Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al Nahyan, deputy prime minister, the Fund is currently a key partner of the Afghan government in advancing and supporting sustainable economic and social development.

"In cooperation with regional and international institutions, ADFD is proud to spearhead this noble march to extend financial assistance for the greater good of the Afghan people.

"Over a time span of four decades, the Fund has significantly contributed to Afghan society through investments in sustainable infrastructure projects that benefit all citizens," he added. (Pajhwok)

(7) Afghanistan...

industries, logistics, exports and imports sectors," he said. At the same event, the Afghan commerce and industries minister Humayun Rasa said they will appoint a trade representative from Afghanistan in Astana with the hope that the envoy would facilitate the sale of Afghan products in Kazakhstan markets. The remarks come after Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries termed Kazakhstan as a good market for the local products, saying that the trade volume between the two states has decreased to 50 percent. (Tolnews)

(8) Ghani Opens...

Similarly, he said, the investors and entrepreneurs of Herat had played a significant part in the development and progress of the country. He particularly extolled Majeed Zabolli's vision for the economic prosperity of the country.

He argued progress had then become possible due to collaboration between the government and the private sector. The Afghans had money but lacked investments, he recalled. During that period of time, the president explained, Afghanistan produced electricity for the first time and karakul became its major export item.

"Our primary goal is to make Herat our future development and transit hub. Herat City will link Iran, China and Central Asian states...A railroad will be inaugurated within weeks, with cement transportation in focus."

He thanked the Herat businesspeople for investing in the province despite a number of challenges. He said it was time the government extended them solid support and honored its pledges.

Ghani underlined the need for a curriculum change to ensure Afghanistan's economic progress. He asked the private sector to share its suggestions with the government in this regard.

The president also proposed an exclusive industrial park for marbles. "In the first step, China will purchase from us marbles worth \$5 million. We hope marbles will become our significant export.

"The train coming here from China returns empty. From now on, the train will return from Herat full of marbles," he observed, acknowledging custom-related irritants for traders.

Unhappy with the performance of Islam Qala, Zaranj, Aqina and Hairatan ports, he said: "This injustice is acceptable neither to the people nor me." He promised the Presidential Palace would oversee the ports till they were reformed, he promised.

About unemployment, Ghani said the people should realize the importance of the private sector role. The government alone could not offer jobs to tens of millions of individuals, he concluded. (Pajhwok)

(9) Taliban 'Severely' ...

A resident of the area, Syed Khan, told Pajhwok Afghan News stiff resistance put up by police and 07 unit forces rescued the Gomal district from being captured by the rebels. He asked the government to honor the forces for preventing the district from falling into the hands of militants.

The deputy governor, Attaullah Fazli, also said the Taliban had been 'severely' defeated in Gomal district by the joint Afghan forces. He said the Afghan forces had also suffered casualties but exact figures were currently not available.

He said hundreds of families who fled homes due to the conflict were in dire need of assistance.

Separately, police ambushed and killed three Taliban militants in the Janikhel district of

Paktika province. The dead bodies of the militants had been shifted to the provincial police headquarters in Sharana, the provincial capital, the media office said. (Pajhwok)

(10) Daesh, Taliban ...

time when Taliban, Daesh and other insurgent outfits had been defeated in Nangarhar. Daesh's plans to make Nangarhar its headquarters had been thwarted with the cooperation of the Afghan people and sacrifices of the security forces, the governor added.

Gen. Mohammad Zaman Waziri, commander of the 201st Selab Military Corps in the eastern zone, said all security forces based in the province were ready to defend their homeland.

He also asserted breaking the back of Daesh in the province, pledging no terrorist organization would be allowed to create sanctuaries in Nangarhar.

But a Wolesi Jirga member from Nangarhar, Faridoo Momand, complained the province was being ruled by land-grabbers, strongmen and mafia groups.

The people should be freed from the clutches of the underworld before the Independence Day was commemorated. He also blamed the provincial government for failing to curb these elements. (Pajhwok)

(11) Pakistan to ...

reaffirmed its continued commitment to pursue peace and stability in Afghanistan through an Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process.

The meeting chaired by Prime Minister Shahid Khaqan Abbasi reiterated that regional peace and progress is directly linked to resolution of all outstanding issues, including issue of Kashmir. The meeting reviewed internal and external security situation and the foreign policy in regional and global context. The forum resolved to work at all levels with the people and government of Afghanistan for removal of all irritants in Afghanistan for terrorist incidents in Pakistan.

Pakistan claims terrorists who conduct attacks in the country, have their safe havens in Afghanistan. Kabul totally rejects the claims as baseless. (ANA)

(12) U.S. Supports ...

your tireless efforts to achieve a united, peaceful, and prosperous Afghanistan," he said in a statement sent by the U.S. embassy in Kabul.

Mr. Llorens said that it is important to recall how much progress Afghanistan has made - even in the face of great challenges.

"All of us in the United States have great respect for everything the Afghan nation has achieved, under the most difficult circumstances, since gaining independence in 1919," he added.

He said Afghan people are strong, resilient, and have a passionate love for their nation and families.

"We are confident that Afghanistan's independence - and its commitment to democracy - will continue to propel it toward a future of greater possibility for generations of Afghans to come," he stated.

This comes after U.S. President Donald Trump will meet with his national security team at Camp David today to announce his strategy on Afghanistan.

Possible plans in the strategy include sending thousands more troops into the nearly 16-year conflict, or taking the opposite tack and pulling out, leaving private military contractors to help the Afghans oversee the fragile security situation. (Tolnews)

(13) Afghan Girl's ...

decorates jewelry. Her trainer says that Saeeda made the necklace within two months which cost \$8,000 USD.

Saeeda has studied disabled persons' school and later she was enrolled in Feroz Koh Institute.

Husna Khurrami, another trainee from the institute, said she has a special interest in designing jewelry.

"My main goal is to become a designer. I want to be a good designer," she said.

Abdul Waheed Khalili, head of the institute, said a number of foreign companies have asked for new designs from the Feroz Koh trainees.

"We have contacted a number of companies to introduce our designs. Sometimes we receive designs from foreign companies and sometimes we introduce our own designs to the international markets," he said.

The institute graduates 12 trainees every year and 30 percent of its students are girls. (Tolnews)

(14) Khan Calls ...

and political tensions, however, have led to a reduction in the trade and transit activity through Pakistan, according to businessmen on both sides.

Bilateral ties have deteriorated, particularly over the past few years because of a spike in Taliban attacks and territorial advances in Afghanistan.

Afghan officials allege that insurgents use sanctuaries on Pakistani soil to plot deadly attacks in Afghanistan, and the neighboring country's spy agency is helping them expand their influence in the war-ravaged country. Islamabad denies the charges and accuses the Afghan intelligence agency of sheltering and helping anti-Pakistan militants to orchestrate terrorist attacks in the country. "The worst of times"

Cricket-star-turned-politician Khan, who also is popular among cricket-playing Afghan youth, acknowledges it is "the worst of times" in terms of relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

"The problem is right now there is a lot of suspicion in Afghanistan about Pakistan, the way our foreign policy has gone up and down. And in Pakistan right now there is a lot of suspicion about Afghanistan, that the attacks in Pakistan, the terrorist attacks, are coming from Afghanistan, instigated by India," said Khan.

He echoed Pakistan's official stance that arch-rival India is using its growing influence, particularly among Afghan security institutions, to allegedly destabilize Pakistan. Kabul and New Delhi both deny the charges.

Khan urged that the United States should desist from intensifying military actions in Afghanistan, underscoring the need to find a political settlement to the protracted Afghan conflict.

"I think the best decision Donald Trump could make is to finally decide to take American troops out of Afghanistan, and then that will pave the way for some sort of consensus government in Afghanistan," Khan said.

President Donald Trump's administration has said it is close to finalizing its Afghan policy, which could see an additional several thousand U.S. troops being deployed to Afghanistan to help local security forces break the military stalemate with the Taliban.

"As long as the troops are there, they are not going to be able to enforce peace there. If 150,000 NATO troops could not change Afghanistan, then 5,000 or 10,000 troops are only going to prolong the agony," he added. Khan's party rules Pakistan's northwestern Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, which shares a border with Afghanistan. The province has borne the brunt of terrorist attacks since Islamabad joined hands 16 years ago with Washington's anti-terrorism operations in Afghanistan.

The violence has significantly declined, however, due to counterterrorism operations in adjoining border areas and major police reforms the provincial government has introduced over the past four years.

The opposition politician and his party, Pakistan Terheek-e-Insaf, are being credited with leading a consistent anti-corruption campaign that ultimately prompted the country's Supreme Court to investigate and oust former prime minister Nawaz Sharif from office last month for concealing overseas assets. Observers say Khan's successful legal battle has boosted his party's political standing, and it could pose a serious challenge to Sharif's ruling Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz party in 2018 parliamentary elections. (VoA)

(15) Melbourne Music...

musicians in regional Victoria along the way. The concert's director and founder, Eilan Lincoln-Hyde, hopes to raise up to \$4,500 in total.

"We would like that to have a visible impact on the students and administration when we give it to them, and let them know this is actually a long-term thing," Ms Lincoln-Hyde said.

"[We want to say to them] we have been thinking about you the whole time [and] we love what you're doing and this is our work to show how much we value your work."

She said the students decided to hold off on donating the proceeds of their concerts until this year, as the orchestra has attracted significant international support.

"We'd really like to have the emotional impact of sending several thousand dollars, rather than \$200 every six months," Ms Lincoln-Hyde said. (ABC)

(16) Family of Soldier...

training and was assigned to train others in Pul-e-Charkhi. Then I heard that he was deployed in Rishkhor (area in the outskirts of Kabul city) and that he has joined the commandos," Rokai said.

Humayun's friends also urged government not to leave Humayun's wife and sons alone. "He was the only breadwinner of his family," Ghulam Mujtaba, Humayun's father-in-law said. "He has nothing. His relatives donated money for his burial and funeral ceremony" said Khaile Seddiqi, another relative of Humayun. (Tolnews)

(17) Noor Ordered ...

from others. Momand renewed his corruption allegations against Noor and he had arrived in Kabul to summit documents against the governor with the Attorney General's Office. "After one hour of my detention, my mobile, passport and 4100 dollars were taken from my pocket and the governor asked his secretary to finish me, but later the governor changed his mind and handed me over the NDS." (Pajhwok)

(18) Uruzgan Security ...

Aminullah Tokhi said 18 wounded security personnel were evacuated to the main provincial hospital from the site of the clash. One policeman succumbed to his injuries at the hospital. He said the injured, including five soldiers and 12 policemen, were under medical treatment. (Pajhwok)

(19) Kandahar Parents ...

Matiullah Weesa, told Pajhwok Afghan News that a few days were left in the start of the new academic year and they wanted to encourage parents to admit their children, both girls and boys in school. (Pajhwok)