

### (1) Drop Weapons...

who was present on the occasion, congratulated all military officials on the 98th Independence Day and said security forces had frustrated the enemy's many designs.

He termed operations by special forces as vital and said evaluating the commando division to corps level was part of the four-year security plan.

NATO commander Gen. Nicholson told the security personnel that they were the real sons of the soil who had the capability to defend every inch of their land.

"Your enemy has no other option but to surrender or be eliminated at the hands of Afghan commando forces," he said. (Pajhwok)

### (2) Andesha Call on...

Afghan Deputy Foreign Minister Nasir Andesha is visiting Pakistan to mark the Afghan independence celebrations and for the foundation-laying ceremony of the new Afghan Embassy in the Diplomatic Enclave in Islamabad. Earlier this week, the Foreign Secretary also visited Kabul on 15 August 2017 for meetings with Afghan leadership for strengthening bilateral engagement. (PR)

### (3) Exonerate Media...

accordance with provisions of this constitution", the article adds.

Khilwatgar said media outlets in southern Ghazni province paid taxes to both the government and the Taliban, which they could not afford. Since 1393 solar year, nearly 200 media outlets including 12 radio stations, four television channels, two news agencies and many print media were forced into packing by financial problems, he said.

Security threats

Khilwatgar expressed concern over increasing security threats against journalists and said five journalists were threatened only in one week in a province in the northern region while a journalist in southern Helmand was forced into leaving the country.

"Journalists in northern Sar-i-Pul province prepare their reports in the governor's house due to security problems", he added.

"We contacted a journalist who was sent from Kabul to Sar-i-Pul province, he said he prepares reports at the governor's house and if he wants to go outside, he should be assisted by a group of security guards," Khilwatgar added. (Pajhwok)

### (4) Security Personnel...

concerned but no action had been taken so far to rescue the security personnel, he complained.

But Nasrat Jamshedi, deputy spokesman for the 209th Shaheen Military Corps, rejected the claims and said the security forces in Ghormach were equipped and commandoes had been dispatched to the district to launch an operation to recapture the town.

Abdullah Waqif, the town's administrative chief, confirmed the siege of the security personnel at the hands of Taliban. He said after the fall of Ghormach some bodies of security forces had been evacuated but the besieged personnel could not be reached so far. (Pajhwok)

### (5) Trump Has ...

Afghanistan to a modest increase.

One U.S. official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said Trump's top national security aides are backing adding between 3,000 and 5,000 troops and allowing them to embed with Afghan forces closer to combat. Democratic U.S. Senator Tim Kaine said lawmakers were waiting for the Trump administration to articulate its strategy on Afghanistan before making a judgment on troops.

"The troop strength question is sort of cart before the horse," Kaine told CBS' "Face the Nation" on Sunday. "The real question is what is our strategy? And then when you lay out the strategy, the troop strength question can kind of answer itself."

U.S. Senator Ben Cardin, the top Democrat on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, told "Fox News Sunday" that he would oppose sending more troops.

"I don't believe putting more American soldiers in Afghanistan is the answer," he said, adding that the goal should be to help Afghanistan work toward having and maintaining a stable government.

Michael Kugelman, with the Woodrow Wilson Center think tank in Washington, said an extended strategy review was somewhat positive because it showed that all options were being considered. However, recent gains by Taliban militants made it imperative that a strategy be announced soon.

According to U.S. estimates, government forces control less than 60 percent of Afghanistan, with almost half the country either contested or under the control of the insurgents. "The Taliban insurgency has never been stronger... We need a strategy to address all this, and fast," Kugelman said. (Reuters)

### (6) AAF to Get ...

A-29s and MD-530s.

In the meantime, the alliance informs regarding the unprecedented progress the Afghan Air Force has made recently.

"Just as one example, last year, the Afghans led, planned, and executed a medical evacuation in which they managed to transport a soldier from the battlefield to a medical facility within one hour, the golden hour, saving his life," explained U.S. Air Force Master Sgt. Terisa Filner, TAAC-Air medical superintendent.

This is just one example of how the Afghans have excelled in routine medical evacuations. In 2016 they successfully transported about 10,000 wounded soldiers for medical care. This translates into saving many lives, she added.

Another success highlighted by these NCOs was the first-ever operation to resupply forward deployed Afghan soldiers earlier this year, in which the Afghans led and executed an airdrop of 650 pounds of critical supplies in support of ground forces.

According to Resolute Support mission, a mission critical component of these successes are the air-to-ground coordination team and the Fly Away Security team. FAST provides security to the aircraft and the crew.

"The air-to-ground coordination team owns the battlefield. They are responsible to validate strikes and avoid civilian casualties. They cipher altitudes, set priorities of fires, set structure levels to destroy, suppress or neutralize the enemy, make safety calls, and constantly make life or death decisions with the ground commander," explained Chief Warrant Officer 4 Davis R. Kalcevic, 438th Air Expeditionary Attack Squadron - Train, Advise, Assist MD 530, instructor pilot.

Air power is a key capability that insurgents do not have, which places extra importance on the AAF mission. To put their successes into perspective, it takes about five to 10 years to build an Afghan pilot during peacetime. The AAF, with the help of coalition forces, is professionalizing these pilots and experts in about 18 months without sacrificing quality. To save time, Afghan candidates are recruited directly from officer school. They undergo an aggressive process, conducting part-task training, which means concentrating efforts on specific areas they will be performing.

"We are building an enterprise. It is not only about the aircraft, it's about maneuvering, maintenance, weather planning and sustainment. They have an authorized force of 8,017 members, and in 2017 we are on pace to meet or exceed the missions from 2016," explained Brig. Gen. Phillip A. Stewart, TACC-Air commander, during the mission brief.

The new generation of Afghan leaders are striving for continued success, according to TAAC-Air leadership.

"The next generations of Afghan senior leaders will definitely help the junior enlisted and young NCOs to succeed and find their way... the new generation of Afghan airman and soldiers will thrive. There is no doubt," Thetford said.

He was referring to current initiatives by Resolute Support leadership to bring new generations of leaders and position them in key areas of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. (KP)

### (7) Aug 19 is Day...

The Afghans were currently at a critical juncture, a time whose value they must understand and complete unfinished mission, the president said, asking the people to demonstrate unity and discharge their historic responsibility toward the next five generations. "Today we should renew our resolve to lead and represent the entire nation. When all of us look at ourselves in the mirror of a single nation, our hopes and aspirations will become a reality," he said.

Those who still speak of violence, dance to the tunes of foreigners and inflict bloodshed on the Afghans are moving in the wrong direction, according to Ghani, who said such elements could not escape defeat.

Governor Mohammad Asif Rahimi, who also attended the ceremony, welcomed the president and his delegation. He asked youth to improve their sense of patriotism to realize the aspirations of Amanullah Khan.

At the present sensitive stage of economic development, terrorists targeted the basics of the system, he noted, saying the nation supported achievements of the government and would not allow foreign agents to achieve their ominous goals, he said.

Maj. Gen. Mohammad Naser Hidayat, commander of the 207th Military Corps, said the progress made by the Afghan forces was not enough and they would fight against terrorism like their forefathers did.

He said the Afghan nation was behind the success of the security forces, working day and night to defend the country. They would not hesitate laying down their lives for the motherland, he concluded. (Pajhwok)

### (8) Nicholson Says...

to reduce the level of violence in the country. Although, the new strategy on the Afghan war has not been finalized by Donald Trump's administration, Afghan officials hope that the US government holds Pakistan accountable for its support of terrorism in the new strategy.

This comes a day after the chief of the US Central Command General Joseph Votel visited Pakistan where he called on Pakistan officials to make sure that terrorists do not use Pakistani soil to launch attacks on neighboring countries.

"Votel stressed that Pakistani soil should not be used to plan or conduct terrorist attacks against its neighbors," the US embassy in Islamabad quoted Votel as saying.

Meanwhile, a source within the Afghan government said on condition of anonymity that apparently a consensus has been made among White House officials on the deployment of additional US troops to Afghanistan as part of the new strategy.

"If they want the strategy to be successful,

they must put pressure on Pakistan, Iran, Qatar and Saudi Arabia," said military analyst Mohsin Mukhtar.

There is some speculation that the US relationship with Pakistan has been under scrutiny during Trump's lengthy review of a new strategy and troop levels in the fight against Taliban and other militant groups in the country.

"The negotiations which took place between the US and Afghan leaders, we hope that these relations continue in the best way," said Mujib Rahimi, spokesman for CEO Abdullah Abdullah.

US officials have said that the Trump administration will announce the new strategy at an appropriate time.

"Important day spent at Camp David with our very talented Generals and military leaders. Many decisions made, including on Afghanistan," Trump said in a tweet on Saturday after meeting with his aides, including Defense Secretary Jim Mattis and Secretary of State Rex Tillerson, to discuss his administration's new strategy on Afghanistan. Mattis said recently that there were a number of options on the table when it comes to the new strategy on Afghanistan and the options included of the complete withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan, deployment of additional forces or handing over the mission to private security firms. (Tolonews)

### (9) Handicapped...

Ending their gathering, the disabled individuals issued a seven-point article, calling on the government, politicians, tribal elders, and local authorities to create 'a real peaceful environment.'

It urged all insurgents groups, politicians and warmongers to stop fighting in order to prevent civilians from being killed and maimed and resolve their conflict and disputes.

They also vowed to closely monitor the entire peace process and try to negotiate and invite armed groups to the parleys. (Pajhwok)

### (10) 15 Years on, no...

always went into private pockets. However, he named no one.

The provincial council members last year closed their office in Paroon to protest against the government for not reconstructing roads in the province.

Residents of the five districts, which have no access road to Paroon, say they reach the provincial capital by travelling through neighboring Kunar and Laghman provinces.

These districts are Barg-i-Matal, Kamdesh, Doab, Mandol and Nurgram and these districts are called western Nuristan.

A resident of Barg-i-Matal district, Khan Zali, told Pajhwok Afghan News: "It is very important to connect the western Nuristan with the center, 15 years on, no road to these districts could be constructed."

A resident of Paroon, Wasil, said people faced a lot of problems in travelling home from the centre to districts. "Those who have jobs here are unable to leave for home in months."

The rundown condition of the existing roads multiplies people's problems when snowfall begins in winter.

Local officials hold their predecessors for the current situation of roads in the province.

Governor Hafiz Abdul Qayum said currently many construction projects including roads were in progress in Nuristan.

"The previous administration is responsible for being unable to do something appropriate in this sector. Resources, foreign aid have reduced compared to the past, but most of the work you see is done recently, in the past three years and people know it."

The governor said it had been planned to construct half a kilometer road in Paroon, sub-roads and some bridges.

He said Paroon would be connected to eastern and western parts of the province and the 76km Paroon-Asadabad road would be reconstructed in near future. (Pajhwok)

### (11) UN Confirms ...

who were hors de combat at the time of their killing, were among the victims, UNAMA said. Others, including one woman, were shot while they tried to flee the village.

"I condemn this blatant targeting of civilians and persons hors de combat in clear violation of international law," said Tadamichi Yamamoto, the secretary-general's special representative. "The perpetrators of these killings and crimes must be held accountable."

UNAMA found no evidence to substantiate allegations of beheadings. The human rights team, which interviewed witnesses and officials, could not verify claims about abductions of women and sexual violence.

It added further investigations were required into the allegations of sectarian hatred as a factor in the killings in Mirzawlang, whose residents are mainly Shiite Muslims.

Asking the militants to stop deliberate targeting of civilians, the report encourages prompt, impartial and transparent investigations of the attack to ensure accountability for perpetrators and appropriate redress for the victims. (Pajhwok)

### (12) Ghani Stresses

pointed to the railway network from the Eastern region of Khaf in Iran to western Herat province of Afghanistan as well as the China railway to Hairtan port located in North of the landlocked country, and said, "The region will witness economic boom."

Iranian and Afghan nations enjoy lots of historical and cultural commonalities. The two

countries have high-level political and economic ties.

Afghanistan has been main export destination for Iranian commodities and products for several years.

In relevant remarks in mid-May, a senior Afghan official declared that Tehran and Kabul have doubled their trade volume in a three-year time.

"The level of trade exchanges between Iran and Afghanistan reached \$2 billion over the past year Iranian Calendar (starting at March 21, 2016)," Spokesman for Afghan Ministry of Commerce and Industries Musesafer Qoqandi said.

He reiterated that there has been a considerable boost in Tehran-Kabul economic relations over past three years, especially after the nuclear deal between Tehran and major world powers.

"This shows a twofold rise in the volume of trade exchanges between the two neighboring nations," Qoqandi added.

He reiterated that Iran and Afghanistan have also expanded their relations in other areas in the past three years, and said, "Construction of Khaf-Herat railway project is an example." (FNA)

### (13) Kuwait can ...

the diplomat claimed.

He called Afghanistan the main victim of terrorism and asked the international community to agree on a clear definition to better manage the war on terror.

Hussain talked about Afghanistan's relations with neighbours and the United States. Here are some of the questions and answers.

Q: How do you see Afghanistan-Kuwait relations?

A: Our relations with the Kuwaiti government are very good and historic. Both countries are Muslim. The Kuwait government has long supported the Afghans and continues to do so.

Q: Would there be an exchange of political visits between the two states in the near future?

A: Former president Hamid Karzai had visited Kuwait. The Afghan foreign minister also visited it. We would try for further improvement of bilateral delegations. We need a concrete move from Kuwait to bring stability to Afghanistan.

Q: How is it possible for the Kuwaiti emir to play a role in Afghanistan's security? Have you asked him for help in this regard?

A: The emir is a popular and respected figure in the region and the world at large. He has good relations with all, having a strong political position and a special place in hearts of our people. This country is important for us as we believe the emir of Kuwait can help improve the security situation in Afghanistan.

Q: Have you sought help from him in this regard?

A: No, we haven't yet. But we are waiting for the emir's stance and will share our plans with him once we hear about Afghan peace talks from him.

Q: How is the current political situation in your country?

A: The security situation is good in Afghanistan. We have an elected president and a national unity government that works for the development of the country. The Afghan government also struggles for ensuring security and the High Peace Council (HPC) is a dedicated institute for that. We believe in democracy and the freedom of speech; we are committed to good relations with neighbours.

Q: Even with Pakistan?

A: Yes, because Pakistan is our friend. There are no obstacles to our cooperation with that country. As we don't accept interference, we also don't meddle in others' affairs. Our bilateral negotiations continue and we still have nearly two million refugees in Pakistan.

Q: How do you establish contact with the Taliban? Does the Taliban's political office in Qatar still exist?

A: Yes, the Taliban office has been functional in Qatar for six years now and we invite them to peace parleys. We have kept open our doors for negotiations with the militants. We don't want to fight.

We are fighting against terrorism but we invite all sides to peace. We see negotiations as the only solution to all problems.

Q: Do terrorist still have hideouts in Afghanistan?

A: Afghanistan and its people are victims of terrorism. Terrorists don't know borders; they disrupt public security in every part of the world. The international community should work together to eliminate this menace and forge a global consensus on the issue. (Pajhwok)

### (14) Unknown ...

said officials.

The officials said police have started investigations into the incident.

No group including the Taliban has claimed responsibility for the abduction.

Qarabagh is one of the insecure districts in the province in which the insurgents are active and frequently target local security forces. (Tolonews)

### (15) Taliban Rejects Ata ...

Afghan national army in the North said the deputy shadow governor of the Taliban identified as Matiullah Omari was wounded during the counter-terrorism.

The officials further added that the operations nicknamed Alburz-12 were launched

on Saturday after the insurgency related movements by the Taliban group.

According to the officials, the operations are being led by the 209th Shaheen Corps commander Gen. Amanullah Mubin.

More than ten insurgents have been killed during the operations so far, the officials said, adding that Omari was wounded during the operations in Arab Mazari village.

Balkh has been among the relatively calm provinces in northern Afghanistan during the recent years but the anti-government armed militant groups including both the Taliban and ISIS loyalists have been attempting to expand their foothold in some of the remote districts of the province. (KP)

### (16) A Dozen Policemen ...

Meanwhile, sources in the Emergency Hospital in Lashkargah – the provincial capital – confirmed receiving 15 wounded individuals from the scene of fighting in Nawa.

Taliban spokesman Qari Yousaf Ahmadi claimed 17 policemen were killed in the fighting took place near the district centre. However, he said nothing about Taliban's casualties. (Pajhwok)

### (17) 13 Taliban...

us, because a threat to Khanabad district always emanated from here. But now we have occupied it," the NDS official added.

Abdul Hai, a resident of the area, said a fierce clash took place in Khanabad district on Saturday when both sides suffered heavy casualties.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid confirmed the clash, claiming eight security personnel and two fighters were killed. One tank was blown up. (Pajhwok)

### (18) Aryana Sayeed...

"Why you are here? They told me they were here to defy those who were against the concert."

Ms Sayeed, described by her fans as Afghanistan's Kim Kardashian, is known for her long hair and figure-hugging outfits, which are seen as taboo by many in Afghanistan.

Her music mixes traditional and folk songs rendered as pop. She sings both in Dari and Pashto, Afghanistan's two main languages.

A day before the concert, I interviewed Ms Sayeed. She said she was determined to go ahead with the concert, despite the threats.

"I am taking this as a very good excuse to be able to give a bit of happiness to my fellow Afghans, who are in dire need of it at the moment," she said.

She has received a number of death threats from those who say her outfits and public shows are an affront to Afghan culture.

"There are certain people in Afghanistan who have been against music, against celebration, against even New Year, Eid and everything, I feel like today we need to stand together and fight against it," said Ms Sayeed.

"At the end of the day, we are also human beings and these are basic human needs - music, celebration, Independence Day, New Year."

Ms Sayeed said she would donate the proceeds from the concert to the families of those killed by Islamist militants in an attack on the village of Mirza Olong in northern Sar-e-Pul province. (BBC)

### (19) Tehran Denies ...

MAZAR-E-SHARIF - Army officials in Balkh said Taliban has suffered heavy losses and a key member of them has been killed in the clash.

Heavy fighting is ongoing in Chamtal district in Balkh province, officials said, adding that two people have been killed and 12 others wounded in the clash.

Deputy head of Balkh provincial council, Sayed Abdullah Masroor, said that six of his bodyguards were wounded when a rocket shelled by the Taliban landed near their house in Taraki village in Chamtal district at around 9pm local time on Saturday. (Tolonews)

### (20) Balkh Airport...

"Guilty and innocent are not yet identified, they only killed and said that you are my enemy, guilty must be identified," another woman said.

But Balkh provincial governor's spokesman Munir Ahmad Farhad called the gathering a conspiracy against Noor.

Farhad said that the women should go to government and human rights organizations to lodge complaints not to the house of a provincial council member who himself is accused of corruption and forgery. (Tolonews)

### (21) Hashmat Karzai ...

his election campaign, was killed in a suicide attack at his residence in Dand district in 2014.

Khalil Karzai said his brother was a kind person and always helped the people and worked for peace and stability. (Pajhwok)

### (22) 10 Civilians ...

Niazio village, said his brother was killed last week as a result of a clash between Taliban and security forces. (Pajhwok)

### (23) Ongoing Clash...

According to Masroor, six public uprising forces were also wounded in the fight between security forces and the Taliban in the district. Two public uprising forces were killed in the clash, he told TOLONews.

Balkh hospital officials confirmed that one dead and four wounded have been taken to the facility so far. (Tolonews)