

(1) Taliban Likely

told members of House Armed Services Committee during a hearing that he expected the ANSF to maintain stability and security in Kabul and key urban areas while retaining freedom of movement on major highways.

Stewart said ANSF would remain reliant on coalition enablers for air, intelligence and maintenance support. The ANSF will struggle to effectively fill the void created by the withdrawal of foreign troops, deal with interoperability challenges between the army and police, and address persistent maintenance and logistical issues, he noted.

The Afghan National Army (ANA) was the most proficient security institution in the war-torn country and had shown the capacity to plan and conduct multi-corps operations in high-threat areas, the Pentagon spokesman said.

"However, the ANA will continue to struggle with permanently denying insurgents freedom of movement in rural areas and will remain constrained by its stretched airlift and logistical capacity," he explained.

High attrition also continues to plague the force, which has struggled to keep its numbers near full capacity. The Afghan National Police (ANP) provide sufficient presence and security within urban centers and provincial and district hubs, but remain vulnerable in controlling high-threat, rural areas, he noted.

Gen Vincent Stewart warned the Taliban would be able to conduct attacks in urban areas through at least 2018, two years after the scheduled withdrawal of all US troops.

"The development of ANSF capabilities in 2015 will be critical as the insurgency will again attempt to increase its influence in rural areas, operate in larger formations and continue to test security forces by temporarily seizing a number of vulnerable rural checkpoints," the director predicted. (Pajhwok)

(2) RIC Meeting

into the region through trade and transport networks.

"It is important for the international community to remain engaged with Afghanistan and fulfill its long-term commitment to civilian and security assistance," the statement added.

The fourth ministerial meeting of the Afghan-led Istanbul Process in Beijing was also highly valued which would contribute facilitating peace and economic prosperity in Afghanistan.

The ministers also agreed on the need for enhanced economic, security cooperation and fighting terrorism. (Pajhwok)

supportive of the security forces. Their stout support had been manifested during the Dangan battle, where tribesmen fought against the enemies of Afghanistan.

Col. Wali Mohammad Ahmadzai, commander of the 201st Selab Military Corps, welcomed support pledges from the people. He said with backing of ulema, tribal elders and youth, the armed forces would defend their motherland.

Governor Shuja-ul-Mulk Jalala said Kumar had a 260 kilometre porous border with Pakistan and that was why rebels could easily sneak into the province. He added it was difficult for security forces to stop the movement of insurgent.

At the end of gathering, Qari Rahimullah presented a resolution in support of the armed forces. It was unanimously approved by participants. (Pajhwok)

(4) China Willing

saying a final decision, however, would be made by the Afghan government. He reiterated Islamabad's willingness to play the role of a facilitator in the peace process.

Direct negotiations between Kabul and Taliban were the need of the hour, Aziz in told the daily. No doubt, former president Hamid Karzai was reported to be in touch with the Taliban, who were encouraged to open an office in Doha, he recalled.

But the way the Taliban's political bureau was inaugurated in Qatar infuriated the Karzai administration and spawned differences between Kabul and Washington. As a consequence, the initiative fizzled out.

At a time when most of the foreign troops had pulled out of Afghanistan, there was a level playing field for all parties concerned to move forward toward result-oriented talks, he believed.

A new government was in place in Kabul, the advisor pointed out, saying China was ready to promote regional peace – key to development and prosperity. (Pajhwok)

(5) Taliban

of insecurity and deteriorated law and order since the presidential and provincial council elections.

Pasoon Shinwari, a resident of the district, said militants did not allow the vaccination campaign in the district and the government should work out a strategy to ensure it.

Muhammad Hanif Gardiwal acknowledged militants had banned the campaign and said efforts were on to kick-off the drive. But the Taliban have not yet commented on the issue. (Pajhwok)

(6) Study Shows

they face along the way, the young migrants are said to be driven on by a powerful amalgam of desperation and hope.

The architects of the study emphasized that their research focused on economic migrants who were utilizing illegal migrant networks to get abroad. "Our research basically covers those young migrants who seek asylum in European countries because of poverty and unemployment and tolerate major difficulties along the way, but our aim isn't those that transfer their capital from the country because of security and political issues, because migrants in this category mostly prefer to settle in gulf states like United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Bahrain and other countries," said Mir Ahmad Joyenda, the head of the Afghan Research and Evaluation Unit.

According to officials from the UN Refugee Agency, Afghan migrants face major challenges when they arrive in destination countries, such as the language barrier, lack educational opportunities, poor working conditions and other critical issues. They said recommendations would be sent to the Afghan government regarding new training and education programs.

"We have our own special recommendations to the government of Afghanistan, that the government of Afghanistan should make sure learning and training opportunities are provided to the youth so that youth suffering from poverty and unemployment find a better future," UN Refugee Agency spokesman Nadir Farhad said.

In 2013, 3,595 Afghan children filed migration applications for European nations, while in 2012 that figure was around 5,700. The UN has said that migrants requested asylum in more than 44 different European countries. (Tolonews)

(7) Iran, Afghanistan

the hope that through unity and brotherhood existing between the border guards of the two countries the enemies would be defeated in near future.

The Iranian commander, for his part, said that both Tehran and Kabul are resolved to secure joint border in a bid to pave the ground for glorifying of their trade interactions.

Iran is one of the most important donors to Afghanistan, which has kept its promises to help to the reconstruction of the war-ravaged country.

Iran has built several roads, power transmission lines, border stations and many other infrastructure projects to better link the two nations. Iran has also contributed more than \$50mln annually to Afghan anti-narcotics efforts during the last five years.

Tehran has repeatedly called for a withdrawal of the US-led foreign troops from Afghanistan, stressing that establishment of peace and security in the war-ravaged country is possible only through cooperation among the regional states. (FNA)

(8) Ashton Carter

escalation between our countries. The U.S. Government should continue to use all instruments of national power, including diplomatic, informational, military, and economic, to prevent and respond to these intrusions."

On removing Bashar al-Assad as leader of Syria: "As the President has said, Assad has lost legitimacy and cannot be a part of the long-term future of Syria. However, the most immediate threat to U.S. national interests is ISIL – and there is no sustainable solution in Syria without addressing the threat of ISIL. If confirmed, I will consult with my military commanders, civilian advisors, interagency partners, foreign counterparts and Members of Congress to formulate by best strategic advice for the President."

On Iraq, he was asked, "What does the end state President Obama has declared to be the objective of our operations – 'ultimately destroy ISIL' – look like in your opinion?" He answered: "I believe that ISIL must no longer be a threat to Iraq, the region, the United States, and our partners." On Russia, he was asked what he would do about this problem: "Rus-

sian tactics in eastern Ukraine have been called 'hybrid' and combine hard power with soft power, including elements such as lethal security assistance to separatists, the use of special forces, extensive information operations, withholding energy supplies and economic pressure." He answered: "Through the European Reassurance Initiative and the NATO Readiness Action Plan, the United States is supporting our Allies and partners in Eastern Europe with training activities, rotational presence, and capacity-building programs. These efforts focus on making our Allies and partners more resistant to asymmetric threats; demonstrating U.S. resolve to support European and global security; and deterring Russian aggression. If confirmed, I would seek opportunities to support and work with our Allies and partners in creating more activities, training, and exchanges that build their resistance to asymmetric, or hybrid, methods of coercion." (Agencies)

(9) Residents Irked

The ongoing situation is unacceptable to the people."

Earlier, Roohullah said, people did not have confidence in the commission's integrity and thought of it as an outsider. But the panel had won public trust due to its consistent stance on legal issues. He claimed.

The commission has volunteers in various districts to report people's grievances. Roohullah added last year alone they registered 134 cases of violence against women. Murder cases against women have risen in 2015.

"The reasons for violence are poverty, drug addiction and ignorance of laws and rights" The AIHRC regional head urged the government take cases of violence against women seriously. (Pajhwok)

(10) Ghani Warns

crime branch chief. During a visit to the area, the president consoled with the bereaved families and prayed for the swift recovery of the 39 individuals wounded in the suicide bombing.

While underlining the need for stability across the country, the president said in a statement from the Presidential Palace that his administration was working on strengthening the security forces to better protect the people.

He urged the masses to swing behind their security forces and said stability would remain a pipedream without active cooperation from the people. The president offered fateha for the 201st corps soldiers, who were martyred in the assault.

He lauded the soldiers who laid their lives to protect their motherland and directed the Ministry of Defence to extend all-out cooperation to the bereaved families. He said the injured service members should be provided with best medical facilities.

He said each soldier killed in the line of duty would be given an award. Every soldier, he stressed, should know their problems would be resolved on a priority basis.

Being the commander-in-chief of the armed forces, Ghani said he would not accept any delay in transportation of logistics to the security forces. He advised the military commanders to ensure equipping their respective brigades well in time.

Addressing the 201st military corps, Ghani said: "I am here to listen to your problems and provide a tangible solution. You are the sons of the soil and fighting for the defence of Afghanistan. The people of Afghanistan and I respect the uniforms you are clad in." (Pajhwok)

(11) Accusations of Police

company were detained by police for half hour without any cause.

Mr. Qaderi believes the harassment of his delegation was an act of conspiracy against his company to give it a disadvantage in the bidding process.

Mr. Qaderi has accused the Defense Ministry of involvement in a conspiracy to exclude his company from the bid. "They made a pretense that the number plate of the car was a fake one despite our colleagues insistences that the vehicles and the drivers would remain in custody and that they had important documents with them," Mahmoud Qaderi said. "We came for bidding and the police wouldn't accept it."

According to the Afghan International Petroleum executive, his company was determined to sign the contract for 215 million USD less than the winning companies.

Representatives in Parliament have pounced on the controversy as a prime example of administrative corruption in the government. "This is not the only example that comes and dares to file a complaint, there are more similar cases," Kandahar MP

Abdul Rahim Ayoubi said on Tuesday.

However, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) has defended the police and rejected the accusations of corruption. "Our information indicates that the police stopped a vehicle because of it's lack of legal documents and the car didn't even have a license plate," MoI spokesman Sediq Sediqi said. "It is the duty of the police to stop illegal vehicles and transfer them to police stations to assess the documents."

Meanwhile, the head of Afghan reconstruction services, Abdul Wakil Hanifi, expressed satisfaction with the cancellation of the fuel contracts. "It was good that the contract was cancelled, it would be better to put up for bidding again, because there were some doubts about it," Abdul Wakil Hanifi told TOLONews.

President Ghani has called for the review of eight other contracts he said have technical and legal issues. Ghani has also ordered the authorities of officials at the Procurement Department of the MoD to be suspended until investigations are complete.

Ghani announced that the fuel contracts would be put up for bidding once again on Monday in a meeting with officials from the Ministry of Defense, NATO, SIGAR, fuel contractors and the unsuccessful bidders that had taken part in the initial process. He cited the 215 million USD figure as reasoning.

The price of oil in the contracts in question was set at around 60 AFG. Ajmal Rahmani, Fahim Hashimi, Ismail Ghazanfar and Abdul Wase Faqiri were among the winners of the USD 900 million worth contracts. (Tolonews)

(12) President

of employees and medical practitioners of the hospital over mismanagement and offering poor health services.

However, the president in his latest visit to the hospital lauded the performance of doctors and management. He announced "to award best services award to the hospital official."

He expressed satisfaction following working out a five year plan for the development of the hospital. He said a commission would be formed to ensure the implementation of the plan.

The president urged international community to help train medical staff of the hospital and provide them with scholarships. (Pajhwok)

(13) Iran Ready

expected increase in the export of energy will be brought about by the development of the country's giant offshore South Pars gas field phases.

Last year, Iran and Iraq inked a gas supply deal where Tehran would supply gas to two Iraqi power plants. The first gas pipeline between Iran and Iraq has been already been completed.

Iran commenced pre-startup tests on the pipeline. After the end of cleaning and calibration pigging, 97 kilometers (Iran's section) of the pipeline will become operational. The 97-kilometer pipeline, 48 inches in diameter, would be linked to Iran's gas trunklines (IGATs) to deliver natural gas from Iran to Iraq.

Gas supplies are expected to start in May this year.

Iran has also opened a \$1.5 billion tender for the construction of a second pipeline to carry natural gas to Iraq, state owned Shana News said Sunday. (Agencies)

(14) EU Envoy's

and the existing practices."

In reaction to the remarks, the IEC said the statement was in contradiction to all diplomatic norms and parlance and amounted to obvious intervention in the election affairs of Afghanistan.

The statement acknowledged EU cooperation with the IEC and said it had observed and supported all elections technically and financially during the last decade. But the envoy's statement ignored the independency and impartiality of the IEC, the panel added.

Under Article 156 of the Constitution, IEC has been established to administer and supervise elections. Any change in the organisation necessitates observing provisions of the effective laws in the country.

"The IEC asks diplomatic missions and political groups of the country not to damage the electoral entities and the electoral process by making such statements. There are political purposes behind actions," the commission concluded. (Pajhwok)

(15) Business

Chakhansori said, Iranian officials will reduce restrictions on Afghan trucks transporting goods from that country.

On the other hand, some traders in Nimroz staged a protest, asking the

authorities to help clear their trucks stranded on the Iran border.

One of the protestors, Mohammad Nazir, said: "Our trucks have been stopped on both sides of the border; we have invested thousands of dollars and ask the government to help solve our problem." (Pajhwok)

(16) Pakistan Urged

Kamawal presented his department's annual report to the Governor's House.

He said construction work on the kidney hospital had finished and Pakistan had promised buying equipment worth six million Pakistani rupees for the hospital, something yet to be done.

He hoped Pakistan would buy and deliver all the needed equipment for the hospital in the near future.

Dr. Kamawal said government budget appeared to be insufficient to run the hospital and suggested the facility should be semi-privatised.

"We have sent copies of a letter having the signature of the deputy governor to all relevant departments to semi-privatise the hospital in order to provide quality and cheap services to the people." Ahmad Zia Abdulzai, the governor's spokesman, said the matter of buying equipment for the kidney hospital had been discussed with the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul and the country's consulate in Nangarhar. He said Pakistani officials had promised handing over the equipment to the Afghan government this winter. The provincial government was pursuing the issue, he said.

Press counselor at the Pakistani Embassy in Kabul, Akhtar Munir, confirmed Pakistan had promised delivering equipment to the kidney hospital and said the required machinery would be handed over soon to Nangarhar officials.

Speaking at the governor's house in Jalalabad, the director said mother-child mortality rate had declined in Nangarhar. He added 1400 among 100,000 mothers would die in 2002 and the number had decreased to 327. (Pajhwok)

(17) Experts

especially the Ministry of Interior," NDS spokesman Hassib Sediqi said. "But the NDS is temporarily providing guards or training for personnel to some people who are facing threats."

The NDS Special Forces are considered some of the most highly trained troops in the Afghan security forces, and were developed at high costs to the Afghan government and international donors. (Tolonews)

(18) 18 More

personnel and 26 rebels wounded during the operation. Four rebels three of them Pakistanis in women uniform were detained, he added.

Ahmad Zia Abdulzai, the governor's spokesman, said the offensive in Nazian was launched last Tuesday night and ended late on Wednesday.

He was unaware of civilian casualties but said 18 rebels and an Afghan commando were killed. He rejected the Taliban's claim of bringing down the ANA helicopter. (Pajhwok)

(19) Afghan Student

can serve more tactical operations such as searching a village or a building for enemy positions. Quad copter design includes a camera and telemetry that will allow us to watch live video from the Quad copter on a laptop that is located more than 1 km away," Ahmady said.

Mr. Pratyush Kumar, president of BOEING India said, "we have a partnership with IITs. We were celebrating as how to capture the hearts and minds of young talent on aerospace engineering and manufacturing."

"It should not be left unsaid that it was my great ambition from childhood to become a pilot. As I grew up, my dreams got bigger and fortunately after graduating from Habibia high school, I got a scholarship from the Indian Council for Cultural Relations (ICCR) to pursue my bachelor degree in mechanical engineering in India. I wish to afterwards pursue my M.Tech in aerospace engineering and be a fruitful servant to my beloved homeland in the future," Yasin added.

He further emphasized hope and expectations for similar competitions to be held in Afghanistan, to further acquaint the youth of his country with various technological advancements and exposure to the various fields of Engineering, which he believes are instrumental to the growth of the aerospace and aviation industries within the country.

Yasin Ahmady advises his fellow friends and Afghan students to study in Science fields, to make use of their time and try to learn practical knowledge beside their theoretical subjects taught in their schools and universities. (KP)

(20) Taliban Commande

whose dead body was set on fire by unknown gunmen.

Eng, Farahmurz further added that Mullah Noorudin was injured following a gun battle with the Afghan security forces and succumbed to his injuries after he was taken to Pakistan for treatment.

He said the dead body of Mullah Noorudin was taken to Shindand district for burial when unknown armed individuals set his dead body on fire.

It is yet not clear who was involved behind the act but Shindand district chief said an investigation has been launched in this regard.

Shindand is among the relatively volatile provinces in western Afghanistan where anti-government armed militants are actively operating and frequently carry out insurgency activities. (KP)

(21) Mining Threatens

drop in foreign aid have left the government strapped for cash. It hopes to attract global firms to exploit oil, natural gas and minerals, ranging from gold and silver to the blue lapis lazuli for which the country has been known since ancient times.

The request is rooted in hope for better days, when tourists might replace the tense guards scanning the valley. The archaeological value of the site "will outlast the life cycle of the Aynak mine," an anti-corruption group called Integrity Watch Afghanistan said in a report. "The relics found could be a perpetual tourist attraction and would provide a new symbol of the historical foundation of the region and people." (AP)

(22) Irresponsible

against the government for the past 14 years, could help improve the security situation in Bamyan.

The commander, encouraged by local elders to join the peace drive, was ready to answer any complaints against him in court, Aliyar said. About a month ago, civil society activists and residents staged a protest against the commander and accused him of torturing civilians. The protestors complained Wafa had beaten a civilian in Surkh Joi area. (Pajhwok)

(23) Former Jihadi

managed to escape and their motive was yet to be ascertained.

Their bodies were taken to hospital late at night, said local hospital spokesman Mohammad Rafiq Sherzai. Chon-kar's daughter is being treated, he added. (Pajhwok)

(24) Police Chief

deadliest for the insurgents and security officials would show no mercy to them whether carrying black or white flags.

Some days back, the Taliban had killed 11 uprising members and injured half a dozen more during an attack that also left seven insurgents dead. A resident of Andar, Khan Mohammad, said the current security situation in the area was satisfactory and people were fully cooperating with security forces.

Earlier, the acting governor and some lawmakers from Ghazni had claimed the emergence of IS militants in the province. (Pajhwok)

(25) Firewood,

Momin ghee at 1,000afs – same rates as last week's rates. But a retailer in the Dahan-i-Bagh area of Kabul, Khan Ali, sold a 49-kg bag of flour for 1,370afs, a 50-kg sack of sugar for 1,800afs and a 24-kg bag of rice for 1,800afs. Moneychanger Ahmad Shah said the buying rate of one US dollar was 57.20afs, while 1,000 Pakistani rupees ac-counted for 563afs. Last week's exchange value of the dollar stood at 57.20afs and 1,000 Pakistani rupees at 563afs. (Pajhwok)

(26) German, French

that's exactly what they are doing," Biden said as he arrived for a meeting with European Council President Donald Tusk. (Reuters)

(27) Tunisia's

regional stability, four years after a revolution ousted longtime dictator Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, and against rampant unemployment.

Tunisia's security forces are battling jihadists who have claimed responsibility for a series of attacks on police and soldiers that have killed dozens of people since Ben Ali's ouster. Additionally, some 2,000-3,000 Tunisians, many holding dual nationality, are believed to have joined jihadists fighting in Iraq and Syria. (AFP)

(28) Australia's

some members of his party, the final straw came last month when Abbott made Queen Elizabeth II's 93-year-old husband, Prince Philip, an Australian knight on Australia's national day. (AP)