

(1) UNAMA...

The report pointed out that against a backdrop of protracted ground fighting, "the battlefield permeated civilian sanctuaries that should be spared from harm, with suicide attacks in mosques; targeted attacks against district centers, bazaars and residential homes; and the use of schools and hospitals for military purposes." In 2016, UNAMA documented record numbers of civilian casualties from ground engagements, suicide and complex attacks and explosive remnants of war, as well as the highest number of civilian casualties caused by aerial operations since 2009.

Increases in civilian deaths and injuries from these tactics drove the overall three percent rise in civilian casualties, while civilian casualties from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and targeted and deliberate killings decreased.

UNAMA stated that as in 2015, ground engagements between anti-government elements and pro-government forces, particularly in areas populated or frequented by civilians, remained the leading cause of civilian casualties, followed by IEDs, suicide and complex attacks and targeted and deliberate killings.

In addition, the report stated between 1 January and 31 December 2016, UNAMA documented 4,295 civilian casualties (1,070 deaths and 3,225 injured) from ground engagements, a three percent increase compared to 2015 and the highest number of civilian casualties caused by ground engagements since UNAMA started documentation in 2009. Consistent with 2015, ground engagements remained the leading cause of civilian casualties, causing 38 percent of all civilian casualties.

Pro-Government Forces caused 41 percent of all civilian casualties from ground engagements in 2016; Anti-Government Elements caused 34 percent; and 25 percent resulted from ground engagements between Anti-Government Elements and Pro-Government Forces in which UNAMA could not determine the exact perpetrator and attributed responsibility to both.

"UNAMA is particularly concerned by the persistent use of indirect and/or explosive weapons in civilian-populated areas by parties to the conflict. These weapons systems accounted for 61 percent of civilian casualties caused by ground engagements and 23 percent of all civilian casualties documented by UNAMA in 2016," read the report. The conflict severely impacted Afghan children in 2016. UNAMA recorded 3,512 child casualties (923 deaths and 2,589 injured), a 24 percent increase from 2015, and the highest number of child casualties recorded by UNAMA in a single year.

In 2016, UNAMA documented 1,218 women casualties (341 deaths and 877 injured), representing a two percent decrease compared to 2015.

Civilian casualties increased in five of Afghanistan's eight regions last year with the armed conflict having most affected the southern region, which recorded 2,989 civilian casualties (1,056 deaths and 1,933 injured), a 17 percent increase compared to 2015.

The central region recorded the second highest number of civilian casualties - 2,348 civilian casualties (534 deaths and 1,814 injured) - an increase of 34 percent compared to 2015 due to suicide and complex attacks in Kabul city.

The report attributed 61 percent of all civilian casualties through attacks to anti-government elements. This was a total of 6,994 civilian casualties (2,131 deaths and 4,863 injured). Of this, UNAMA attributed 4,953 civilian casualties (1,618 deaths and 3,335 injured) to Taliban; 899 civilian casualties (209 deaths and 690 injured) to Daesh; and 1,099 civilian casualties (286 deaths and 813 injured) to unidentified anti-government elements where there was no public claim of responsibility. (Tolonews)

(2) ARG Responds ...

press release reads. ARG's statement comes just hours after UNAMA issued its annual report - at the same time calling on all warring parties in Afghanistan to take urgent steps to halt the killing and maiming of

civilians. UNAMA documented the highest ever number of civilian casualties in a single year, including record figures for children killed and injured in 2016.

The ARG press release states that the president has always called on the Afghan defense and security forces to ensure safety of civilians during operations.

"The president once again clarifies that the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan instead considers the Taliban and other terrorist groups accountable to ensure the safety of people's lives and properties," the press release concludes.

ARG's statement was in response to UNAMA's report which attributed 2,728 civilian casualties (903 deaths and 1,825 injured) to Pro-Government Forces in 2016 - a 46 percent increase compared to 2015 - accounting for 24 percent of all civilian casualties.

UNAMA attributed 20 percent of total civilian casualties to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) 2,281 civilian casualties (706 deaths and 1575 injured); two percent to international military forces, 262 casualties (145 deaths and 117 injured); and two percent to pro-Government armed groups, 185 civilian casualties (52 deaths and 133 injured). The report stated over half - 53 percent - of civilian casualties caused by Pro-Government Forces, mainly ANSF, to the use of indirect and/or explosive weapons during ground engagements, mainly mortars and artillery, with 1,449 civilian casualties (379 deaths and 1,070 injured).

UNAMA stated that Pro-Government Forces caused at least 41 percent of all civilian casualties during ground engagements in 2016.

Aerial operations remained the second leading cause of civilian casualties by Pro-Government Forces in 2016, accounting for 22 percent of all civilian casualties attributed to this factor.

In 2015, UNAMA attributed 1,866 civilian casualties (628 deaths and 1,238 injured) to Pro-Government Forces.

In its report, UNAMA said: "The mission emphasizes that the government must hold accountable all Pro-Government Forces responsible for such incidents." (Tolonews)

(3) Taliban Reject ...

in an email to Pajhwok Afghan News said the civilian casualties had been misjudged in the UN report.

"We are very sensitive and careful about civilian casualties, this report is incomplete and we reject it," he said.

Mujahid said they had a special office for monitoring and reporting civilian casualties.

He said foreign forces were the major perpetrators of Afghan civilian casualties as they dropped tons of bombs on people and raided homes.

He called the Afghan forces 'second major perpetrators of civilian casualties.

Giving his own figures, Mujahid said foreign and Afghan forces were responsible for 77.1 percent, Islamic State or Daesh for 17.48 and Taliban for 12.42 percent of civilian casualties in 2016. (Pajhwok)

(4) Deprived...

important requirements of Paktika was electricity and the Ministry of Water and Energy should take action in this regard.

Ghani said Paktika was rich in natural resources particularly in petroleum, asking the Ministry of Mines and Petroleum to start its research on natural resources of the province.

Long and short term development plans have been prepared for deprived provinces by considering people's major demands, he said, acknowledging the youth needed more job opportunities. (Pajhwok)

(5) China to ...

bilateral cooperation in various spheres. They also talked about regional matters and China's role in Afghanistan's peace process. Rabbani thanked China's support to Afghanistan government's bid for peace and beneficial bilateral cooperation. The envoy assured Rabbani of his country's continued support. (Pajhwok)

(6) 107 Killed ...

to another. Abdullah hailed the performance

relevant organs, which worked in close coordination to rescue precious lives during the country-wide snowfall. (Pajhwok)

(7) Australia Firmly ...

has contributed A\$51.8 million in humanitarian assistance to Afghanistan since January 2014 through the UN and other international partners. We stand with the Afghan people as they work to respond to this disaster. (PR)

(8) Kabul Looks...

Some circles claim that over the past fifteen years, Kabul has failed to come up with a strong strategy to mend ties with Russia. Karzai and Ghani both are blamed for their failure to mend relations with Russia over the past fifteen years. "The uncle of Mr. Karzai (former Afghan president Hamid Karzai) was serving as ambassador there and he also failed to bring the ties back on track. Now that Dr. Ashraf Ghani appointed his uncle there, he also disappointed our neighbor; we heard that for a long period of time he stayed in Kabul and did not return to Russia," said Sayed Eshaq Gailani, chairman of the Nahzat-e-Hambastagi Milli Afghanistan party. But Afghanistan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) believes that the complexity of the issues in the region cannot be resolved by a single country. "It is not the question of foreign policy failure, security in the region is much more complicated and it is difficult to address these issues only through foreign policy. Main parts of the security aspects in the region are related to wider international issues and these issues are outside the circle of Afghanistan's foreign policy," said Faramarz Tammanna, head of Afghanistan Center for Strategic Studies at MoFA. After assuming office as president, Ghani ordered the appointment of his uncle Qayoum Kochai as Afghan ambassador to Russia. (Tolonews)

"We therefore recommended, among other actions, that the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA) immediately terminate grant agreements S-AF200-13-CA-012 and S-AF200-13-CA-014 with OHG," the report said. (Pajhwok)

will for peace and full political and public support for reconciliation efforts.

"The anti-government insurgents also have willingness for peace, so we should be optimistic of peace efforts," remarked the diplomat, who called for intra-Afghan negotiations, as the international community merely supported final results and agreements.

There were no losers or winners in the peace dialogue, he said, adding both sides were winners. The biggest excuse of insurgents was the pullout of foreign forces, he continued, arguing peace would pave the ground for it. He asked other anti-government insurgents to consider the above points, and realise the worn-torn nation's desire. (Pajhwok)

(9) Marble Traders...

said USAID Mission Director Herbie Smith. "It is expected that such support for increased marble exports leads to upstream investment in value-added technology in marble extraction, cutting and polishing to increase both quality and demand." The India Stone Mart is organized by the Center for Development of Stones, the Federation of Indian Chamber of Commerce and Industries, and the Government of Rajasthan and brings together marble producers and exporters, architects, civil engineers, interior decorators, builders and real estate developers under one roof. The tradeshow event follows a successful event in Dubai during December 2016 called "Exhibition Afghanistan" that raised awareness of Afghanistan's big marble exports, including marble and other semi-precious stones. (PR)

(10) Govt. to Review...

Abdullah Abdullah has however said in the past that a lack of interest from within the presidential palace is behind the delay. (Tolonews)

(11) Avalanches...

up all roads covered with snow in different provinces," he said. On Sunday, Afghanistan's government declared a public holiday due to the heavy snowfall across the country. The United Nations has offered its assistance.

(12) JIA Supports ...

"I commend the efforts of the Afghan government that has quickly mobilized to respond to the disaster," said U.N. humanitarian coordinator for Afghanistan Mark Bowden in a statement. "The U.N. system stands ready to fully support the Afghan government in responding." (AP)

(13) State Dept. ...

the president and Atta Mohammad Noor, executive director of the party and acting governor of Balkh province. Contact was established a few days ago between the two sides and people are awaiting results, the statement added.

Attorney General Abdul Wahid said he had talked to Ghani on behalf of JIA and CEO on some important issues. But Mujib Rahman Rahimi, spokesman for the CEO, said Noor had met the president on behalf of JIA, not Abdullah. (Pajhwok)

(14) Peace to...

domestically without registration. This practice is violation of the right of authors and publishers. The revenue from sales is also not taxed by the government," he revealed. As a result, a large number of publishers avoid joining any association/union to legalise their operations. The ministry concerned was careless on the issue, he maintained. Shah Wali Sultani, head of Mohammad Rafiq Publications, acknowledged they had not yet registered the books they printed. "No one monitors our books and we did not register them either because they would impose tax on us. We cannot pay taxes both to the municipality and the Ministry of Finance," he continued. Generally speaking, many people use the Internet and evince little interest in reading books. Therefore, the government should promote book reading and support publishers and booksellers, he argued.

A law on protecting the rights of authors, artists and researchers was approved following a legislative decree from former presi-

dent Hamid Karzai on July 21, 2008. Based on Article 45 of the law, MoIC can define procedures, bills and regulations for better implementation of contents of the law. Deputy Minister of Information Syeda Muzhgan Mustafawi, commenting on the complaints of APA, said they were monitoring the books imported through the customs.

Without giving details, she said that MoIC was ready to give copyright and ISBN to all books printed inside the country to prevent the materials from being misused by others. She admitted the ministry did not force the registration of books and publishers voluntarily turned up to do so.

Zakiullah Amiri, director of the copyright section at the ministry, confirmed most books were published without being registered. "We have registered around a thousand books since 2012 when this section launched work; 16 other books have obtained copyright from 2015 till now," he explained.

He said lack of awareness about authors' rights, negligence of writers and fraud in registration of authors by publishers were the reason why most of the books were unregistered. (Pajhwok)

again destroy schools and deprive children of education. Governor Asadullah Amarkhel, who was present at the press conference, said his administration gave more importance to education and efforts were in place to avoid destruction of schools again by insurgents.

He expressed happiness over reconstruction of the damaged schools, saying it was pleasing that children had resumed going to school. (Pajhwok)

to go unnamed, said an Afghan Local Police (ALP) member was also killed in the fight. The Taliban have not yet commented about the incident. (Pajhwok)

that efforts are underway to safely return the child to his mother. The anti-government armed militant groups including the Taliban insurgents have not commented regarding the report so far.

This is not the first time reports have emerged regarding the assignment of children as fighters and suicide bombers by the militants in Afghanistan. The Afghan security forces have arrested scores of children who were recruited by the militants for the suicide attacks but were eventually released to join their family. (KP)

The local residents of the two districts did not suffer any casualties during the clash and airstrike. The anti-government armed militant groups including the Taliban insurgents and ISIS loyalists have not commented regarding the report so far.

Nangarhar is among the relatively calm provinces in eastern Afghanistan but the anti-government armed militant groups have started activities in some of its remote districts during the recent years. (KP)

posing a threat to passengers. Over the past three days, Gen. Rajab said, at least 63 avalanches hit the road. But the snow was cleaned to enable passenger buses to cross the tunnel. Crossing the highway, which is often blocked for traffic in the winter, poses a serious threat to commuters. In January 2010, dozens of passengers were killed as a result of avalanches in Salang. (Pajhwok)

having fallen in love with her and wanted to tie the knot with her. Hameedullah allegedly went as far as to make fake marriage documents, mentioning the complainant as his lawful wife, the newspaper quoted a senior police officer as saying. Hameedullah duped the complainant into transferring \$86,000 to an account in Afghanistan. Later, he received the money in India through alternative channels, the daily reported.

A police team apprehended Hameedullah near a five-star hotel and recovered a sedan car,

two expensive mobile phones, a laptop and documents of the property he had purchased. On an Afghan passport, Hameedullah arrived in India in July 2011 on a tourist visa, which was later converted into medical visa. "He is suspected to be involved in more such cases..." one officer said.

Police suspect he has duped more than a dozen women. The complainant has reportedly furnished a lot of details. He lived in an apartment in Noida and had an office in Karol Bagh. (Pajhwok)

evacuated to the provincial hospital, he said. Taliban have not yet commented about the incident. Over 11,000 civilians were killed during 2016 in ongoing conflict, the UN report has said. (Pajhwok)

"Muslim ban," for example, Gallup noted. This comes against this backdrop of nearly three in four Republicans, or 74 percent, saying the media has been too tough on Trump. Democrats, on the other hand, are more divided, with 49 percent saying the media has not been tough enough and 40 percent saying its coverage has been about right.

The public's mood, according to this late January poll, differs from January 2009, when only 11 percent of Americans thought the U.S. news media had been too tough on then newly-elected President Barack Obama. (Xinhua)

world - that's a good thing," Trump said, using an acronym for the Islamic State group. "Will I get along with him? I have no idea."

O'Reilly then said about Putin: "But he's a killer, though. Putin's a killer." Trump responded: "There are a lot of killers. We've got a lot of killers. What do you think? Our country's so innocent?"

In the excerpt released by Fox, Trump did not cite specific U.S. actions. It was not clear whether he expanded on the comment or added context later in the interview. (AP)

a recent missile test. The US also introduced sanctions on the Islamic Republic over the missile test and what it said was Iran's continued support for terrorism. (Presstv)

oaths to protect." The six-page document was provided to the United States Court of Appeals for the 9th Circuit. The San Francisco-based appeals court has already turned down a Justice Department request to set aside immediately a Seattle judge's ruling that put a temporary hold on the ban nationwide. (AP)

opposition delegations are set to embark on talks in Geneva at the end of February, a month after rebels and government representatives agreed to a nationwide cease-fire brokered by Turkey and Russia, which went into force on Dec. 30. (Xinhua)

security." The two leaders also renewed their commitment to fighting terrorism and radicalism and to reinforce efforts to resolve the Ukraine crisis and to achieve peace in the Middle East, including in war-torn Syria. (AP)

(NATO) allies sharing the monetary burden of defense spending, according to the White House. (Xinhua)

dislodged toward rebel-held areas in the northern part of Syria. "Syria has witnessed a positive progress, particularly after the Aleppo battle late last year, in terms of the war on terror," he said. (Xinhua)

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