

### (1) Afghanistan-Indonesia

the media office for the senior advisor to the president said.

According to the commerce ministry, currently the trade volume between Afghanistan and Indonesia is about \$6 million USD. (Tolo news)

### (2) US Expands

explosive devices.

Afghan security forces, backed by U.S. and NATO partners, have maintained battlefield pressure on the Taliban throughout the winter in their bid to prevent insurgent regrouping and recuperating before fighting picks up in coming weeks.

This week's U.S. airstrikes followed a series of pictures Taliban propagandists recently released via social media, showing insurgents winter training camps in snowy scenes. The group did not name the places but northern Afghan provinces, including Badkshan, are mostly covered with snow in winter months.

During these strikes, a U.S. Air Force B-52 Stratofortress dropped 24 precision guided weapons on Taliban fighting positions, setting a record of the most guided weapons ever released from the aircraft, the military said.

Meanwhile, the U.S. military said airstrikes in partnership with Afghan special forces have resulted in the removal of more than \$30 million of Taliban revenue since the campaign began, according to Tuesday's statement.

Most of the 14 districts in Helmand, one of the world's major poppy producing region, are controlled or contested by the Taliban.

Afghan security forces, backed by U.S. and NATO partners, have maintained battlefield pressure on the Taliban throughout the winter in their bid to prevent insurgent regrouping and recuperating before fighting picks up in the coming weeks.

"The Taliban have nowhere to hide," said General John Nicholson, who commands U.S. and NATO's Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan. "There will be no safe haven for any terrorist group bent on bringing harm and destruction to this country." Recent redeployment of a squadron of American A-10 ground attack planes in Afghanistan after a gap of three years, has also bolstered the air campaign.

On Monday, the U.S. military announced a batch of about 4,000 newly trained or under training Afghan commandos will be ready to join their national special forces by spring.

The boasting of military preparedness follows President Trump's remarks last week in which he ruled out peace talks with the Taliban citing recent deadly attacks in Kabul and vowed to defeat the insurgents on the battlefield.

Over the weekend, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani also vowed not to engage in talks with Taliban groups who plotted the violence and promised to bring the perpetrators to justice.

The Taliban when asked for its reaction has refused to directly comment on Ghani's remarks, mocking him as "merely an American puppet."

The spokesman for the insurgency, Zabihullah Mujahid, however, reiterated while speaking to VOA the Taliban believes authority to decide on the fate of Afghan war rested with the U.S.

"President Trump has chosen the path of war and Mujahideen [Taliban fighters] are ready to deal with the challenge like they have successfully done in the past," he asserted. Mujahid added the Taliban will not stop fighting until all foreign forces withdraw from the country.

Analysts say peace in Afghanistan has never been more elusive and the stepped up U.S. military operations coupled with an "emboldened and defiant Taliban" suggest the strong likelihood of increased casualties in terms of Afghan civilians, security forces and foreign troops.

"I fear that this coming summer fighting season could be one of the bloodiest that Afghanistan has seen for quite some time," cautioned Michael Kugelmann, deputy director of the Asia Program at Washington's Wilson Center.

He noted that U.S. policymakers hope the intensified military campaign will turn the tide of the war and weaken the Taliban significantly.

"Unfortunately, I think that the U.S. is banking on a misguided hope. If the U.S. couldn't turn the tide of the war back in 2010 and 2011, when it had more than 100,000 troops in place, I can't imagine it doing so now with less than 15,000 troops on the ground," said Kugelmann.

The Taliban controls or contests about 44 percent of Afghan territory, according to latest U.S. military assessments. The insurgent group inflicted heavy casualties on Afghan forces in 2017.

As many as 10,000 Afghan forces were killed last year, according to a recent New York Times article. The Afghan Defense Ministry has recently bared U.S. partners from making public details on casualties, attrition rate and other internal challenges facing Afghan security forces.

The United Nations also documented record levels of civilian casualties in 2017.

Conflict-related violence across Afghanistan last month reportedly caused more than 2,000 casualties, including nearly 1,200 fatalities. The Afghan news agency, Pajhwok, documented the casualties in an article published Monday, saying they included militant losses as well. (VoA)

### (3) US Redeploying

the BBC reported.

Iraqi officials reportedly said their government reached an agreement with the US-led coalition to reduce the number of troops in Iraq.

The reported military buildup in Afghanistan is the latest sign of a growing US focus on Afghanistan as the primary conflict.

The White House reportedly signed off in August on deploying an additional 4,000 troops in Afghanistan.

The US Army is also floating plans to increase the total US force in the country by 1,000 in a bid to boost Afghan forces' fight against the Taliban, the Washington Post reported.

Since Trump took office, the number of troops has nearly doubled in Afghanistan - from 8,500 in early 2017 to 14,000 today. (Tolo news)

### (4) Ten Insurgents

"The Taliban planned and launched insurgent attacks in the district," it said.

The statement did not provide further details.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Haroon Mubarez, a security police official in the province claimed that the foreign troops were also involved in the operation, adding that "the operation was launched in the district to clear the insurgent hideouts."

However, he did not provide more details about the operation.

The Taliban have not yet commented over the operation. (Tolo news)

### (5) Council of Ministers

project had been executed by a private construction company and funded by the government.

Asadullah, an official of the Harirod Company and in charge of the project, said the building had been constructed on about 2,250 square metres.

"The building has been constructed to modern standard and we have tried to use domestically-produced materials. But windows and gates came from abroad," he concluded. (Pajhwok)

### (6) Paktia Residents

Afghanistan have always been secured by common people historically and today they are ready to discharge the same duty, but their arbitrary action would be unacceptable because it would represent weakness of the government and the country system." The governor's office said the area and activities of the Pakistanis were being monitored.

Abdullah Hassrat, the governor's spokesman, rejected Pakistan had started installing fences and constructing some facilities across the Durand Line and said Afghan border forces in the area would not allow anyone to encroach upon the Afghan soil. Earlier, Pakistan has said it had started installing fences on the Durand Line to prevent terrorists from entering the country from Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

### (7) Commandos the

Maiwand-11 now under way, Afghan commanders expressed confidence that they are succeeding in providing more security for the population. For them, the Taliban's recent campaign of bomb attacks against civilians shows weakness. "They commit suicide because they can't fight anymore," according to Major Taj Mohammad Begharaz, the tactical operations center chief for the Afghan 215th Corps, whose area includes Helmand. He said, "The enemy is powerless against us; they can't fight us face-to-face anymore. They just bury IEDs and commit suicide. They are very limited in their capabilities."

During operations in Helmand, the ANDSF stopped two suicide bombers before they managed to carry out deadly attacks using car bombs.

Afghan and US forces also worked together to target and kill three of the four top Taliban leaders in Helmand, continuing a campaign of pressure on the insurgents and their support networks in places where they previously had enjoyed relative safety.

Under new authorities, US forces can now hunt down Taliban targets from the air, instead of acting only in self-defense as before. Air strikes on Taliban drug labs will continue in 2018 to attack the Taliban's main revenue stream.

"The Taliban has turned into an organization that profits from the drug trade," said General Nicholson in November, 2017.

On January 25, Commandos from the 3rd and 9th Special Operations Kandaks led a team of Afghan Special Security Forces on a night time raid, capturing Taliban weapons and nearly a half-million dollars in narcotics in Kajaki district, Helmand province.

The seized drugs included 124 kg of raw opium, 85 kg of heroin, 7 kg of black tar heroin, and 28 kg of morphine base valued at \$471,480.

"We are with Afghanistan and we will stay with the Afghan people. We have a great partnership with the Afghan security forces and the Afghan government. Their forces have the momentum," said General Nicholson.

The Taliban have continued to fail to put pressure on the capital of Kunduz province in the northeast of the country, the mission said.

In persistent, combined offensive operations, Afghan Commandos supporting the 209th Corps' 20th Division defeated the Taliban in engagements north of Kunduz city during recent fighting January 15-20.

As well as inflicting heavy casualties on the Taliban, Afghan troops destroyed 39 emplaced IEDs and nearly 250 kg of homemade explosives; and seized four IED caches and more than 40 anti-vehicle mines.

This is the second significant combined operation in the past two months conducted by the 10th Special Operations Kandak and the 20th Division in Kunduz province - all part of a campaign that has led to success in denying the Taliban their stated objectives for 2017, which focused on the capture of provincial district centers.

"We can no longer wait for peace to come to us," said President Ghani at a press conference January 29. "We must win it through collective national resolve." (Pajhwok)

### (8) US B-52 Drops

improvised explosive devices, the statement read, as quoted by Fox News.

"The Taliban have nowhere to hide," Gen. John Nicholson, the commander of US Forces and Resolute Support mission in Afghanistan, said.

"There will be no safe haven for any terrorist group bent on bringing harm and destruction to this country," he said.

The B-52, which was recently reconfigured with a "conventional rotary," dropped 24 guided

At a gathering on Tuesday, President Ashraf Ghani pointed to the first air raid against the Taliban in Badkshan province. He said pressure on Taliban in the north will be increased. "My second message to the north of Afghanistan particularly to Sar-e-Pul, Jawzjan and Faryab provinces is that large-scale (military) operations will kick off," Ghani said. "You witnessed yesterday that terrorist sanctuaries in Badkshan province were targeted by intense air raids. Such attack will be conducted in Jawzjan, Maimana and Sar-e-Pul when the weather allows. The preparations have been taken."

This comes as a report published on Fox News shows that the US military is redeploying its forces from Iraq to Afghanistan.

The report said that western contractors at a base say US troops began the drawdown over the past week, with groups of soldiers leaving the base on daily flights.

However, the exact scale of the redeployment was unclear.

According to various estimates, as of 2016, there were more 5,000 US military personnel stationed in Iraq, with nearly 4,000 deployed to support and assist local groups fighting Daesh militants. The remaining personnel included special operations forces, logistical workers and troops on temporary rotations, the BBC reported. (Tolo news)

### (9) Arg-Jamiat Resume

and some other issues," said Zabifetrat, deputy spokesman of Jamiat. According to sources, the upcoming

elections in the country is one of the core issues between the two sides.

Sources say government has asked the United Nations to undertake a technical assessment of the issue so that it can take a decision based on the UN study.

"President (Ashraf Ghani) should not have fired Mr. Noor, but he fired him. He (Ghani) should not have negotiated with him, but now he is negotiating. The president must abide by the law," said MP HelaiErshad.

Meanwhile, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) said the international body wants the government-Jamiat rift to be resolved as soon as possible.

"Responding to requests from the parties involved, UNAMA is engaged in looking to support a peaceful resolution at the earliest possible time. As a political mission mandated to support conflict prevention, UNAMA uses its offices to prevent violence and promote stability. The international community is committed to assisting Afghanistan hold credible elections in 2018. We trust that all Afghans are doing all they can to ensure the polls happen this year," UNAMA spokesman Liam McDowall told TOLOne.

But a defiant Noor continues to work as Balkh governor.

"The decision was made as per the direction of his excellency the governor of Balkh and on the request of the people," said MunirFarhad, spokesman to Noor, referring to the dismissal of Sholgarah district governor.

"Someone else replaced me as Sholgarah district governor. I was given the assurance to be appointed as district governor in another district," said SirajAbid, the former district governor of Sholgarah.

Presidential Palace has not commented on the issue.

The Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) has not reacted to Noor's move on the dismissal of the Sholgarah district governor. (Tolo news)

### (10) New Fruit Market

vegetable-sellers' association in Pakistan, promised cooperating on quick transportation of fruit from the market.

Public representative Ajmal Omar called the market a standard project in the eastern zone. Earlier, Nangarhar had a small market where vegetables and fruits were brought from different parts of the province.

Allah Nazar, a shopkeeper, said he alone needed 20 workers. He hailed the market as a good step toward reducing unemployment and boosting trade in vegetables and fruits. (Pajhwok)

### (11) India Pledges

He pointed to cross-Durand Line incursion by Pakistan and said "(some) countries - in the region - cannot achieve anything by firing missiles and suicide attacks".

Abdullah said those countries which claim they want friendly relations with Afghanistan "must show it in practice".

This comes after Pakistan forces resumed cross-Durand Line incursions on Kunar province in the east of Afghanistan over the weekend.

Local officials say that more than 180 missiles have hit Dogram and Sarkano district in Kunar in the last few days.

Local officials claimed that the rocket shelling resulted in casualties in the area. However, no exact information is available in this respect. (Tolo news)

### (12) Afghans Line

"I have received a one year labor visa," said one applicant Abdullah.

Currently, the Iranian consulate in Herat issues two types of visas. Labor visas which are valid for one year are issued for 100 Euros while the tourism visa for one month is about 80 Euros.

"We issue work permits to them and they go to Iran and work there for one year and come back to Afghanistan and remain here for six months, after six months, they again consult us and again we issue them with work visas," said Mohammad Afkhami, Iran's general consul in Herat.

According to Iranian officials, this year Tehran increased the number of visas to Afghans by 100 percent. Based on statistics, last year Iran issued 100,000 work visas to the Afghans. (Tolo news)

### (13) Gujar

commander Abdul Awal, but no one responded. Meanwhile, Takhar deputy police chief Col. Nazimuddin Ghorif confirmed the incident and said a num-

ber of illegally armed men attacked Gujar tribe homes. He assured that a delegation had been sent to investigate the issue.

He said: "We have been trying our best to resolve the issue though communication and peacefully between the two sides". =

A number of Gujar tribe people had been expelled from homes in the past, but during former president Hamid Karzai term, some of them were brought back to their homes. (Pajhwok)

### (14) Afghan Worker

and worked in the abattoir for over a month before the injury.

While moving a bull carcass on an assembly line to the point where he was almost horizontal, he felt pain in his back, the report added.

Diagnosed with an L5/S1 disc prolapse, where the vertebrae ruptures and the soft inner gel leaks out, he was given a 10 per cent impairment.

However, an orthopedic surgeon said manual labour would worsen his condition. "Repetitive bending or heavy lifting, especially if associated with twisting, is likely to make pain worse..."

In a ruling on his petition, Justice Duncan McMeekin said: "He has difficulties sitting or standing for significant periods, difficulties walking when the condition was at its worst." (Pajhwok)

### (15) Border Forces

incursions, they want to divert people's attention," Waziri remarked.

According to the official, Afghanistan's brave border security personnel have been ordered to target the area where rockets are fired from into Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

### (16) All Private

reporter visited two of the seven private clinics but none of the doctors or owners wanted to speak on the issue. But a local elder, Maroof Shah, said he had brought a patient to one of the clinics for treatment.

"I am a resident of Malarghi area. Someone gave me the address of this clinic, so I have brought my patient here. The clinic gave him medicine and now we are going back home," he said.

Hamidullah, a resident of Kunduz City, the provincial capital, urged public health officials to strictly monitor hospitals and clinics.

"Most of nurses in Kunduz work as doctors - a serious threat to people's lives. We have repeatedly shared this problem with the officials concerned but no action has been taken yet," he complained.

MatinAtif, acting public health director, acknowledged that none of the eight private clinics in the province had so far obtained a licence.

"These clinics may have commercial value, but they have no permission to offer health services, because their documents are still under scrutiny," the official explained.

Atif identified the illegal clinics as Maulana, Darman, Hafiz Trukman, Arya City, Sehat Afghan, Farid, MudassirNoori and Mehraban.

He said the clinics without licences did not meet the Public Health Department's standards and they employed nurses as doctors.

"We would soon visit these clinics and bring their owners to justice in case they are found to have violated the law," the acting director concluded. (Pajhwok)

### (17) Taliban Leader

and ammunition to the local authorities.

The weapons handed over to the authorities include five Ak-47 assault rifles, two pistols, a rocket launcher, six hand grenades, and one communication device set.

The militants were previously active in Khogyani district where they were conducting destructive activities under the leadership of the Taliban leader MawlawiNik Mohammad, and the statement added.

The leader of the group Islami said they have been conducting insurgency based on irrelevant and wrong instructions of the Taliban group leaders since last eight years.

He said the Taliban insurgents who have joined peace process are regretting for their activities and he called on other insurgents to renounce violence and join peace process.

They also promised to live a peaceful life after the reconciliation process and contribute in the reconstruction of the country.

The anti-government armed militant groups including the Taliban insurgents have not commented regarding the report so far. (KP)