

(1) Peace in ...

have recently seen brutal attacks in Kabul. In recent months, hundreds of innocent civilians have been killed. This is exactly why our presence is so important. So today, we reconfirmed our enduring commitment to Afghanistan. We will sustain our Resolute Support Mission beyond 2017."

NATO currently has 13,500 troops in Afghanistan in the Resolute Support mission to "train, advise and assist" Afghan troops.

Reports indicate that an increase of up to 3,000 was under consideration, while U.S. officials say it might be nearer 4,000.

The United States, which once had more than 100,000 troops in Afghanistan, is preparing a new strategy for a war which has dragged on for 16 years and which even US generals concede is a "stalemate" at best. (Tolonews)

(2) MoD Calls ...

Today, NATO chief says the allies have agreed to send more troops to Afghanistan, to train, assist and advise Afghan security forces in the fight against terrorist groups. (ATN)

(3) Contracts worth...

approved during the meeting includes procurement of fuel for the public protection forces and the security industry of the ministry of interior, extension of construction of agricultural farms project for Khas Pakh of Balkh and Kham Kalan of Parwan, and extension of the expenses of the governmental scholarships for Turkey, Malaysia, and India.

The presidential further added that the meeting also rejected the project for the procurement of the IT equipment for the ministry of labor, social affairs, and martyred and further decisions were taken that the project should be announced once again for the bidding. (KP)

(4) Three Afghan ...

the bitter events of the past in their historic memory, but now it is the time that we focus on the political consensus and unit against the common enemies," said presidential spokesman Shahhussain Murtaza.

Jamiat-e-Islami party, which is led by acting minister of foreign affairs Salahuddin Rabbani, has been one of the main critics of President Ashraf Ghani alongside Junbish-e-Milli party and Hizb-e-Wahdat-e-Islami party - which are respectively led by the First Vice President General Abdul Rashid Dostum and Second Deputy of the CEO Mohammad Mohaqiq.

However the details of the new agreement have not been made public, but Junbish-e-Milli's spokesman said in a Facebook post that the new coalition does not want the system to collapse, but that it will take practical steps to hold a meeting in the country soon.

Meanwhile, there have been reports that Jamiat leader Rabbani has met with Dostum in Ankara in Turkey. "I think if they deal with the issues through civil movements this would prove beneficial for Afghanistan and the system. Because the shortcomings within the system need to be reformed and monopolization needs to come to an end," said MP Sadiqi Neelizada.

"I hope that this coalition is not for personal motives and exploited for political purposes and personal ambitions," said Sayed Eshaq Gailani, chairman of the Afghanistan Solidarity Party.

This is not the first time that such coalitions have been formed, however they proved in the end to be unsustainable. (Tolonews)

(5) U.S. Senate ...

pleased that this legislation authorizes the necessary visas for these brave men and women," said Senator Jeanne Shaheen, who pushed for the visas, along with the committee's chairman, John McCain. (Tolonews)

(6) Hizb-E-Islami ...

seal a ceasefire with this system," said Mirwais, a Hizb-e-Islami commander in Baghlan.

He assured that Hizb-e-Islami will restore security in Baghlan within six months and will bring Taliban to the peace table if all aspects of the peace accord were implemented by Kabul.

"I assure the Kabul government and the people that we will restore security in Baghlan within six months. Our brothers within the Taliban are in touch with us and say that they are waiting to see the outcome of our peace deal with the government," Mirwais declared. Mirwais who claims to lead a group

of one thousand fighters strongly criticized the performance government forces in Doshi, Pul-e-Khumri and some other parts of Baghlan which are rich with natural resources.

Meanwhile, Baghlan Police Chief Ekramuddin Sare defended the peace deal with Hizb-e-Islami, but said the security forces had the ability to ensure the safety of Baghlan residents.

"The security forces are operating in Baghlan with full power and they have the capacity to secure it. We welcome cooperation between commander Mirwais and government, but we are able to ensure the safety of the residents of Baghlan," he stated.

Mirwais said his fighters would not lay down their arms unless they get an order from Hekmatyar.

He warned that the Taliban will capture areas under the control of Hizb-e-Islami fighters if these fighters are disarmed. (Tolonews)

(7) Afghan Finance...

At the meeting Kumsishvili introduced his Afghan guest to the economic situation of Georgia, the government's four-point plan and the ongoing and planned reforms within its framework. Special emphasis was made on the possibility of developing a transit corridor, which will include both Georgia and Afghanistan.

"Georgia's experience in terms of tax and customs administration and budgeting is what we agreed to share with the Afghan side," Kumsishvili stated after the meeting.

Afghan Finance Minister also met Georgian Prime Minister Giorgi Kvirikashvili.

The meeting focused on geostrategic location of Georgia and its transit potential and prospects of future cooperation between the two countries.

Important issues on the agenda of bilateral co-operation highlighting the need to find effective mechanisms for developing economic co-operation between the two countries, including for establishing a joint economic commission, were discussed at Hakimi's meeting with Georgia's Foreign Minister Mikheil Janelidze.

They discussed to the Lapis Lazuli transit corridor, one of the priority projects connecting the transport infrastructure of Afghanistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey, and its potential to increase cargo traffic between these countries.

The Afghan Minister expressed his gratitude to Georgia's contribution to the strengthening of security in Afghanistan and for its participation in the NATO Peacekeeping Mission.

Mikheil Janelidze thanked Hakimi for Afghanistan's support of Georgia's sovereignty and territorial integrity. (Agenceis)

(8) The Never...

was pleased with allies' willingness to contribute, whilst also placing some blame on the Obama administration for pulling out US troops too soon.

"We may have pulled our troops out too rapidly, reduced the numbers a little too rapidly, but the difference today is that the Afghan army is actually able to carry the fight and they've been carrying the fight for some time now so there's always new ideas you can come up with. There's never a lack of those. There's new opportunities and certainly the political will is there to carry this fight forward," Mattis sent.

So the Europeans will have to wait until those efforts bear some fruit. Mattis will have to return to Washington to "finish out some things," as he put it, before he'd be able to present his plan for approval by President Trump.

For Trump, who during his election campaign promised to get America "out of the nation-building business," sending more troops to Afghanistan is another U-turn, and is reminiscent of the situation Barack Obama faced in 2009.

Obama's reluctant surge ultimately accomplished nothing, as many had warned at the time, and there are no reasons to believe that "Trump's surge" would be any different.

The United States have been fighting in Afghanistan for almost 16 years now, and at height of this longest war in American history there were over 100 thousand anti-Taliban coalition troops in the country. Yet, after billions of dollars and thousands of US and allied casualties the Taliban is believed to control over 40 percent of Afghanistan's territory.

These days NATO leads 13,450 multinational troops whose remit is

to train the Afghan National Army and Security Forces.

Fifteen NATO members, including Britain, have agreed to commit more troops and money to this effort. The emphasis is obviously on the "Afghanization" of the war. But will it work? If "Vietnamisation" is anything to go by, it hardly would. In his door-step remarks before the NATO defense ministers meeting Jens Stoltenberg praised the Special Operations Forces of Afghanistan as being "very professional." However, after some of the most sophisticated and deadliest attacks by the Taliban, which killed dozens of Afghan soldiers and civilians, it has transpired that the Afghan Armed Forces had been infiltrated by the insurgents.

"The politicization of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and the loose recruitment mechanism has practically paralyzed the ANSF, destroyed its intelligence and command structure, and shifted the war equation in Taliban and the Islamic State's favor", Ali Reza Sarwar writes in The Diplomat. Compare this to the assessment of the Afghan army under Babrak Karmal in 1984, made by British diplomats and Western reporters on the ground.

The recently declassified British government papers show that under Babrak Karmal leadership and with Soviet help the Afghan army was becoming increasingly effective against the insurgency.

To undermine the Afghan government of the day, the West spared no effort in arming and financing the Islamist mujahideen. Western "help" was channeled via Pakistan, and having been "skimmed" by the country's military, as the declassified papers reveal, was instrumental in the eventual rise of the Taliban.

A favorite tactic by the insurgents back in the 1980s was to enlist in the Afghan army or form a pro-government militia to get the weapons and turn them on the government troops.

Fast forward to the present day and the insurgents employ the same tactics and enjoy the same cross-border access from Pakistan as they always had.

Unless US and NATO secure Pakistan's cooperation in denying the Taliban safe passage and havens across the border, no amount of extra troops will help President Trump to come out a "winner" whom he claims to be. (Sputnik)

(9) Bamiyan ...

Bamiyan. They said the average \$100 USD for a one-way ticket was not affordable for most domestic travelers.

The directorate also stated that the high unemployment rate in the country and the face people had less disposable cash were also preventing Afghans from traveling. (Tolonews)

(10) Afghanistan

Condemning the recent twin terrorist attacks in Tehran, Ibrahim said that Afghanistan is seeking a suitable solution to tackle terrorism so as to ensure it will not spread to neighboring states.

Larijani and Ibrahim arrived in Seoul on Monday to Attend the Second Meeting of Eurasian Parliament Speakers.

First round of the event was held in Moscow last year with parliamentary officials of 20 countries in attendance. (Tolonews)

(11) Cooperation...

Ifitkhar Malik said Afghanistan was a natural transit corridor and most of its own infrastructure projects could be aligned with OBOR. He added there were very close people-to-people and business-to-business relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Giving suggestions to improve trade relationship between Pakistan and Afghanistan, he said tariffs should be reduced on essential commodities, non-tariff barriers lowered and trade facilitation eased to remove obstacles faced by Afghan businesses and lower the cost of transactions, adding that concessionary export refinancing facilities should be made available to Pakistani exporters for incremental flows of goods to Afghanistan. (APP)

(12) Extortion on...

"It costs us between 100,000 AFs to 150,000 AFs to pay for each truck to customs offices, high tonnage scale and municipality and to many individuals.

We sell our goods for 180,000 AFs or 200,000 AFs. We benefit only 50,000 AFs but we spend it on repairing our vehicles," said Nasir Ahmad, a

truck driver.

"Check posts are taking money (from us), municipality is taking money (from us) and nothing remains for us," said Gul Ahmad, another driver.

The Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries (ACCI) admitted the challenge, saying that MPs also have hand in the extortion.

"In particular they (those who take money from drivers) are MPs, powerful figures and government officials," the ACCI spokesman Siyam Psarlai said.

According to ACCI, extortion, transit problems with regional countries particularly Pakistan are among biggest challenges for Afghan businessmen.

Meanwhile, officials from the Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation said they continue their efforts to overcome the problem.

"We have prepared a draft plan which will be sent to the high council of economy. After its approval, the ministry will order the relevant organizations to implement it. The goal of the plan is to prevent waste of government's incomes," said Hekmatullah Qoyanj, spokesman for Ministry of Transportation. Reports indicate that the prices of commodities and goods have soared in local markets due to extortion on highways. (Tolonews)

(13) Paktia Police ...

There is a need to carry out military operation and add to the number of check posts (in the area)," said Mohammad Mangal, an Afghan National Police officer in Paktia.

"Security in Gardez city and the roads which connect the city with other parts of the province is fragile and the Taliban can easily infiltrate into the city," said Naqibullah, a police officer.

Some members of Paktia Provincial Council expressed their concerns over 'growing security threats' in parts of the province and said they had shared the issue with relevant institutions.

"Paktia intelligence agencies were informed about the situation, but they are quite weak to tackle the issue," member of Paktia Provincial Council Abdul Malik Zazai said.

"Threats are on the rise. The current formation of police cannot meet our needs to improve security in the province," said Paktia Police Chief Toryalai Abdiyani.

Paktia residents warned that the situation could deteriorate unless government takes action and eliminates militants. (Tolonews)

(14) Foreign Troops ...

measured," Bahrami said.

On Thursday, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said that NATO and its allies have reconfirmed their commitment to Afghanistan and that they will sustain Resolute Support Mission beyond 2017.

Acting Defense Minister believes the government would be able to combat and defeat the insurgents with the support of NATO.

"NATO member states committed of continuing financial support and confirmed their cooperation with four-year security plan of Afghanistan," Bahrami said.

The Afghan Interior Ministry, however, stressed on the advising and training role of the U.S. and NATO military.

"These soldiers [New expected foreign troops] will be responsible of training and advising the Afghan security forces and will not participate in combat missions," said Acting Spokesman of the Interior Ministry.

Following the NATO defense ministers meeting on Thursday in Brussels, Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah has welcomed the NATO's decision of continuing support to Afghan government and in fight against terrorism.

It comes as the NATO chief has said that their support with Afghanistan, depending on Afghan government's fight against corruption and bringing reforms into state institutions, particularly in security sectors. (ATN)

(15) Pakistan's Aziz ...

which we have from Pakistan in the peace process need to be addressed," said Jawed Faisal, deputy spokesman for the CEO, Abdullah Abdullah.

Meanwhile, the office of the CEO has expressed hope that the issues between Afghanistan and Pakistan can be resolved with the help of China's engagement.

Over the past 18 months, relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have had their ups and downs as the two countries continue to engage in a war of words over certain issues, particularly regarding the

war on terror.

This comes just days after China, Afghanistan and Pakistan agreed to form a foreign ministers dialogue mechanism.

In the past, Pakistan and Afghanistan signed several agreements - however none of the agreements proved beneficial in resolving bilateral issues between the two nations. As a result, political commentators are now not optimistic and believe the upcoming meetings and the new agreements will not furnish satisfactory results.

"Regarding the intelligence sharing agreement between these two services (Pakistan-Afghanistan intelligence agencies) I would say that Pakistan will try to provide only unsubstantiated information to the Afghan National Directorate of Security (NDS); on the other hand, whenever the NDS provides information to Pakistan's intelligence agency (ISI), this will help ISI to identify Afghanistan's sources on both sides of the Durand Line and always keep its grip on it," said political activist Ajmal Balochzada.

Afghanistan and Pakistan have long accused each other of turning a blind eye to militants operating along their porous border.

But the Afghan government stresses that the intelligence sharing agreement will help the two countries to hold effective discussions on the issue of terrorism and act during emergency situations.

On announcing the new agreement in a joint press statement, Pakistan, China and Afghanistan called on the Taliban to join the national reconciliation process.

The statement also noted that the three parties support the Kabul Process initiative, "and hold the view that the Shanghai Cooperation Organization-Afghanistan Contact Group should be revived as early as possible so as to play a constructive role in moving forward the Afghan reconciliation process."

This comes after China's Foreign Minister Wang Yi visited Afghanistan and Pakistan over the weekend.

During this visit the three sides held in-depth discussions on the situation in Afghanistan, the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan and China-Afghanistan-Pakistan trilateral cooperation.

But, the question remains as to whether Afghanistan, Pakistan and China are able to find a solution to the crisis in Afghanistan without engaging the U.S. in the process. (Tolonews)

(16) Indian...

air cargo route between the two countries.

The Afghan Ministry for Public Health has praised the move by the Afghan and Indian companies to jointly invest in pharmaceutical sector.

The volume of trade between India and Afghanistan, according to officials, is around 500 million U.S. dollars annually and both sides are hopeful that opening air cargo route could help to increase bilateral trade volume and economic cooperation. (Xinhua)

(17) 20 ISIL ...

provinces in eastern Afghanistan but the anti-government armed militant groups have recently increased their insurgency activities in some parts of the province during the recent years.

This comes as an anti-ISIL operation is underway in Nangarhar to eliminate the presence of ISIL affiliates in this province. (FNA)

(18) ISIS Militants ...

wounded in the airstrike. He said the local residents have not suffered any casualties in the airstrike.

The anti-government armed militant groups including the ISIS loyalists have not commented regarding the report so far.

This comes as the US forces based in Afghanistan have stepped up airstrikes against the anti-government armed militants in Afghanistan.

The airstrikes were increased particularly after the former US administration granted broader role to the US forces to resume counter-terrorism operations, a step that was taken after growing instability in the country, mainly due to the insurgency led by the Taliban and ISIS militants. (KP)

(19) Prince Charles...

memoration service at 12.30 p.m. will honour the 158 members of the Canadian Armed Forces who died in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2014.

The royal couple will participate in a wreath laying at the Afghanistan Repatriation Memorial near the

base.

Later in the day, they plan to visit a local winery and a farmers market in Wellington, Ont.

Prince Charles is also expected to watch a search and rescue demonstration and meet beneficiaries of one of his charities, the Prince's Operation Entrepreneur, which helps veterans get the training and resources to start a business.

The Duchess of Cornwall will meet with a regiment - the Queen's Own Rifles.

Gov. Gen. David Johnston also announced Friday morning that the Prince of Wales has been appointed to the extraordinary companion category of the Order of Canada for supporting Canadian charitable activities as well as the men and women in the Canadian Armed Forces. (CBC)

(20) Mattis Says ...

would pledge 100 more troops, though they will serve in a noncombat role.

"We still have a few gaps and nations are stepping up," he said. "We've filled 70 percent of those gaps right now and I'm very, very optimistic that based on what I heard here we'll be filling the rest."

Mattis added that upon returning to Washington, he will consult with U.S. Gen. Joseph Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and then will submit a recommended new Afghanistan strategy to President Donald Trump. "We will refine U.S. troop numbers at that time, within that framework," he said. He also appeared to place blame on the Obama administration for cutting the number of troops "too rapidly."

"We may have pulled our troops out too rapidly, reduced the numbers a little too rapidly, but the difference today is that the Afghan army is actually able to carry the fight and they've been carrying the fight for some time now so there's always new ideas you can come up with. There's never a lack of those," Mattis said. "There's new opportunities and certainly the political will is there to carry this fight forward" While justifying the need for more U.S. and NATO troops in Afghanistan, Mattis pointed to the results of "leaving ungoverned areas."

"You see it coming out of Syria where ISIS has attacked this very town from Syria, it's not like you can declare a war over or want it over or say I'm going to quit and you're not going to pay a price for it," he said. NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said the 29 NATO nations had pledged to spend 4.3 percent more in defense spending, or \$12 billion more. The announcement came following months of pressure from President Trump for each country in the alliance to spend more.

The expected deployment of more Americans is intended to bolster Afghan forces so they eventually can assume greater control of security.

Stoltenberg said the NATO increase does not mean the alliance will once again engage in combat operations against the Taliban and extremist groups.

There are now about 8,400 U.S. troops based in Afghanistan, with an additional 2,000 or so on temporary deployment. Some 6,600 troops from NATO and partner forces also are there. (FOXNEWS)

(21) Afghanistan ...

reached between the Afghanistan Cricket Board Chairman Atif Mashal and the Chairman of Marylebone Cricket Club earlier in April this year.

According to the Afghanistan Cricket Board, the upcoming match in Lord's is a new chapter to be opened in the development history of the Afghanistan cricket.

This comes as the former Afghan coaches have been insisting to organize matches with the big teams of the world in a bid to help the Afghan team gain more experience on international level.

In the meantime, the Afghan cricket team is expecting to have series of T20 International and One Day International matches against West Indies in the month of June. (KP)

(22) Nangarharis ...

up to the customs office, it has created serious problems for us, we request officials to reopen this road," he said.

Drivers also grumbled about the blockade of road in front of the airport, saying they had to use sub roads and travel for suffer long hours to reach their destination.

They said the road closure by airport officials was not only affecting people's economy but had disturbed their routine life. (Pajhwok)