

(1) US Said...

regional presence essentially shelve earlier plans to consolidate forces in and around Kabul, the national capital, next year. NATO will retain its hub-and-spoke system, which has headquarters in Kabul and Bagram, German troops working with Afghan forces in the north, Italian troops doing the same in west, and U.S. forces in the southern region around Kandahar and in the east in Jalalabad.

A senior NATO diplomat said officials believe NATO will get commitments for the \$5 billion needed to fund the current number of Afghan security forces through 2020. The diplomat was not authorized to discuss the matter publicly and spoke on condition of anonymity.

Asked about the plans, Fallon told reporters, "Nobody wants to see all the spokes collapse. I think we're all aware of the fragility of the Afghan forces. They're fighting hard, but taking very heavy casualties."

He also said that Britain will maintain its funding of the Afghan advisory mission at nearly \$100 million a year through 2020.

The moves cement NATO's commitment to the training and advising mission in Afghanistan as the conflict drags on and follow on Obama's announcement of expanded U.S. military authority to support the Afghan forces in the air and on the ground.

The U.S. is now able to conduct airstrikes against the Taliban when needed in critical operations, and American troops can accompany and advise Afghan conventional forces on the ground, much like they have done with Afghan commandos.

Afghan forces are struggling against a stubborn Taliban, which have made gains this year, particularly in the south. Islamic State fighters also have tried to gain a foothold in the country.

While there have been no changes yet to the decision on reducing troop levels, Obama has shown a willingness in the past to adjust troops cuts when conditions on the ground call for it.

As the fighting season rages on, now is an assessment period, the diplomat said, adding that keeping the four regions open will provide greater flexibility in future decisions.

The diplomat said it will be possible to continue working with the Afghans in Kabul and all four regions with the lower U.S. troop levels. (AP)

(2) NATO Approves ...

NATO defense ministers gathered in Brussels signaled a willingness to stay, with Britain's Michael Fallon saying flatly: "This is the wrong time to walk away from Afghanistan."

He warned any collapse of the country would send thousands more migrants heading to Europe at a time when the continent already faces uncontrolled migration flows.

Fallon told reporters that U.S. Defense Secretary Ash Carter told the ministers during closed-door talks that America troop levels "are being looked at again". Carter declined to confirm that however, telling a news conference it was "not a topic of discussion" and saying only that Obama would be willing to consider security conditions in Afghanistan and their impact on force levels later in the year.

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg said several nations on Wednesday committed to a troop presence next year in Afghanistan, underscoring a theme likely to figure prominently at next month's NATO summit in Warsaw.

"With a regional presence, we will continue to advise, train and assist the Afghan national forces because we are very committed to continuing to support Afghans," Stoltenberg said. The United States contributes 6,800 troops to NATO's training mission in Afghanistan, which will fall to 3,400 under the current plan, a NATO diplomat said. Washington also carries out a unilateral counter-terrorism mission in Afghanistan. (Reuters)

(3) Afghanistan...

hectares of agricultural land with the provincial governor Mohammad Asif Nang saying the irrigation will cover five districts and the center of Farah province.

This comes as Afghanistan earlier signed a contract for the extension of Kajaki Dam located in southern Helmand province of Afghanistan.

The signing of the contract for Bakhshabad Dam in Farah provinces comes as said earlier in March that work on key infrastructure projects including construction of water dams will start in accordance with the available resources.

During a meeting of the National Procurement Commission (NPC), President Ghani reviewed a report by the Ministry of Energy and Water regarding the construction of 29 large, medium and small water dams. (KP)

(4) Wolesi Jirga...

dead and another 18 border policemen wounded since Sunday.

The lower house of parliament in a statement condemned Pakistani forces for attacking Afghan border guards and said construction of the gate and installation of fences on the border were against the bilateral agreement between the two countries.

"The Wolesi Jirga condemns attack on Afghan border forces along the Durand Line and in Torkham township. It considers the construction of facilities on the border against the bilateral agreement of the two countries."

The statement asked the unity government to set aside its internal differences and announce a clear stance on protection of Afghanistan territory as well as preventing any malicious attempts from neighbours.

The house also urged the government to resolve the border tension through diplomatic channels and negotiations. Hazrat Ali, who represents Nangarhar in the Wolesi Jirga, said all Afghans were ready to defend their country.

However, he said: "War is against the interests of both countries as it can destabilize the states, both the countries should resolve the problem through negotiations because this problem would not be resolved without talks."

A lawmaker from Kabul, Ramazan Bashardost, said: "If the government really wants to put an end to the problem, all the three pillars should hold a joint meeting to be participated by government leaders and make a serious decision."

Second deputy speaker Niamatullah Ghafari also stressed a peaceful end to the border tension and said: "War is in no one's interest in the current situation, so all should try to use diplomatic channels to resolve the problem."

He praised Afghan forces for resisting against Pakistani forces and asked the government to closely follow Pakistan's attacks on the border. (Pajhwok)

(5) Zakhilwal ...

clash. Zakhilwal, who flew to Kabul, met President Ghani and National Security Advisor Hanif Atmar. He telephoned Sartaj Aziz, Pakistan's foreign affairs advisor, and agreed to meet him on how to defuse the tension.

The ambassador returned late on Tuesday to Islamabad will hold meetings with Pakistan military and civilian leaders to resolve the issue. He said no country could dictate terms to Afghanistan, which would defend its sovereignty.

Zakhilwal denied reports he had agreed with Pakistani officials on the construction of the border gate or other installations in Torkham. He said two days before the clashes an Afghan delegation met Pakistani officials and rejected their demand to construct the gate. (Pajhwok)

(6) Politicians Back...

attended by Chief Executive Officer Abdullah Abdullah, Wolesi Jirga speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim, Meshrano Jirga chairman Fazl Hadi Muslimyar and leaders of various political parties, according to the statement from the palace.

At the start of the gathering, the acting spymaster, defence minister, the national security advisor and the interior minister briefed the participants about the previous and current situation at the Durand Line.

The defence and foreign ministers mentioned efforts being made to prepare security and defence forces and find diplomatic solution to the problem.

CEO Abdullah said the Afghan government instead of war wanted to resolve the Torkham issue through diplomatic ways.

Also present on the occasion were Mohammad Younas Qanuni, Syed Hamid Gilani, Mohammad Muhaqqiq, Syed Hussain Anwari, Wahid Sabawon, Qazi Mohammad Amin Waqad, Asadullah Wafa, Haji Din Mohammad, Maulvi Muhiuddin Baloch, Maulvi Qayamuddin Kashaf and others.

All these leaders supported the government's stance to resolve the Torkham issue through diplomatic channels and praised the government's readiness to defend the country.

They said they did not want war, but defending Afghanistan's territorial integrity was their right and they wanted all issues to be resolved through diplomacy. They also thanked the government for consulting national leaders over national issues.

The president also thanked the political and national leaders for showing unity and consensus on national issues and called their vision and national thinking style as of great importance for Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(7) Karzai Says ...

claims are being made since the beginning of the government by certain people.

Insisting that he does not know on how to make a party and organize demonstrations, Karzai said he has always shared views when the leaders of the government have asked for his advice and it is their duty whether they implement his advises or not.

Karzai said he is hopeful regarding ongoing efforts for peace deal with Hezb-e-Islami led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar and said the initiative started during his tenure and now the talks are close to yield positive results. He said he is happy that the foundation for peace talks with Hezb-e-Islami and several other works including the Salma Dam and construction of the new parliament building started during his government.

In response to question comparing his government with the government of national unity, Karzai said the people of Afghanistan should judge in this regard, emphasizing that he should not discuss in this but it should be the people of Afghanistan to discuss it. (KP)

(8) Taliban...

on the Afghans. "They are now asking and even forcing us to join it. We cannot accept this demand. The Kabul administration has no power as it cannot implement any decision."

With regard to America's expanded drone strikes in Afghanistan, the commander believed the decision would fail the way all US strategies had fallen by the wayside since 2001.

The Haqqani network was part of the Taliban, he said, explaining: "We are not a separate entity. We have never said this. It is the enemy who thinks we are separate. We have repeatedly said the Islamic Emirate is one." (Pajhwok)

(9) Dozens of ...

So far two Afghan border guards and one Pakistani army major among several others had been killed and wounded.

Nangarhar officials said two Afghan children were killed after their home was hit by Pakistani firing in Ghwarji area of Torkham last night.

The situation in the border area remained tense and the border crossing remained closed for a third day on Tuesday, leaving stranded thousands of travelers on both sides of the border, called Durand Line.

Hundreds of families live in Ghwarji area. A resident of the area, Madina, told Pajhwok Afghan News that a mortar shell fired by the Pakistani forces from across the border hit a home in their village, killing two children. "We migrated because of possible clashes."

"You can see our children in this vehicle, we are migrating and have left behind everything. The land of God is wide, we will find refuge elsewhere," she said. (Pajhwok)

(10) Border Police ...

laws. Afghan 301 border zone official Col. Mohammad Ayub Hussainkhel on Wednesday said Pakistani forces once again fired at the Afghan forces last night and the clash continued for several hours.

To a question, Hussainkhel said: "We will not allow the Pakistanis to construct the gate at any cost because their action is against international laws and we will prevent them."

The border security official said the morale of their forces was high and were ready for any possible provocation from the Pakistani side.

Meanwhile, 301 border police quick reaction unit commander Balkh Jamal said they would not allow the Pakistani paramilitary forces to construct the gate.

He said the Afghan border forces had been effectively responding to attacks from the Pakistani side and had an upper hand so far.

An injured border police official, Mirwas, told Pajhwok Afghan News he wanted to fight until his last breath in the defence of the country.

"Last night I got injured during the clash with the Pakistanis and after first treatment, I returned to the line of duty. Our commander granted me leave, but I refused to go home."

The spokesman for Nangarhar governor, Attaullah Khogyani, said the forces at Torkham had been well-equipped. "The governor wants the issue to be resolved through political means, but if the Pakistani side continues the conflict, they will receive a befitting response every moment."

The situation along the border remained tense for a fourth day on Wednesday and the border crossing remained closed for as many days, bringing to a halt all kind of businesses. (Pajhwok)

(11) Taliban ...

were killed and kept hostage by the Taliban? All these activities are their sign of weakness," said Habiba Dan-

ish another MP.

Parliament members believe that ignoring the Taliban's new tactics will increase casualties among security force members and also civilians. They said the Taliban will also use civilians as human shields.

"We are trying to respond to any terrorist activities. Our forces have a strong morale and people are with us," said Dawlat Waziri, the defense ministry spokesman.

"Even if Taliban change their war tactics we are after them and no matter where, if they create problems for our people, will we respond to them with force," said Sediq Sediqqi, the interior ministry's spokesman. (Tolonews)

(12) US Urges ...

the weekend. In Islamabad, Olson met Advisor to the Prime Minister on Foreign Affairs Sartaj Aziz and Chief of Army Staff Raheel Sharif.

In Kabul, he held talks with President Ashraf Ghani, Chief Executive Abdullah and National Security Advisor Hanif Atmar. He also met Resolute Support Commander Gen. John Nicholson, Kirby said. (Pajhwok)

(13) Kabul Calls ...

neighbors, particularly with Pakistan, are settled through increased diplomatic pressure," MoI spokesman Sediq Sediqqi said.

In line with the Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA), between Afghanistan and the United States, Washington has committed to defend Afghanistan's political sovereignty and territorial integrity against external threats.

The Afghan government's statement however comes a day after the White House announced that Washington was closely watching the ongoing tension between Afghanistan and Pakistan in the aftermath of the recent skirmishes at Torkham border gate which has resulted in casualties on both sides.

"I could tell you we are all watching the tensions very closely, that we are in touch with officials on both sides," the State Department Spokesman John Kirby told reporters at his daily news conference.

The U.S. continued to call for a calm resolution to the tension. "We obviously don't want to see clashes; we don't want to see violence; we don't want to see it get worse," he said.

Border tension between the two countries has sparked strong reactions among Afghans in general with Afghan officials calling for the U.S. to intervene and increase pressure on Pakistan to change its behavior.

Meanwhile, a number of Afghan political and military experts have called on Washington to comply with its commitments to the Afghan nation in accordance with the BSA.

"The United States has failed to abide by the agreements signed between the U.S. and Afghanistan. The U.S. realizes the fact that it is only Pakistan that can pose threats to us not anyone else," military analyst Atiqullah Amarkhail said.

"The U.S. will intervene at a time that the Afghan government asks for it. Still there is an ambiguity in Afghanistan's foreign policy when it comes to Pakistan," political analyst Haroon Mir said.

The Torkham dispute is not the first such incident. In the past Pakistan's military forces have conducted several cross-border rocket attacks in Afghanistan's border regions. However, it is the first major incident that has seen Afghanistan retaliate. (Tolonews)

(14) NSC Slams ...

invasion by Pakistan of Afghan soil. As tensions mount over the clashes, a number of legal experts have asked government to file a complaint with the United Nations against Pakistan.

Skirmishes broke out between Afghan security forces and Pakistani troops on Saturday. This is the first major incident in which Afghan security forces have retaliated against military attacks by Pakistani forces.

The clashes have however led to the deaths of at least three Afghan border policemen and two civilians along with a top Pakistani military general.

Responding to the issue, President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman, Sayed Zafar Hashemi said: "We do not want war, but we are prepared to defend each corner of Afghanistan, however we want the issue to be resolved through diplomacy."

Meanwhile a legal expert, Nasrullah Stanekzai, said: "From a legal perspective, our security forces have the right to defend; Pakistani attacks are an act of invasion."

Reports on Wednesday indicated that Pakistan has however deployed more troops and weapons to the Torkham gate area.

In a statement earlier Wednesday, Pakistan's Ministry of Interior said Afghanistan should recognize the efforts by Pakistan to bring peace and

stability to the region and that Afghanistan should avoid playing into other countries' hands.

"Pakistan border management is making sincere efforts to prevent infiltration (of terrorists) from both sides of the border with Afghanistan but the very efforts have been sabotaged lately," Pakistan's Minister of Interior Nisar Ali Khan said.

But the chairman of Afghanistan's Jabha-e-Naween Milli party, Anwarul Haq Ahadi, said: "We support the bravery and determination of the security forces. They (Afghan forces) demonstrated their capability to defend, in such a situation. All people, from all walks of life, should mobilize behind the security forces."

In recent years, Afghanistan, Pakistan and NATO conducted several trilateral meetings in an attempt to avoid such border disputes. But the process eventually reached a deadlock. (Tolonews)

(15) Mohammad Khan ...

international standards and obligations in order their violations did not result in differences.

Mohammad Khan said the tension at the Torkham border crossing should be addressed through peaceful means, dialogue and diplomatic channels as soon as possible.

He said the two countries should not let the tension further escalate because it would land in trouble people living on both sides of the border, who had close and unbreakable relations. (Pajhwok)

(16) Afghan Border ...

lost an army officer to the skirmishes. Several of its border police officials have been wounded.

In Kabul, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) said on Tuesday Islamabad should stop violating the existing agreements on border installations. "The best way is to address the issue through diplomatic channels." (Pajhwok)

(17) 37 Development...

etc while the work of hundreds of others is currently in progress in various communities. (PR)

(18) Logar Highway...

"But in Afghanistan police themselves create problem for people."

Arif is another driver whose truck was intercepted in Tanki Waghjan. "My truck was stopped for half an hour. Police said they had suspicion, but let me go after I paid them 500 afghanis."

Another driver, Mohabat, said: "You see, I have loaded my truck with ghee. I cannot deliver this item to its location until I bribe the highway police in several areas."

He explained trucks were mostly stopped in Pul-i-Alam, Shash Kala, Tangi Waghjan and Saqawi areas of Logar by police for fleeing drivers. Mohabbat asked the government to punish the policemen involved in bribery. (Pajhwok)

(19) Mild Earthquake...

northeastern Badakhshan province. The location of the quake was recorded at 36.492°N 71.156°E, having a depth of 210.4 kilometer.

The most powerful earthquake jolted Afghanistan including capital Kabul in the month of October last year with the magnitude recorded at 7.5.

At least 115 people lost their lives and over 500 others were reported to have sustain injuries with damages reported to at least 4,000 houses. (KP)

(20) Farah, Parwan...

confirmed the incident, but avoided to go into specifics.

Separately, a man was killed as a result of personal enmity in Bagram district and the attacker had managed to flee.

Samad said investigation into both the incidents had been launched and those involved were being traced. (Pajhwok)

(21) 3 Tonnes of Expired...

justice. "Public Health Director Dr. Gul Mohammad Mangal said their monitoring team was currently busy raiding pharmacies for expired and low-quality products.

"We would extend our monitoring to districts and would not let anyone sell expired items," he pledged. (Pajhwok)

(22) Local Gunmen...

so that it can be a lesson to others," Naseri said.

Reports indicate that the police department in Ghor has arrested a man on charges of plotting the murder. However, the main criminals are still on the run.

Rights groups have expressed shock over the tragic incident.

(23) Taliban ...

to some credible sources, in recent years, the Taliban has managed to

infiltrate the highways by bringing dozens of high-speed vehicles under the license of transport companies in order to move fighters, weapons and drugs through the country.

Although the Afghan security forces so far have detained several individuals for their involvement in such activities, the security situation on highways continues to deteriorate.

Local officials in the northern town of Kunudz have said that the Taliban are also using these vans to ferry people as a cover for their activities.

"Taliban and militant groups want to mount pressure on bus passengers and to discourage people from using buses and instead persuade them to travel in high speed vans in order to implement their secret plans and missions," said Kunduz Governor Asadullah Omarkhail.

According to the report, the starting point of the high speed vans appears to be at Torkham border between Afghanistan and Pakistan and their final destination is Takhar province in northern Afghanistan. (Tolonews)

(24) Battles Heat...

and French special forces arrived in northern Aleppo to aid the SDF in their push against IS.

The Observatory, which says it relies on a network of activists on ground, also confirmed the reports, saying that French and German military advisors are helping the SDF in the battle for Manbej.

It added that the French Special Forces have started building a military base near the predominantly-Kurdish city of Ayn al-Arab, or Kobane, the second city after Manbej where the German and French fighters have arrived to. (Xinhua)

(25) NATO Steps...

wounded soldiers. "We are also developing new projects, including in the areas of countering hybrid warfare and explosive devices," he said.

Ministers agreed that the Minsk Agreements remain the path to a sustainable solution to the conflict, and urged all parties to fully implement them, said the press release.

NATO allies will meet with Ukrainian President Petro Poroshenko in the NATO-Ukraine Commission at the Warsaw Summit in July. (Xinhua)

(26) UN Establishes...

society, including non-governmental organizations, to observe the International Day of the Tropics in an appropriate manner and in accordance with national priorities, in order to raise awareness of the tropics, the specific challenges that they face and the emerging opportunities that they present. (Xinhua)

(27) Moscow Forced

common challenges and threats." Lavrov also highlighted the significance of providing a balance of world politics within such frameworks as the United Nations, BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the Group of 20. (Xinhua)

(28) Over 14,000 ...

have been drawing up contingency plans to respond."

In addition, there has been an influx of around 6,700 Iraqis who have entered Syria's northeastern Hassakeh Governorate, using local smuggling networks, since April, he noted. (Xinhua)

(29) Uzbekistan Prepares...

summit," marking the organization's 15th year in its present form. Founded in 1996 as the Shanghai Five, Uzbekistan became the only additional country to-date to join the group in 2001, when the group rebranded as the SCO. The SCO covers political, economic and military cooperation and is just one of the alphabet-soup of intersecting and overlapping regional organizations. (Monitoring Desk)

(30) Khamenei Warns...

we must promote our potentialities," the Leader pointed out, adding that it is only then that Iranian officials can expect the nation to have peace of mind. Ayatollah Khamenei pointed to the threats by some US presidential hopefuls to scrap last year's nuclear agreement, known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), between Iran and the P5+1 group of countries, saying the Islamic Republic will strongly respond to any such move. (Presstv)

(31) 490 Soldiers...

Waziristan, suicide jackets were spreading throughout the country. That has been controlled."

"There are just the last few pockets remaining in the Shawal valley," said Bajwa. The ISPR head said forces recovered "modern weapons" from militants, which he claimed had been stolen from US troops. (Dawn)