

(1) Women Must

talks without preconditions with the Taliban, saying the group could be recognized as a legitimate political party and even open a political office.

The Taliban responded coolly to the proposal, calling it illogical and dismissing the Afghan government as American-influenced.

Ghani's proposals represent a bold offer to the group, which ruled the country from 1996 until 2001, when it was toppled by the US-led coalition that invaded the country following the 9/11 attacks.

But the offer comes at a time when actors are desperate for a solution. Afghanistan's conflict has raged for 16 years, becoming the United States' longest war. Ghani also decried the loss of civilian life in the conflict and said Afghanistan's young people need change.

"Over 100,000 international troops left. We have been doing the fighting, the dying and the defending of this country," he told Amanpour.

Whether Washington will support talks between Afghanistan and the Taliban is not clear. Just last month, US President Donald Trump said the White House was not ready to talk with the Taliban, citing the terror group's continued use of violence.

As a candidate, Trump vowed to draw down the US presence in Afghanistan. But as President, he's given the Pentagon more autonomy, including the authority to increase troop levels. The Afghan government has lost control of large swaths of territory to the Taliban. But Ghani denied that his offer signaled desperation or that his government had lost the upper hand. (CNN)

(2) Afghan Forces

in southern Helmand province," General Mohammad Dawood Tarakhil, an Afghan local police chief, told VOA.

Provincial officials said the suspect would be interrogated about how he ended up with the Taliban.

Omar Zwak, Helmand governor's spokesperson, told VOA the suspect was transferred to Kandahar for further investigation.

An Afghan general from the 215 Corps told BBC that the suspect is in US military custody in southern Kandahar province.

However, Army Captain Tom Gresback, a spokesperson for NATO Resolute Support Headquarter in Kabul, said he could not confirm the suspect was being held in U.S. custody and directed further inquiry about the issue to Afghan authorities.

Neither the German government nor German forces serving under the U.S.-led NATO mission has commented on the news.

Foreign fighters

Afghan security officials claim foreign fighters are present in the ranks of the Taliban and Islamic State terror groups.

"We have long been stressing that foreign terrorists are helping Afghan militants wage war in Afghanistan," Waziri said.

He said foreign militants fighting alongside the Taliban and IS in the country include Uighurs, Chechens, Tajiks, Pakistanis, Arabs, French and Algerians.

Afghan officials claim that most fighting in the ranks of the Islamic State in the country are foreign nationals.

FILE - U.S. Army General John Nicholson, commander of Resolute Support forces and U.S. forces in Afghanistan, speaks during a news conference in Kabul, Afghanistan, Nov. 20, 2017. (VoA)

(3) US Betrays

they are functional.

"When the Russian arms are no longer usable and ammunition runs out, they will be replaced with US ones. As long as they work, we'll keep using them," the General said.

Some Afghan and Russian military experts believe that Washington's program of rearming the Afghan security forces is counterproductive, is not meant to make the Afghan army strong and is undermining the country's security.

"Replacing Russian weapons is a crime against the Afghan Army"

When interviewed by Sputnik, former General and now a military expert, Abdulwahed Taqat, slammed Washington's move as "treason and a crime against the Afghan people."

"The protocol we have signed with the Americans does not say that we cannot either have or buy weapons from other countries. Every Afghan family, especially if they live in dangerous areas, has a Kalashnikov. If they take them away people will have no weapons to defend themselves and terrorists will kill them. Our soldiers are handy with Russian arms; they have been weaned on using them. Many of our officers speak Russian," General Tarqat said.

"Throughout this war we have seen US weapons - they simply do not work. They are nothing compared with Russian weapons," he emphasized.

"The Afghan Army is just a human shield for the US"

The editor-in-chief of Arsenal Otechestva (Arsenal of the Fatherland) journal, Alexei Leonkov, said that the weapons being supplied to Afghanistan by the Americans are similar to their Russian counterparts.

"The Americans have been sending arms to Afghanistan for quite some time now. Because the Afghan servicemen are familiar with Soviet-made arms, the Americans are sending in similar types. The US tries to send in weapons from the countries it controls, mainly from

Canada and Croatia," Leonkov said.

He added that building a modern Afghan army is not something the Americans really want.

"They need an Afghan army to serve as a human shield in case something goes wrong so that they can hide behind it. It is the Afghan army that has been hit the hardest by this war," Leonkov noted.

Experts believe that rearming the Afghan army could take up to five years - a lengthy process that could have a negative impact of its combat efficiency.

"This is a very drawn-out process and a very painful one too," said Mikhail Khodaryonok, a retired Colonel and now a military observer for the Gazeta.ru online paper.

"The Americans will find someone to sell these weapons to"

The experts all agree that the Americans will find use for the Russian weapons they take away from the Afghan military.

Alexei Leonkov said that the arms are very likely to end up in the hands of Daesh terrorists who are making their way into Afghanistan.

"The Americans are very practical and they will find someone to sell these weapons to. The arms could pop up anywhere, above all in areas controlled by [...] what remains of the Daesh army, including those who are now in Afghanistan. [The weapons] won't go anywhere. The Americans will always find a way to cash in, so they will not be throwing these arms away."

General Taqat believes that the Russian arms will be sent to countries where the US forces are currently fighting in only to make their way back to Afghanistan and end up in the hands of the opposition. (Sputnik)

(4) Military Pressure

Afghanistan crisis and in the meantime will continue pressure on insurgents from a military point of view.

"Like always we are talking about a peaceful solution of this war, but we also know that sometimes peace is not possible until you put more pressure on the enemy," said Nicholson.

Nicholson's remarks come after the second Kabul Process meeting was held on Wednesday in which government disclosed a peace offer to the Taliban in order to end war and violence in the country.

A day after the conference, in an interview with CNN President Ashraf Ghani said the peace offer to the Taliban is not the last option for ending the war in Afghanistan.

"First of all, no effort for peace is last stage. We will succeed. Our past against all odds is to be able to do impossible," he said.

MujibKhalwatgar, head of NAI, an organization supporting open media in Afghanistan, meanwhile criticized Ghani's willing over being interviewed by foreign media instead of Afghan media outlets.

"President (Ashraf Ghani) has a two-faced treatment in this respect. He speaks with international media but does not speak with national media. From one side, this is against the law and from another, it shows that the president does not respect his people," Khalwatgar said. Although no timeline has been specified in the peace offer to the Taliban, but sources said government believes if Taliban's attacks decrease by the new war season, it will be a green signal from the group to government's peace offer. (Tolo news)

(5) 80 Athletes

Fatima Nazari got the first position among girls in this competition.

This comes days after more than 180 athletes attended the first winter games festival in Bamian. (Tolo news)

(6) Afghan Govt

to overcome threats and implement the UN counterterrorism strategy. He emphasized on fixing standards for countries who used terrorists as proxies to reach their political goals.

Addressing the conference participants, the president said: "We are united not because our objectives are the same but we have joint benefits and opportunities to prosper."

"We have never threatened our neighbors and will not allow other countries to use our soil against others," said the president, who added: "We are trying to have a normal and peaceful life here (in Afghanistan), something we are deprived of."

Ghani said Afghanistan was trying to revive its past position when the country served as Asia's square. He said in the past some believed Afghanistan would remain landlocked and dependent on others, but new trans-regional projects turned Afghanistan's same location into a golden opportunity.

The president said peace was a religious and national duty and for peace uprising all the Afghan segments, the government and the High Peace Council had reached a consensus on protection of the rights of all people, including women, former jihadi leaders, politicians and all.

"The peace doctrine of the people and the government of Afghanistan is based on the Quranic instructions which call on us to do favor on those who harm you."

The president said embracing peace required courage and conditions for peace had improved and the Afghans' support for the reconciliation process gave spirit to hopes in this regard.

Ghani said the peace deal with the Hezb-i-Islami Afghanistan, led by Gulbadin Hekmatyar, had been a successful experiment which vindicated the determination of Afghans for peace.

International emphasis on peace would ultimately impact the resolve of those hell-bent on fighting and consensus among regional countries on the importance of peace and stability in Afghanistan would ensure the sustainability of peace.

He said religious scholars on international level had rejected violence, something that had positive impact on peace's durability.

"The national unity government has put forward proposals for peace to the Taliban, in which all high interests of Afghanistan and the rights of all citizens including women are secured. The proposals guarantee prevention of all terrorist groups and criminals gangs." (Pajhwok)

(7) Kandahar Has

overcome stand unwanted traditions and threats by militants.

"Girls love this game very much," Madina, a woman cricketer in Kandahar, said. "The problem is that they are not allowed by their families to play cricket. I hope their families stop putting pressure on them. We have a right too, same as boys, to improve and move on."

"As you see, we do not have a standard playground. We urge (government) to establish a playground for us to play in a better environment," Maryam, another cricketer said.

Another woman cricketer, Safa, said some girls are not allowed to go to school besides a ban on them to play cricket.

"There are some girls who are not allowed by their families to play any sport, especially cricket. Meanwhile, they are not allowed to go to school," said Safa.

The girls said lack of equipment and a proper playground are the reasons that fewer girls are interested in sports, especially in cricket.

"At this school, we are the first girls who started playing cricket. I am a coach. We have two teams, one is for elder girls and another is for younger girls," Sahar, coach of a woman cricket team, said. "In total, there are 48 female cricketers. We have had little progress, because we were not paid attention and we do not have enough equipment."

Statistics by Kandahar Sports Department indicate that at least 100 girls play cricket and basketball in the province.

(Tolo news)

(8) Karzai Throws

visible way to end the conflict.

The former president hoped war, suicide attacks and killings would be ceased in the country with reconciliation which needed one voice and unity of the Afghans. (Pajhwok)

(9) New Peace

will respond."

Abdali said: "We want an end to their sanctuaries. If Pakistan thinks it can block the region from integration, it should already know by now (that blocking) is not a viable option. We have already moved beyond."

About India's support since 2001, Abdali called New Delhi a special friend. India has invested generously in building roads, dams and hospitals in the war-torn country. (Pajhwok)

(10) India to

security forces, the source said.

Gokhale called the Kabul Process meeting as important for peace and stability in Afghanistan and the region and congratulated the Afghan people over the conference's success.

Talking on behalf of the Indian government, he assured strong support to decisions made at the Kabul process meeting. He also said India was ready to finance some specific infrastructural projects.

On the other hand, Atmar thanked India for its support in various fields in Afghanistan and hailed the Indian people for their cooperation with the Afghans in education and military areas.

He said the role of regional countries, particularly India, was important in counterterrorism and peace.

The Indian media said Gokhale, who called on President Ashraf Ghani, handed over a letter from Prime Minister Narendra Modi to the Afghan leader, according to the external affairs ministry.

In his meetings with Afghan leaders and addressing a meeting of 'Kabul Process', Gokhale emphasized India's position that there can be no compromise with terrorism and action must be taken against those who provide safe havens and sanctuaries to terrorists. (Pajhwok)

(11) Taliban Execute

executed three men, Naqibullah, Mohammad Naim and Lalai who were involved in kidnapping cases in Khak-I-Safid district of Farah today. (Pajhwok)

(12) Ghor Residents

I cannot send it to the media outlet I am working with, on time due to slowness of the internet."

He hoped the government would pay attention to the problem or at least force telecom companies to provide high quality internet services to their customers.

Mohammad HaidarHabibi, Ghor communication and information technology director, agreed with the people's complaints and said the internet services were currently very slow in the province.

He said the problem could not be solved with private telecom companies until fiber optic cable was extended to Ghor province.

Another reason behind slow internet speed is high number of its users in Ghor, but we as-

sure the people the internet speed would be improved in the beginning of next solar year, he said.

Currently only MTN and Salaam telecom companies provide 3G internet services in Ghor province. (Pajhwok)

(13) 9 Kidnapped

efforts underway to free the others as well. Taliban spokesman Qari Yousaf Ahmadi claimed around 16 police personnel and other security men; including the governor's spokesman Dost Mohammad Nayab had been captured.

But Nayab told Pajhwok he was safe and on his job. (Pajhwok)

(14) China Offers

AshrafGhani for reconciliation.

"We hope all relevant parties can work for the shared goal, enhance dialogue and consultations, discard difference and achieve the lasting peace, development and stability in Afghanistan as well as possible," she added.

This comes after Kabul hosted the second Kabul Process conference on Wednesday in which the Afghan government sent a peace offer to the Taliban.

The Kabul Process meeting was a gathering of 25 nations and organizations including the EU, UN and NATO, and discussed ways to attain peace and stability in the country. (Tolo news)

(15) Pakistan Vows to

"President Ashraf Ghani's offer of peace talks to the Taliban is a considerable development," he said. "The Taliban are a political entity, a political force within Afghanistan because it is their country. So, it is a good move and a healthy sign emerging in Afghanistan [towards promoting peace]."

He pledged that "any assistance, any help in this regard from Pakistan" will be "wholeheartedly" given to Afghans, if required.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif attends a meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov during a visit to Moscow, Russia, Feb. 20, 2018.

Pakistani Foreign Minister Khawaja Asif attends a meeting with his Russian counterpart Sergei Lavrov during a visit to Moscow, Russia, Feb. 20, 2018.

"And if they would like to utilize any other platform, a trilateral, or a quadrilateral, or if they would need help from neighboring, or regional countries, everyone will be ready to do so," Asif added.

The Taliban has not officially responded to Ghani's offer of a peace dialogue. But the group has refused past offers of engaging in talks with Kabul, saying only the United States, and not its "puppet" Afghan rulers, can determine the fate of the war.

Taliban insurgents and members of the Haqqani Network are allegedly using sanctuaries on Pakistani soil to sustain and extend insurgent activities, charges Islamabad rejects.

Afghan and U.S. officials have been pressing Islamabad to eliminate the "safe havens" and push the Taliban to the negotiating table.

"The presence of [U.S.-led] foreign forces in Afghanistan has not served any purpose, said Asif. "It has not brought peace to this region, rather the situation has become much more grave than it was 20 years back."

He said Pakistan, together with China, Iran, Russia and Turkey, is making efforts to promote a regional solution to the Afghan conflict and Ghani's offer to the Taliban is in line with those efforts. Asif insisted that neighboring and regional countries have "direct stakes" in whatever is happening in Afghanistan.

"Our stakes are much, much higher, rather these stakes are existential stakes as compared to America, who [is] remote-controlling things in Afghanistan," Asif asserted.

Differences over how to fight terrorism and stabilize Afghanistan have hurt Pakistan's relations with the U.S.

Asif said the tensions and security challenges facing his country stem from Islamabad's policies of siding with Washington in the Afghan resistance against Soviet occupation of the neighboring country and joining the U.S.-led military coalition that invaded Afghanistan after the September, 2001 attacks in the U.S.

But Pakistan, the minister said, is in the process of correcting its foreign policy to wanting to be "close to friends in the region. "But we will, in no way, sacrifice our national interests and become an American proxy, or safeguard American interests like we did in the past," he stressed. (VoA)

(16) India Ready to

According to the Ministry of Energy and Water, the project will provide healthy drinking water to two million people in the capital city, Kabul.

"The design and feasibility of the dam has been completed. Previously, Afghan and Iranian companies have worked on the project. The construction of the dam has remained. It will be used mostly for drinking water," said Asif Ghafoori, a spokesman for the Ministry of Energy and Water.

Analysts said the dam project is a good step towards overcoming healthy water shortages in the city.

"Underground water has reduced in Kabul and people are concerned about it. The project will overcome this problem," Abdul Wase Haidari, an economic affairs analyst, told TOLOnews.

The construction of the dam will cost \$236 million USD, the Ministry of Energy and Water said.

This comes after the underground water level in Kabul dropped to about 10 meters last summer. This has caused severe water shortages in certain areas of the city.

The project will provide irrigation water to at least 4,000 hectares of land in ChaharAsiab and Khairabad districts in Kabul. It will also provide drinking water to the New City in Dehsabz. (Tolo news)

(17) Ghani Remarks

position, converting to the center of regional cooperation and intersection as TAPI, TAP and fiber optic projects can be cited good examples in this regard," he said.

Lisa Curtis praised the Afghan people and security forces' counterterrorism efforts and sacrifices and said the Afghan forces were fighting for security of not only Afghanistan, but the region and the world.

She said Afghanistan had many achievements against terrorism and areas of economic, infrastructure development, reforms, law enforcement, women rights and some other areas.

President Ghani appreciated the international community, particularly the US, for their cooperation in many areas with Afghanistan and said that the Afghan government would reach peace in collaboration with the Afghan people and their allies. (Pajhwok)

(18) Most MPs Skip

members and 28 of 66 members of Meshrano Jirga did not visit their relevant provinces (electoral districts) during the winter recess.

Some of the parliamentarians say they did not visit their provinces due to security problems. ShekibalHashemi, a lawmaker from southern Kandahar province, said: "We do not have the power to task convoy of armored vehicles for our protection. Security threats are increasing with each passing day, no one would care about our security if we go to our provinces, so we chose not to go."

However, she said she had talked to a number of her constituents about their problems through telephonic contacts and meetings with them in Kabul.

Sayed Mohammad DaudNaseri, a lawmaker from central Daikundi province, said he did not visit his province due to his bad health condition and security threats, but he added he had the plan to travel to his province by air before the recess ends.

Daikundi is one of stable provinces of the country, but Naseri still complains about security threats. He said security problems were a reason most of parliament members avoided going to their provinces.

Jummadin Gayanwal, who represents Paktika province in Meshrano Jirga, said he did not visit his province due to his illness and security problems during the winter recess. He said he used hear his voters problems mostly through telephone contact.

Abdul QadirZazai Watandost, Wolesi Jirga secretary and a representative of Kabul province, said: "Lawmakers should visit their electoral districts during winter and summer recesses and know their problems and share them with the government officials, it is the rule."

Some representatives visited their provinces, some traveled abroad for their medical treatment, others stayed in Kabul due to security threats at their home provinces, he said, without going into details.

He rejected rumors that say 120 lawmakers travelled to Dubai this winter recess but said the public representatives had the right to use their recess for recreation.

Tayeb Atta, secretary of Meshrano Jirga, who visited his province Kunar during the winter recess, said parliament members must respect the rules and go to their provinces and hear problems of their constituents and share them with the upper house.

But he said that most of the house members did not visit their provinces due to security problems and the government did not provide them with air flight facilities.

Gul Ahmad Madadzai, deputy head of Afghanistan Lawyers Association, said that the law did not force parliament members to travel to their relevant provinces, but they need to go to their electoral districts and listen to problems of their people during recesses.

"It is ethical if a representative visits his/her province and voters during winter and summer recesses, but unfortunately they do not observe rules, because they think the government is unlawful, so they continue their job without any concern," he said.

About a possible delay in Wolesi Jirga elections, he said people were worried about the fate of elections and they were not sure if the ballots would be held even next year.

Article 83 of the Constitution states: "The constitutionally mandated tenure of the house of people shall terminate after the disclosure of the results of the election, on the 1st of Saratan (22 June), and the new parliament shall commence work."

Based on this article, Wolesi Jirga elections were due in May 2016, but were delayed and the president announced the lower house current members would continue their duties until fresh elections were held.

The Independent Election Commission (IEC) announced July 7 the date for holding the Wolesi Jirga and district council elections.

Three days earlier, the IEC said it was ready to hold elections on schedule but on the condition if the government provided the required budget on time and took security measures. (Pajhwok)