

UK's Upgraded Puma Helos Prepare for Afghan Deployment

LONDON - The United Kingdom is to deploy its newly upgraded Westland/Aerospaciale SA 330E Puma HC.2 medium transport helicopters to Afghanistan this month, just weeks after initial operating capability (IOC) for the type was declared. Speaking at the Puma's home base of Royal Air Force (RAF) Benson on 12 March, Station Commander and Puma Force Commander Group Captain Simon Paterson told IHS Jane's that an unspecified number of his helicopters (previously reported to be three) are to deploy to Kabul in the coming months as part of Operation 'Toral': the UK's contribution to the NATO 'Resolute Support' training and assistance mission. Specifically, they will replace the three Boeing Chinook helicopters that have been flying in support of



the Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) and Afghan Security Ministries in Kabul since late 2014. "The Chinook is a big helicopter for operating in an urban place like Kabul, whereas the [smaller] Puma offers us flexibility and versatility," the group captain said. The deployment to Kabul, which will be divided into three month rotations for the crews (the helicopters will be replaced during their regular servicing intervals) will see the Puma force operationally tasked for the first time since Iraq in 2009, at which time they were flying the legacy HC.1 heli-copter.

The HC.2 upgrade involves fitting 24 Pumas with more powerful Turbomeca Makila 1A1 engines, as well as glass-cockpit avionics, secure communications, and improved self-protection equipment. They are also to be fitted with wire-cutters and an anti-collision system as part of a safety upgrade to be rolled out across the whole of the UK's frontline helicopter fleet. According to Gp Capt Paterson, the benefits of the HC.2-upgrade work can be summed up best as "more power and more lift", which will be especially important for the upcoming deployment in the 'hot and high' environment of Afghanistan. This point was picked up by rear crew member Master Aircrew Gareth Attridge, who told IHS Jane's that while with the ... (More on P4)...(23)

ALP Personnel among 14 Dead

GHAZNI CITY - Seven Afghan Local Police (ALP) personnel and as many insurgents have been killed in a clash after a group of rebels stormed security post in the Deh Yak district of southern Ghazni province, the deputy governor said on Friday. Muhammad Ali Ahmadi told Pajhwok Afghan News that militants mounted the attacks on the district security check-posts at 3:00am and the ensuing firefight left six rebels and two ... (More on P4)...(24)

4 Police Personnel among 14 Killed in Clashes

LASHKARGAH - Four policemen and nine militants have been killed and 12 others wounded during an explosion and a clearing operation in southern Helmand and Kandahar provinces, officials said on Thursday. A roadside bombing killed four policemen in the Maiwand district where they were on their way to rescue their colleagues, who had come under attack from militants, police spokesman Zia Durrani told Pajhwok Afghan News. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the bombing and killing of eight other security personnel in northern Takhar province. Elsewhere, nine rebels were killed and 12 others wounded ... (More on P4)...(25)

300 Saplings Planted

KABUL - A number of high ranking Afghan officials and residents planted 300 saplings at Hashmat Khan Lake in Kabul City on Thursday in efforts to address the environmental issues. Kabul's acting Mayor Abdul Ahad Wahid stressed the importance of beginning serious work in addressing the issues of the environment, starting with Hashmat Khan Lake. "We have short, middle, and long-term plans to preserve the lake," Wahid said. "The level of water is very low because of sediment. We want to clean the lake so that there is more water in the future." Hashmat Khan Lake is home to a variety of species such as birds and fishes and according to a guard who over-looks the lake, the new developments and attention have attracted large group of birds that are now living at the lake. Head of the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA), Mustafa Zahir, stressed the importance of preserving the environment because of the affects ... (More on P4)...(26)

16-Member Rebels Group Joins Peace Process

JALALABAD - A 16-member insurgent group joined the government-initiated peace process in eastern Nangarhar province, the Peace Committee chief said on Thursday. Haji Malik Nazir told Pajhwok Afghan News the group had been active in Ghanikhel district and led by commanders Khalid and Rough Gul. Earlier, the group carried out anti-state activities



such as torching oil tankers and blowing up bridges on the Kabul-Torkham Highway. He noted 511 insurgents ... (More on P4)...(27)

Mangal Bagh-Led Splinter Group Returns to TTP Fold

KABUL - As part of its reorganisation plan, a dreaded splinter group has announced returning to the fold of the banned Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). Lashkar-i-Islam (LI) led by Mangal Bagh merged into the TTP, a media report said on Friday. Jamaatul Ahrar spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan the TTP would comprise members of his LI. Dawn quoted Ehsan as saying the head of the



new set-up was yet to be named. The TTP disintegrated last year when a faction led by Omar Khalid Khurasani revolted against Mullah Fazlullah and formed Jamaatul Ahrar. South Waziristan-based militant leader Khan Said - alias ... (More on P4)...(28)

Jamaat-ul-Ahrar Commander Killed

KABUL - A Pakistani militant commander has been killed along with an associate in eastern Afghanistan, BBC Urdu reported. Jamaat-ul-Ahrar, a Tehreek-i-Taliban Pakistan splinter group, identified the commander as Maulana Shakeel Ahmed Haqqani, alias Qari Shakeel. He was killed along with Dr Tariq Ali, alias Abu Obaidah al-Islamabadi, the group said, blaming the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) for their deaths. According to the BBC report, the two men were killed in Nangarhar. Maulana Haqqani was a key commander of Jamaat-al-Ahrar who had been blamed for high-profile attacks in Mohmand agency. (Pajhwok)



Key Taliban Commanders Arrested

KABUL - The National Directorate of Security (NDS) has arrested two key Taliban commanders during separate operations in the capital Kabul. A statement issued by the NDS states that their personnel arrested Mullah Wazir son of Juma Khan from the jurisdiction of 16th police headquarters and Hikmatullah alias Sangari son of Ghulam Ali from the jurisdiction of 8th police district of Kabul city. According to NDS Mullah Wazir was the military commander of

Taliban for Ashmakash District of Takhar province and Sangari was involved in terrorist activities in Logar, Maidan Wardak and Kabul provinces. NDS statement further states that Mullah Wazir was actively involved in the terrorist activities in Takhar province and Sangari in Logar, Maidan Wardak and Kabul provinces but it is not specified whether Sangari had played any role in last month's deadly attack on Logar police headquarters that left at least ... (More on P4)...(29)

NDS Claims Detaining 9 Insurgents, Kidnappers

KABUL - The intelligence service on Friday announced detaining five militants and four alleged kidnappers in northern Takhar province. The individuals were arrested in separate operations by law-enforcement personnel, the National Directorate

of Security (NDS) said. However, the agency gave no dates of the arrests. In a statement, the agency said: "Three Taloqan residents, loyal to Taliban commander Maulvi Aminullah Tayeb, were held with an explosives-rigged motorbike." ... (More on P4)...(30)

6 Daesh Members Dead in Military Offensive

JALALABAD - Six militants, associated with the Islamic State group, have been killed and 12 others wounded during an operation in the Ghanikhel district of eastern Nangarhar province, a security official said on Friday. Nauman Hatifi, spokesman for the 201st Selab Corps, told Pajhwok

Afghan News the offensive was launched on the basis of intelligence reports regarding the cross-border infiltration of militants for recruiting rebels. Afghan commandos took part in the operation, which inflicted heavy casualties on the militants, he added. The official also

acknowledged the loss of two special forces personnel in the firefight. Hazrat Hussain Mashriqwal, provincial police spokesman, confirmed the operation. A resident of the locality said three civilians were also killed in clash. Militants have not yet commented on the incident. (Pajhwok)

Outlook Horoscope

Aries (Mar. 22-Apr.20)

Although everyone may appear to be going nuts, you feel as sane as ever. Then again, you may not be the best judge of reality now that your key planet Mars connects with crazy Uranus and passionate Pluto. You might not even realize that you're driving against the flow of traffic because you believe you possess super powers today - and maybe you do.

Taurus (Apr. 21-May 20)

You might not have a solution for a tense social dilemma yet, but you're able to keep relatively calm in spite of the pressure. Perhaps you realize that you can't single-handedly change the current events, so you don't need to invest a lot of energy in trying to fix the situation.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

The current excitement at work gets your adrenaline going, but you're probably not as happy if you have to hide your feelings. Oftentimes, all you want to do is share the information that you have before moving on to what's next. However, a stormy emotional component makes everything more complex now. Maybe it's time to act as if you're the lightning and strike with unexpected brilliance and force.

Cancer (June 21-July 20)

Your mind is chock full of original thoughts and you are eager to act on every single one of them. Unfortunately, you may need to get your plans approved by someone who doesn't seem so friendly to your cause right now. If you can't find a way to express your creativity, you might discover that negative emotions quickly replace your intelligent visions.

Leo (July 21-Aug. 21)

You want everyone to know about your emotional turmoil now, but you don't want to go through the process of explaining everything to each person. Although actions speak louder than words, it's a mistake to believe that anyone will understand your true intentions if you just swing into motion without saying anything at all.

Virgo (Aug. 22-Sep 22)

Nothing much has changed since yesterday, but you might feel more playful today. Perhaps you have surrendered to just letting go instead of worrying about everything you can't control. But it would be incorrect to say that you have thrown in the towel. You're simply reassessing your strategy and changing your tactics because you must. However, don't lose track of the final destination if you want additional freedom in your life.

Libra (Sep 23-Oct. 22)

You may as well toss your calendar aside today because it only brings you frustration if you try to stick to your previously conceived schedule. But this doesn't mean that you can also shirk your responsibilities. Although you will still be held accountable, it's much easier to be creative if you do it on your own clock. Flexibility is your secret weapon in the war on mediocrity.

Scorpio (Oct. 23-Nov. 22)

There is no stopping you today while you are fueled by the powerful stress generated by the catalytic alignment between your two key planets, Mars and Pluto. Fortunately, you are able to express your creative brilliance as long as you keep bringing your focus back to the business at hand.

Sagittarius (Nov. 23-Dec. 20)

You might believe you already missed your opportunity to add an outrageous activity to your day. However, the truth is you can still act on an off-the-wall plan if you make it happen soon. Others are looking to you for inspiration, hoping you will pull a rabbit out of a hat. Don't worry about what everyone thinks; expressing your most ingenious ideas needs to be satisfying for you and not anyone else.

Capricorn (Dec. 21-Jan 19)

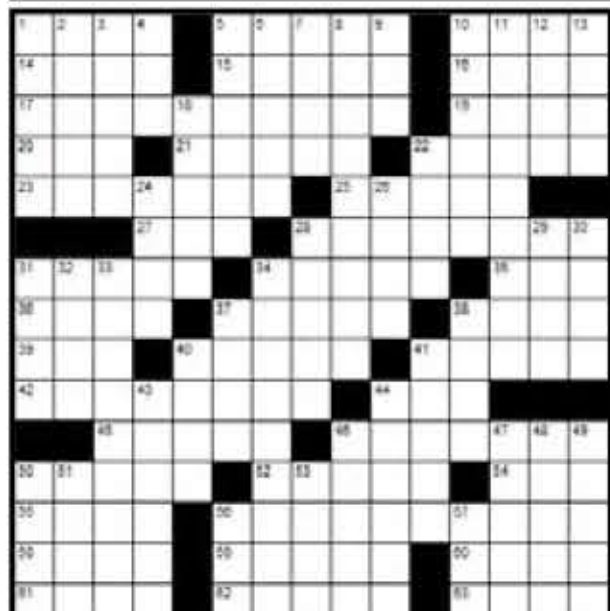
You can't maintain the status quo by simply declaring your intention to do so. However, even your most concrete plans won't prevent the changing tides from wreaking havoc and raising self-doubt. Intellectually, you realize that risky behavior can pay off handsomely, but you're hesitant to gamble on anything yet. Maybe you are motivated by fear; maybe it's common sense.

Aquarius (Jan 20-Feb. 18)

Your schedule seems totally unmanageable today and the more you try to reassert control over your daily routine, the faster you spin in circles. Fortunately, you can change the game entirely by loosening the reins and allowing the chips to fall as they may. However, you won't derive any benefit from your detachment unless you let go completely.

Pisces (Feb. 19-Mar. 20)

You have a significant decision to make today; you can either take preemptive action or wait for changing circumstances to force your hand. Fortunately, being the lightning bolt feels exhilarating, while being struck by it is a frightening experience. You are keenly aware of the stress, fiscal or emotional, and you can no longer pretend that it will resolve on its own.



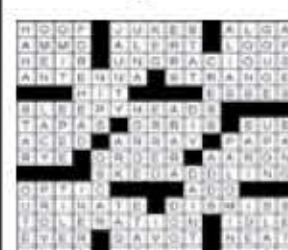
Across

- 1. Satisfy, 5. A fencing sword, 10. Disgorge, 14. Warmth, 15. Stories, 16. Young girl
- 17. Impertinent, 19. Angers, 20. A sizeable hole 21. Wear away, 22. Avoid, 23. Conference, 25. Squandered, 27. Completely, 28. Resembling malaria 31. Homeless children, 34. Yokels, 35. African antelope, 36. Church alcove 37. French for "Room", 38. Dirty air, 39. Prefix meaning "Modern", 40. Javelin, 41. Plateaux, 42. A writer of literary works, 44. Record (abbrev.), 45. Doctrine, 46. Framework of strips of wood, 50. Declares, 52. Wavelike design, 54. Cup, 55. Wicked, 56. Tableware, 58. 1 1 1 1, 59. Drop to one's knees, 60. Auspices, 61. Toward sunset, 62. Severe pain, 63. Horn sound

Down

- 1. Boats, 2. Eagle's nest, 3. Small open pies, 4. French for "Summer", 5. Unsaturated alcohol, 6. Moses' brother, 7. Hemorrhaged, 8. Inexhaustible, 9. Eastern Standard Time, 10. Splinter, 11. Models, 12. Utilized, 13. Being 18. Head coverings, 22. Historical periods, 24. Not in danger, 26. Away from the wind, 28. Swindle, 29. Dwarf buffalo, 30. Totes, 31. Diminish, 32. Mimics, 33. Kind of triangle, 34. Redeeming, 37. Told, 38. Religious offshoot, 40. Caustics, 41. Gauge, 43. Apprehend, 44. Seldom, 46. Energize, 47. Insect stage, 48. Oddity, 49. Excrete, 50. Affirm, 51. A climbing plant, 53. Margarine, 56. Calypso offshoot, 57. Damp

Yesterday's Solution



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l, could, d, d, u, n, g, e, g, s, e, x, c, i, t, e, f, a
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