

(1) Obama to

in the coming days as Afghan President Ashraf Ghani visits Washington, D.C., and meets with key leaders.

Ghani has urged a slower drawdown, warning about the security environment in his country and even the emergence of ISIS-affiliated fighters. Under the new plan, most of the 10,000 U.S. soldiers in the country will remain through 2015, instead of trimming that force to 5,500 by the end of this year – though troops would continue to rotate in and out of service in Afghanistan. Obama has said that after that, the U.S. would only maintain an embassy-based security force in Kabul of perhaps 1,000 troops. Second, sources say the U.S. will keep open the Kandahar Airfield in southern Afghanistan and Jalalabad Airfield in eastern Afghanistan through 2015, a reversal from prior plans. The agreement could mark a new era of cooperation between the U.S. and Afghan governments, after years of tension under the Karzai government. Ghani, in an apparent effort to mend fences, on Monday thanked U.S. troops and taxpayers for their sacrifice and support during a Pentagon ceremony.

“What I want to state on behalf of the Afghan people is that each one of you also has left a memory in the heart of every Afghan that you’ve touched and encountered,” Ghani said in a message to American troops, honoring the more than 2,000 soldiers who “paid the ultimate sacrifice.”

Ghani also offered assurances that his country would not be a burden on the international community as it continues to struggle against the Taliban and its own internal divisions. Defense Secretary Ash Carter welcomed Ghani and Afghan Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah at a ceremony in the Pentagon’s center courtyard. Ghani thanked Obama and top administration officials, but also American taxpayers who “make your hard-earned dollars available for Afghanistan.”

His message was welcomed. “Karzai never did this. It’s nice to be thanked,” one Marine officer told Fox News.

The Afghan president’s tone was markedly different from that set by his predecessor, Hamid Karzai, who had a falling out with the U.S. government and left office amid an atmosphere of mutual distrust. (Foxnews)

(2) New Afghan

cooperative and better. Many international audiences have seen the change,” National Security Council Senior Director at White House Jeff Eggers told reporters.

Describing Ghani and his CEO’s visit as an unprecedented and unique, Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan Dan Feldman said the two leaders would be policy makers across the executive and legislative branches.

“They will have a number of opportunities both privately and publicly to help reset this bilateral narrative, as well as engage in very substantive discussions about where we continue to go as partners,” he said.

Ghani, who is also scheduled to address a joint session of the US Congress on Wednesday, is seen here as a much different leader – co-operative and assimilative – than his predecessor, White House officials feel.

“The expectation for the visit is, at the outset, setting a different face on Afghanistan given the new administration led by President Ghani. This is a different relationship than we had under President Karzai,” Eggers said. Dan Feldman said the new Afghan leadership had been making slow but demonstrable progress in terms of well functioning of the government of national unity with a number of key cabinet ministers in place. (Pajhwok)

(3) President All

He said the US security personnel have been in Afghanistan’s remotest valleys, highest peaks and parched deserts and beautiful plains in most demanding situations.

Each one of them left a legacy, said the president, accompanied by his Chief Executive Dr Abdullah Abdullah. “What I want to state on behalf of the Afghan people is that each one of you also has left a memory in the heart of every Afghan.”

He said the US soldiers in Afghanistan had built schools, dams, roads and physical infrastructure that had changed lives. The Afghan people and security forces honoured America’s attitude, he added.

The combat role of the United States ended on December 31, 2014, Ghani noted, explaining the legacy had been proud Afghan security forces that had dealt with the best of them and emulated their example.

The military academy in Kabul is going to train generations of Afghans who are going to be committed to the values that General Greene so valiant-

ly portrayed and espoused. All these are legacies of the US-Afghan partnership. (Pajhwok)

(4) Kidnappers Give

the kidnappers have sought the release of their people from different jails including Kabul.

He says one of the local elders mediating to secure the release of the abducted civilians has told him that kidnappers have sought the release of their people from jails in Kabul, Kunduz and other provinces.

Tokhi says the local elder has also told him that if government releases their people in the exchange kidnappers will let go the same number of abducted civilians.

Hamidullah Tokhi said that the local elder who gave him the information asked not to be named.

Mohammad Arif Rahmani another member of parliament says that he does not have a figure but some of those civilians have been released and arrived in Kabul.

These civilians were traveling in two buses on Kabul-Kandahar highway when unidentified gunmen stopped their buses in the jurisdiction of Shah Joy District of southern Zabul province and kidnapped them on gun point on the afternoon of February 23. President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani has called the kidnapping case a conspiracy against government.

Military operation was also initiated to secure the release of these civilians but it anonymously wended up without giving a positive result.

Taliban have rejected hand in the abduction but chief of the provincial council of Zabul says he is confident that the kidnappers belong to DAISH (Islamic State). (KP)

(5) Afghanistan

Ghani and his CEO Dr. Abdullah Abdullah arrived in Washington for talks with American leaders.

He said the talks would focus not only on security aspects of the relationship, but also on economic self-reliance, a goal articulated by Ghani after coming to power last year.

“Stability of Afghanistan is key to stability of the region and Islamic countries. Of course, the United States can play a very significant role in creation of such consensus (among regional players and Islamic countries),” he added.

On Sunday evening, Secretary of State, John Kerry hosted a dinner for Ghani and Abdullah. At Monday’s talks, Kerry will be joined by Defense Secretary Ashton Carter, Treasury Secretary, Jack Lew and others.

The visit of new Afghan leaders, Abidi said, was to thank the American people, its security forces and leadership for the role they had played and the sacrifices made to bring peace and defeat insurgents.

“A lot of change has happened in Afghanistan between 14 years ago and now. This change inside the country was not possible without the support of the United States,” he acknowledged.

In fact, Ghani and Abdullah would kick off their official engagement Monday when they drive down to the Pentagon and deliver a speech to the US armed forces for the sacrifices made by them in Afghanistan. On Tuesday, the two leaders will visit the Arlington Cemetery.

The Afghan delegation will reiterate its commitment to the fight against corruption and administrative effectiveness. “This is a responsible government. We are taking measures to fight corruption and we have a very effective agenda of reform. We are committed to fighting corruption and implementing reform,” he said.

Security would be one of the major issues, Abidi said, adding the nature of war had changed. “There are new threats facing Afghanistan and the region, Islamic countries and the whole world.”

There should be effective and proper ways to overcome the threats, he stressed. “Actually terror has morphed into a system. It is not only a phenomenon. Without understanding this system, without regional cooperation, we are not really able to fight it,” he remarked.

“A strong message we want to send is that our national security forces are strong enough to defend the country. Of course, we need more support when it comes to training our forces. We are determined Afghanistan will be graveyard for Daesh,” Abidi concluded. (Pajhwok)

(6) Islamabad Plans

Addressing a Pakistan Day function in Kabul, the diplomat recalled the passage of the historical Lahore Resolution on March 23, 1940 had played a vital role in determining the destiny of the Muslims of Sub-Continent.

The ceremony began with national anthem and hoisting of Pakistan flag by Ambassador. The event was attended by members of the Pakistani

community.

Hussain highlighted the historical significance of the day and paid tribute to the founding fathers for rendering immense sacrifices for achieving a separate homeland for Muslims.

On Afghan-Pakistan ties, he called for intensifying bilateral cooperation in areas of trade, economy, culture and defence. Pakistan would like to see a strong, stable, peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan, he added.

The ambassador said Pakistan had removed several impediments so as to facilitate bilateral trade. He stated that Pakistan had executed various projects in health, education and infrastructure sectors in Afghanistan. (Pajhwok)

(7) Ghani, Carter

but we, the people of Afghanistan, are willing to speak truth to terror by saying, no, you will never overwhelm us, you will never subdue us, we are going to overcome. ... And in this endeavor, our partnership with the United States is foundational, because we will be the first line of defense for freedom globally.” Ghani has requested that President Barack Obama extend the stay of the 10,000 troops currently in Afghanistan through 2016. Based on current plans, U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan are expected to drop to 5,500 by the end of this year. (KUNA)

(8) MPs Seek

burning a copy of the Quran, an allegation that investigators have rejected as false.

The mob beat Farkhanda before throwing her body off a roof, running over it with a car, setting it on fire and throwing it into a river near a well-known mosque. Eyewitnesses said the men were chanting anti-America and anti-democracy slogans while beating the woman.

But the Ministry of Haj and Religious Affairs said no incident of Quran’s burning had taken place in the area. The authorities have detained 11 suspects in connection with the lynching and fired 13 police officials who failed to save her.

The attack appeared to have grown out of a dispute between Farkhanda, who had just finished a degree in religious studies and was preparing to take a teaching post, and men who sold amulets at Shah-Do Shamshera shrine, where the killing happened.

The incident that shocked many Afghans and raised renewed calls for justice and reform drew heated debates on the national assembly’s floor, with some lawmakers proving unable to control their emotions.

Habiba Sadat, a lower house member from southern Helmand province, asked the authorities concerned to award the perpetrators the harshest punishment possible. “If they are not given an exemplary punishment, such incidents will increase,” she warned. Her colleague from central Urzurgan province, Rehana Azad, held similar views. “If the president is unable to protect people, he should resign.”

President Ashraf Ghani, now in Washington on his first state visit to the United States since taking office in September, condemned the killing as a “heinous attack” and ordered an investigation.

Mualvi Ahmadulla Moahid, a lawmaker from eastern Nuristan province, told the session that injustice had been done with Farkhanda and her killers should be stoned to death. “No human, but only God has the right to burn people.”

“Infidels and apostates sitting in shrines and mosques are earning a bad name to Islam and they use and sell religion for their own benefit. Such individuals must be kicked out of shrines and mosques,” he remarked.

Wolesi Jirga secretary Abdul Rauf Inami said: “The killing of Farkhanda has saddened me deep. Humanity was hanged in Kabul on Thursday. It was a heinous crime committed in the name of religion.”

He claimed Farkhanda had been killed by drugs dependent amulet sellers, who should endure punishment for their crime.

First deputy speaker Abdul Zahir Qadir said: “We have not come here to shed tears, we should call right what is right and wrong what is wrong... with unity, we should demand justice for Farkhanda.”

Without going into details, Qadir, a powerful figure from eastern Nangarhar province, alleged Farkhanda’s lynching was pre-planned. He said a special commission should be constituted to probe the murder.

The Wolesi Jirga released a statement asking the government to punish the killers of Farkhanda and their supporters in accordance with the law. It said police officers who had committed negligence should be dismissed and prosecuted.

A day earlier, the Ministry of Interior said 13 suspects had been arrested in connection with the murder and were being investigated. The suspects in-

cluded the second police district chief.

In a statement, the Wolesi Jirga urged the Supreme Court, the Ministry of Justice, religious scholars and other departments concerned to launch a strong campaign against myths.

Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim, condemning the incident, ordered the creation of a parliamentary commission, headed by Qadir, to investigate the lynching and brief the house on its findings. (Pajhwok)

(9) Police are

27-year-old woman was beaten to death, burnt and thrown into muddy Kabul River by a mob on the accusation of burning Quran.

She was killed in the presence of a number of policemen who were quietly watching the scene, something that has provoked the anger of citizens, human rights organizations and the civil society groups.

The protesters chanting anti-police slogans called on the government to fire all those police involved in the case from their positions and punish them in public.

“We don’t want justice from the government because the government was itself involved in the incident,” a protester said.

The party head Belqis Roshan said during the protests that the government was responsible for Farkhanda’s death.

“Farkhanda was killed due to the negligence of government,” she said, calling on complete investigation of the case.

The protesters warned the government that they would not sit quiet until the perpetrators were not brought to justice.

The incident happened last week on Thursday when a Mullah accused Farkhanda of burning Quran which led dozens of angry civilians to attack her with stones and sticks.

However, the security agencies rejected the accusation against her as baseless, saying there was no evidence found that she had set Quran on fire.

“Farkhanda was innocent and all the accusations against her were untrue,” interior minister Noor-ul-Haq Ulumi told the Parliament on Monday. “13 suspected perpetrators and 13 police officials have been arrested in this connection.”

Farkhanda’s burial ceremony was held Sunday in Kabul where the women for the first time in Afghanistan’s history carried the dead body to the grave. (Tolnews)

(10) Team Appointed

and submit a report to him.

Maulvi Mohiuddin Baloch heads the panel, which includes Maulvi Mohammad Umar Farooqi, Syed Mohammad Hussain Mohaqiqzada, Fauzia Kofi, Shinkai Karokhel, Shahla Farid, Mehbooba Siraj, Najibullah Azizi, Shamsullah Ahmedzai, Khpalwak Safi and Mujibur Rahman Khilwatgar.

The Interior Minister has been directed to ensure security forces prevented such acts in the future. All departments concerned were asked to cooperate with the commission in probing the incident. (Pajhwok)

(11) Barekzai Promises

issued a decree that formed the committee of 15 people, giving its leadership over to MP Barekzai and her deputy, Sediqullah Tawhedi.

Chief Executive Abdullah, who has been one of the biggest proponents of electoral reform ever since he claimed the Independent Election Commission (IEC) was involved in systemic fraud during the 2014 presidential election, encouraged Barekzai and the other members of the reform commission to act freely and decisively.

“The trust that has been lost, taken away, harmed and sacrificed for political purposes and extended corruption must be reconstructed, and it can only be done through creating a system,” Barekzai said on Sunday. “We can have the trust of people in elections, but only if institutions are responsible, electoral reforms are closely implemented, and the reforms are not for the sake of individual or group interests,” she added.

In the wake of last year’s tumultuous election, which many regard as the worst in the country’s post-Taliban history, those in favor of reform – that is, basically anyone but the IEC – have stressed the importance of reestablishing faith in the electoral system through reform prior to the upcoming parliamentary elections. (Tolnews)

(12) In A Major

work correctly.”

The MD-530F Cayuse Warrior helicopters will continue to be in the AAF inventory even after other systems, like the 20 A-29 Super Tucano are brought into service.

From the factory in Arizona, the helicopters were transported by US military cargo aircraft to a port

where a contracted air carrier delivered the shipment to the Hamid Karzai International Airport.

Since its inception, the MD-500 line of aircraft has been used by the militaries of 15 nations including five current and former ISAF and Resolute Support partner nations.

Seen as ideal for Afghanistan’s security needs, the helicopters’ number offers high visibility to aircrews allowing them to quickly identify targets and safely operate. It can also operate at high-altitude.

Easy to maintain and featuring low operating costs, the MD-530 helicopter are an economical and effective choice to deliver pinpoint fire support for ground units.

The arrival of the armed aircraft comes at a critical time when Afghan forces prepare for the spring fighting season. (Pajhwok)

(13) Farmers’ Day

also marked in Aibak, the capital of northern Samangan province, where a wide variety of products were showcased and stalls of pesticides set up.

Agriculture Director Mohammad Hassan Dana told Pajhwok Afghan News the aim of such exhibitions was to boost domestic products. (Pajhwok)

(14) Carter Hails

While welcoming the Afghan leaders, Carter said: “In short, Ghani demonstrates that public service is a public trust. And along with Dr. Abdullah, he has made clear Afghanistan’s future is ultimately for the Afghans to decide.

He acknowledged Ghani had led an extraordinary life and had deep ties to the United States, where he won a fellowship as a young man to study at the American University in Beirut. Through some of Afghanistan’s darkest days, when the Soviet Union invaded and many of his family members were persecuted and jailed, Ghani always guarded his faith in a brighter future.

“As a scholar, he studied state-building and how to break the cycle of conflict. And has a practitioner at the World Bank, he applied those lessons, managing large-scale economic development projects and helping ease the transition in Afghanistan,” he added. (Pajhwok)

(15) A Glance at

figures in Afghanistan. Jahani was a member of the Drafting Committee for the Afghan Constitution and has also written the poem for the latest national anthem.

Baseer Ahmad Usmani - Nominated for the Ministry of Energy and Water, he has a graduate degree in engineering. Usmani formerly served as coordinator for European Union programs in Western Afghanistan and taught at Herat University.

Gulab Mangal - Nominated for the Ministry of Borders and Tribal Affairs, he holds a bachelors in Pashto Literature, is a former member of the Commission on Constitutional Clarification, and has also served as governor of Laghman, Paktika and Helmand provinces.

Said Sadat Naderi - Nominated for the Ministry of Urban Development, he earned an MA in International Business at school in England, and formerly served as the CEO of a private insurance company and Board Member of the Central Bank of Afghanistan.

Engineer Mahmood Baleegh - Nominated for the Ministry of Public Works, he has a MA in Engineering. Baleegh formerly served as a university professor, member of the Commission on Constitutional Clarification, and also as Editor-in-Chief of Eqtedar Millie newspaper.

Abdul Razaq Wahidi - Nominated for the Ministry of IT and Communications, he holds an MA in Research Mathematics, and formerly served as a university professor and the Administrative Deputy Minister at the Ministry of Finance.

Asadullah Zameer - Nominated for the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock, he holds an MA degree in Economics from a school in the United States and formerly served as Director of Programs at the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock.

Humayoon Rasa - Nominated for the Ministry of Trade and Industries, with an MA in Computer Science. Rasa formerly served as Deputy Minister of Education, the Deputy Director of the National Directorate of Security and has also worked at the United Nations.

Delbar Nazari - Nominated for the Ministry of Women’s Affairs, she has her bachelors from Kabul University in International Relations and is a former MP.

Muhammadullah Batash - Nominated for the Ministry of Transport and Civil Aviation, he has a PhD

from Moscow University in Russia. He formerly served as acting Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation and as Governor of Faryab province. Salamata Azimi - Nominated for the Ministry of Counter Narcotics, he holds a BA in Political Science and formerly served as a university professor and the Deputy Director of Balkh University.

Abdul Sata Murad - Nominated for the Ministry of Economy, has his degree in International Relations from a school in the United States. He formerly served as Governor of Kapisa province and as the Chairman of the Jameiat Islami party’s Political Committee.

Dr. Nasreen Oriakhail - Nominated for the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs, Martyrs and Disabled, she has a BA from Kabul University. She formerly served as a Professor at Kabul Medical University and Director of Rabia Balkhi Hospital and Malalai Hospital.

In addition, Asadullah Haneef Balkhi has been nominated for the Ministry of Education; Dr. Abdul Sear Anwar for the Ministry of Justice; and Farida Mehmam for the Ministry of Higher Education. (Tolnews)

(16) 3 Police Killed

managed to flee after reinforcements arrived at the site.

A resident of the area, Asadullah, said the fire exchange lasted until 4am. He added civilians had suffered no casualties in the incident.

But Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid claimed killing five policemen and seizing their weapons. He also confirmed the death of one rebel and injuries to a second. (Pajhwok)

(17) 400 Projects

thousands of people would find jobs on the projects, which would help further increase people’s cooperation with the government. (Pajhwok)

(18) Efforts Ongoing

said the education department had been unable to resolve problems in functional schools.

Samullah, a student at the Sheikh Mati High School No.2, said they had been without a complete set of textbooks last year, when lack of professional teachers negatively impacted their studies. He added students should be delivered textbooks in time and the problem of teachers’ shortage resolved.

Another student, Abdul Hamid, said their school lacked sufficient benches and desks for students. But the education director promised there would be no such problems during the new academic year. (Pajhwok)

(19) Taliban Attack

and security forces escaped unhurt, he said.

Residents said the fighting erupted at 12:00pm and continued till 4:30pm. Both the sides used heavy and light weapons, eyewitness said on condition of anonymity.

Hospital sources in Shindand district said they had not been delivered any casualties.

The district’s hospital in-charge, Dr. Alauddin Himmat, said doctors and other staff had been directed to stay alert for an emergency situation. (Pajhwok)

(20) Taliban, Illegal

to Attaullah, who blamed the Taliban for collecting Ushr from growers. A poor farmer was recently forced into giving Ushr to the Taliban and gunmen from the other outfit.

Mohammad Ali, hailing from Chahar Toot locality, claimed dozens of innocent people had been killed in a couple of months as a result of infighting between rival armed men. Officials of the peace committee said around 200 gunmen had been killed in the last two or three years, including some civilians. (Pajhwok)

(21) Pakistanis among

the Taliban claimed killing several security personnel in the Sangin fighting, but local officials spurned the assertion as groundless. (Pajhwok)

(22) 2 Civilians

of a local Madrasa was among the ones killed.

No group has so far claimed responsibility for the explosion.

Security officials say they have launched an investigation into the incident.

Khost province has a joint border with Waziristan tribal built of Pakistan. Haqani network has been blamed for several terrorist activities in Khost province. In the past several senior Haqani Network commanders have been arrested from Khost province. (KP)