

(1) SIGAR Expresses...

think-tank. Providing a review of the over 13 years and \$ 62.5 billion in US-led efforts to build capable and sustainable ANDSF, Sopko said the evidence suggests that Afghanistan lacks the capacity—financial, technical, managerial, or otherwise—to maintain, support, and execute much of what has been built or established during more than 13 years of international assistance.

“With a reducing US presence, \$ 7.6 billion remains in the financial pipeline—appropriated but not yet spent—to support Afghan security institutions, with billions more expected to be appropriated every year for the foreseeable future,” he said.

Sopko said under even the most optimistic scenarios, Afghan government contributions would not fully fund the ANDSF by 2024.

Since 2005, the system used to assess the ANDSF has changed four times and after 10 years of reporting, it is troubling that the current rating system found that the Afghan Army has not yet achieved the highest rating level of “sustaining” in any category assessed even though during prior reporting periods ANDSF units were rated as “independent,” he rued.

Sopko said he is worried that the Afghan ministries aren’t, in any way, ready to stand on their own. Senior U.S. military leaders told SIGAR that the Afghans will not master any of their essential functions by the time the U.S. shrinks its military presence at the end of 2016, he noted. (Pajhwok)

(2) EU Expected...

conditions set by the EU for having the ban lifted.

Establishing the Afghan Civil Aviation Authority (ACAA); ratifying new aviation laws; improving technical training in the aviation sector; creating an aviation sector database; preventing temporary companies from providing air services; and boosting overall services by utilizing standardized equipment and methods were all high priority demands made by the EU that have been met.

Still, there is more work to be done. “We are determined to consult domestic companies and identify their problems so that we can get off the EU blacklist,” Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation Mohammadullah Batash said on Friday.

Officials say getting access to European markets will be a major boon for Afghan airlines. “Removing Afghanistan from the EU blacklist will pave the way for positive competition between domestic companies and this will help us overcome challenges,” head of Hamid Karzai International Airport Mohammad Yaqub Rassouli said.

The Afghan aviation sector was blacklisted by the EU five years ago in light of repeated instances of mismanagement and irregularities. (Tolonews)

(3) Cabinet Disapproves...

Ministry of Justice was tasked to bring needed changes to the draft in coordination with information, technology and communications and information and culture ministries and refer it to the next cabinet session. (Pajhwok)

(4) Ghani Visits ...

February 24 from southern Zabul province were released on Monday in an alleged prisoner swap in Jaghori district of southern Ghazni. However Ghani rejected prisoner swap immediately after the release of hostages.

Reports suggest that the government handed over 26 people, 22 of them children, in return for the release of 19 passengers.

As the families of hostages continue to complain over uncertainty regarding the fate of their remaining loved ones, the Ghazni local officials assure that efforts are underway by the local elders of Zabul and Ghazni to secure release of the remaining hostages.

“National security Council and the National Directorate of Security are working on to secure release of remaining hostages,” said Khaliq Dad Akbari, head of Ghani Provincial Council.

He stated that the abductors have transferred the remaining hostages to a remote village in southern Zabul – where the 31

passengers were initially kidnapped.

“They [hostages] are being held in a mountainous area where the roads are blocked and mobile networks do not work either,” Akbari noted.

But another local official from Ghazni had recently claimed that six of the hostages had been killed by the abductors and the other six were still being held by them.

Meanwhile, the families of hostages who have set up their protest camps for more than a month declared that they will not put an end to their protests.

“We will continue to our protests until the release of remaining 12 hostages,” a civil society activist Abdul Sami said. (Tolonews)

(5) Public Works ...

“The reforms in the structure and administration of the Ministry of Public Works will be in Human Resources,” Baleegh explained on Thursday. “The establishment of the Ministry of Public Works has been suspended since 2013 and has not been approved since; that is why we have many problems, and our first effort will be to finalize our structure and establishment,” he added.

On the public work’s side, Baleegh indicated intentions to better manage road maintenance, boost transparency in the procurement process for infrastructure projects, solve ongoing issues related to heavy-weight vehicles and modernize roadside weigh stations.

“Maintenance of roads is among the most important duties of the ministry, and will be one of our priorities in the next three years,” the minister said. “We will be reviewing the procedures, mechanisms and methods of maintenance for the roads.”

In addition, the Baleegh said that, within the next 100 day, he would work on creating a transport institute, categorizing construction and road building companies, extending Afghanistan’s nascent railway and solving problems facing the Qaisar-Laman road. (Tolonews)

(6) NATO Welcomes ...

talks would yield tangible outcome in near future and both countries would be able to resolve their issues amicably. NATO extended complete support to the unity government and Afghan should take responsibility of security of their state, Armaz emphasized.

Referring to future NATO cooperation with Afghanistan, Ambassador Aramaz said that NATO would work in consultations with Afghanistan on the planning for the establishment of its future presence.”

NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg told a news conference that they agreed to maintain a presence in Afghanistan even after the end of the current training mission.

He said the new mission would be civilian-led and would include both soldiers and civilians to give advices to Afghan security bodies. He said the new mission was expected to be smaller than the current 12,000-strong training operation.

To a question, Armaz said NATO countries would discuss the modalities of future cooperation with Afghanistan, in close consultation with the Afghan authorities. (Pajhwok)

(7) Badakhshan...

allowed or facilitated security issues in the province in order to pursue their own political and economic objectives. The net result being increased clashes between security forces and insurgents, violence by local power-brokers associated with organized crime, rising rates of roadside bomb incidents and an overall lack of government services.

“The legislative, executive and judicial bodies should avoid interference in Badakhshan that could create obstructions,” political commentator Waqif Hakimi said.

“The allegations aren’t only pointed toward the MPs, but the question is why the government paves the way for the illegal interference of MPs in Badakhshan? I am confident that the emergence of the Taliban in Badakhshan was planned several years ago, because of the rivalries, profiteering and unlawful interference of MPs in some re-

gions of Badakhshan.” Hakimi, who also serves as spokesman of the Jamiat-e-Islami Party, emphasized just how deep-rooted corruption is among officials in Badakhshan. He said being an MP for the province seemed to give one the authority to place relatives and friends in positions of power, but also the ability to make deals with the country’s enemies and not be punished for it.

“Our perspective is that the government doesn’t have the determination to suppress the Taliban in Badakhshan, or it has deliberately ignored the influence of the Taliban as it infiltrated Badakhshan,” another participant named Abdul Wadood said on Thursday. Perhaps unsurprisingly, no Badakhshan MPs were in attendance at the gathering.

The even concluded with the drafting of a resolution demanding the government take action to root-out the threats in Badakhshan, as well as the enabling forces behind them. “The government must appoint a fact finding committee to find out the main causes of the security threats in Badakhshan so that the secrets behind the security threats in Badakhshan are disclosed to the people,” one of the organizers of the event named Mujib Mehrdad said.

The participants emphasized the pressing importance of addressing Badakhshan’s security issues, sharing reports that hundreds of insurgents are supposedly readying a large-scale offensive in some parts of the province. They said dozens of families of Chechen and Uzbek fighters have moved into the area. And the fear is that the violence witnessed in Jurm and Wardoj districts in recent months could be repeated.

“Of course, those initially responsible for the war in Badakhshan were some MPs and local criminals, but now the situation is critical and MPs from Badakhshan can’t even visit the province,” a participant named Abdul Sayer told TOLONews.

Recent Taliban offensives in Badakhshan’s Warduj and Jurm districts caused major casualties among the Afghan security forces in the province and struck fear in the hearts of residents. Many fear the province, as remote as it is, could devolve into lawlessness and violence if the issue is not addressed quickly.

“Today, dozens of well trained and educated youths in Badakhshan are jobless,” a participant named Kambiz Qurbani said. “When youths find themselves weak and unable to do something for their family they are more likely to join the armed opponents.”

Badakhshan province is known for its natural treasures, such as gold, lapis lazuli, ruby and other precious minerals. The province borders both China and Tajikistan, and is a key link in the chain expected to be developed as part of the new Silk Road trade initiative between Afghanistan and China. Some analysts have suggested the recent insecurity in Badakhshan could be an attempt by the Taliban to prevent the project from taking off, as it would give Afghanistan greater economic leverage among its neighbors, especially Pakistan. (Tolonews)

(8) India Condemns ...

and Former President Hamid Karzai to the families of Indians killed in the attack.

The Afghan leaders appreciate the contributions of Indians who are working here for the socio economic development of Afghanistan. The four brave Indians who lost their lives in the Park Palace attack will be remembered for their selfless contribution to friendship between our nations, it said. The statement further said that The Mission also appreciates the Afghan Security forces for their valiant effort to evacuate the civilians from the hotel and for neutralizing the terrorist in the yesterday’s attack. (PR)

(9) UNAMA Condemns...

international humanitarian law, which binds all parties to the conflict in Afghanistan including the Taliban, prohibits attacks against civilians and civilian locations, such as civilian government offices and hotels, at any time and in any place whatsoever. Such acts may amount to war crimes.

In the first four months of 2015, UNAMA documented a record high number of 2,937 civilian casualties (974 civilian deaths and 1,963 injured), a 16 percent increase over the same period in 2014.

“With this years’ appalling rise in civilian casualties, UNAMA again urges parties to the conflict to take all necessary measures to protect civilians in line with their obligations under international humanitarian law,” said Gagnon. UNAMA extends its condolences to the families of all of those killed and injured in the 13 May attacks. (PR)

(10) 14 PC Kandahar...

admitted her daughter was malnourished for last few months. She added that her children were malnourished due to her poverty. She demanded the government to establish more nutrition centers and start awareness program in this regard. (Pajhwok)

(11) 40 Rebels Dead...

security forces conducted aerial attacks through helicopters, jets and drones, targeting Taliban’s positions but militants were still in control of Charsada district. He claimed security forces suffered heavy casualties in the gun battle. It is worth mentioning that Taliban took control of Charsada district last year for one day briefly and the security forces regained control the very next day. (Pajhwok)

(12) Afghans Celebrates...

Syed Tariq Majdi visited Qargha on Friday to speak with people gathered for picnics with their relatives. “Today, we came here to celebrate this day in a peaceful environment,” a Kabul resident named Rozat said.

“Many families have gathered here today, and I accompanied my parents,” another resident named Sunatollah said.

Yet, in Afghanistan, any day of celebration is inevitably back-dropped by the ongoing realities of war, political instability and economic hardship impacting people across the country every day. “On this day, we pray that sustainable peace is restored in our country, so that every citizen can visit every part of the country,” Kabul resident Munawwar told TOLONews.

Moreover, in Afghanistan, poverty, illiteracy and outdated social customs are constantly undermining the growth and prosperity of families, most commonly in the form of female members being denied their basic human rights. (Tolonews)

(13) 9 Districts of ...

According to Pajhwok Afghan News Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the militants captured two bases and 10 check posts from security forces after an overnight firefight that lasted two hours. He claimed 32 security officials were killed, 19 wounded and 17 others captured alive with their weapons.

On Sunday May 3, militants reportedly captured 13 check-posts after they were abandoned by security forces to avoid clashes in the Sofyan village of Warduj district.

Meantime, Afghanistan Times reported on May 15 that Afghan security forces have retaken control on Yamgan district of north-eastern Badakhshan province.

The provincial security chief, Fazaluddin Ayar, was quoted as saying that Afghan security forces succeeded to retake control of Yamgan district after hours of conflicts with the Taliban insurgents.

Ayar said the operation was launched by the Afghan National Police (ANP), the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan Special Forces.

He added that two Taliban have been killed in the operation. According to the security chief, no casualty was suffered by the Afghan security forces in the operation.

Dozens of the Taliban militants attacked Yamgan district earlier this week and managed to take control of the district following hours of gun battle, Afghanistan Times reported.

Opinions differ within Tajikistan as to the gravity of the possible threat emanating from Afghanistan. Qosimsho Iskandarov, a Tajikistani expert on Afghanistan, told Asia-Plus in late April that “armed clashes being conducted in Kunduz, which borders Tajikistan’s Khatlon province, pose a

threat to southern borders of our country and Tajikistan and its allies ought to be ready for all possible scenarios of continuation of war near our borders.”

But another local expert told Asia-Plus that “world powers” are exaggerating the threats for their own ends. “World powers such as the United States and Russia are interested in spread of so-called forecasts on threats that are allegedly posed by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Taliban and others militants to Central Asia’s nations, first of all Tajikistan,” said Davlatkhoja Nazirov. “Neither ISIL nor Taliban militants will go far from Afghanistan.” (Asia-Plus)

(14) Ghani Visits ...

medical care.

Second Vice President Mohammad Sarwar Danish on Thursday evening also enquired about the health of the wounded persons. Ghani prayed for swift recovery of wounded persons. (Pajhwok)

(15) UNFPA Donates...

council, urged officials to keep the ambulances in good condition in larger interest of the people of the area.

Meanwhile, Abdul Haq Shafaq, acting governor of the province, said modern ambulances are yet to arrive in the provincial clinics. He hoped the arrival of new ambulances would resolve many health problems in the province. (Pajhwok)

(16) Delayed Verdict ...

that the case must not get sidelined or held up in bureaucracy.

“The court was asked a week ago for the verdict about the 19 police, but despite the deadline ending, so far, they have not been able to announce the result,” Dr. Alema said. “Our concern is that they will forget Farkhunda’s case.”

Farkhunda, a 27-year-old woman, was brutally murdered by a rabid mob of men in March after being falsely accused of burning the holy Quran outside the Shah-e-Do Shamshira mosque in downtown Kabul. (Tolonews)

(17) Pakistan Accuses...

proxy war in the country. However, both the rival countries have been rejecting the accusations against each other.

Furthermore in the briefing, Khalilullah strongly rejected what it called claims by an American investigative journalist, Seymour Hersh, who wrote in a recent article that Pakistan’s government had prior knowledge about U.S. operation against Osama Bin Laden on 2nd May 2011.

“We strongly reject the various claims made by Mr. Seymour Hersh regarding Pakistan. The allegations that Pakistan’s government had prior knowledge of US operation of 2nd May 2011 against Osama Bin Laden are baseless.”

Hersh, however, attributed his information to a retired Pakistani spy general and several unidentified sources in the US and Pakistan.

He said in a story for London Review of Books that bin Laden was held by Pakistani authorities in their secret jail and they helped the U.S. to conduct the raid on his compound. (Tolonews)

(18) 8 ANA Soldiers...

Haji Janan, a local elder, said 30 ANA soldiers were present at the check post. “Five of them escaped and the rests would either be killed or taken as hostages,” he noted. Janan requested officials concerned to take immediate steps for the security of the district.

Taliban posted on their website that they killed 21 ANA soldiers while two others were taken hostages. (Pajhwok)

(19) 4 Rebels...

Mullah Faiz Mohammad as police chief of the province.

Mohammad Hashim was police chief four year ago of Jwand district when Taliban took control of the area for one day but later the Afghan National Army (ANA) flushed Taliban out of the district.

Baig accused Hasim for his incompetency and feared had Hasim remained as police chief, Jwand would have fallen to Taliban again.

Mullah Bismillah, a local resident, feared that security situation would deteriorate if ANA would leave Jwand district. (Pajhwok)

(20) Civilians Among...

locality in the Maiwand district today.

Police, he said shifted the wounded to a local hospital but they were stated to be in critical condition.

Durrani said the mines had been planted by insurgents in different localities on roadside aimed at targeting police.

Separately, In Maroof district, five militants were killed and two others wounded when a group of insurgents mounted attack on a police check post in Jaar and Kas locality.

The gun battle lasted two hours in which one policeman suffered injuries, he said, adding that militants’ corpses were still lying in the area. However, Taliban have not commented on the firefight as of yet.

After Taliban’s announcement of spring offensive, fighting gained momentum in Kandahar province, with militants staging attacks on security forces and planting roadside bombs. (Pajhwok)

(21) Food Items...

had caused afghanis to drop against dollar.

He added previously the central bank was circulating around \$80 million every week, while now that amount has reduced to \$50 million.

In that last 12 years since the central bank printed new currency, afghani had maintained a steady price against dollars but it has come down in the last two years.

Officials at central bank could not be reached for comments on the reasons behind this decline. This decline against dollars, many said, was a major reason behind a spike in food prices.

Fazel Rahman, head of food traders’ union, said the price of 50-kilogram Pakistani sugar today had reached up 1,600 afs as compared to 1,570 afs last week, price of 50-kg flour was 1,220 afs as compared to last week’s 1,200, 24-kg, Pakistani rice was sold at 1,580 as compared to 1,550 and 16 litre Momin ghee was sold at 1,080 afs as compared to last week’s 1,040 afs.

The price of one kilo African black tea and Indonesian green tea, he added, remained steady at 210 and 180 afs.

Petrol prices also witnessed increase.

A filling station worker Abdul Hadi in Wazir Abad locality of Kabul said price of one-litre diesel had reduced to 41 afs from 43 afs, but price of petrol had increased to 44 afs from 42.

Reduction in imports, he said, have caused price rise in petrol. Mohammad Sharif, a liquefied gas seller in Taimani locality, said gas prices remained constant and was sold at 30 afs per kg. Mohammad Fawad, a jeweler, said one gram of Arabian gold was sold at 2,000 afs, and the price of Russian gold has gone up from 1,900 to 1,950 afs per gram. (Pajhwok)

(22) A Mother...

stop him from this callous and un-Islamic act.

Imam Din agreed to take care of the girl baby as his own child. He has four sons and a daughter. “I am happy to return her daughter to her mother,” Din said when wife of Jan got her daughter back after convincing her husband.

Sayed Mohammad Samey, director of Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) in northern zone, said had the parents would not return their daughter, it would be an offence according to law. Samey admitted that poverty-stricken parents sold their children in northern zone but handed over a newborn was the first such incident in the province. “Islam does not differentiate between son and daughter therefore the parents are considered as culprits by law,” Samey noted. (Pajhwok)

(23) Two-State...

Noting that he was speaking at Camp David, Obama referred back to a 1978 deal negotiated at the same US presidential retreat that brought peace between Israel and Egypt.

“Israel is better off for it. I think the same would be true if we get a peace deal between Israelis and Palestinians,” he said.

“That prospect seems distant now, but I think it’s always important for us to keep in mind what’s right and what’s possible.” (AFP)