

(1) Elite US Special...

The Pentagon declined to comment on Nicholson's successor.

"We have no announcement on any changes," said Pentagon spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Kone Faulkner. One US official familiar with Miller said his past service showed a focus on addressing global militant networks that fuel insurgencies, which could be valuable in the fight against Daesh in Afghanistan.

The change in command would come at a particularly sensitive time in the Afghan war, in which commanders are under pressure to show progress against a resilient Taliban insurgency. Critics warn that the US-backed Afghan military cannot promise to defeat the Taliban anytime soon or overcome Afghanistan's vast political divisions and entrenched corruption. The United States also has been unable to address safe-havens it says the Taliban enjoy in neighboring Pakistan. US President Donald Trump had long identified with war-weary Americans skeptical about the Afghan war, even advocating withdrawal. But faced with the risks posed by the Taliban, he reversed himself and last August approved the more aggressive strategy that Nicholson has led, with mixed results.

A US government watchdog report released on Monday said there had been few signs of significant progress by Afghan security forces between January and March, despite assertions by the US military that Taliban militants were weakened.

Nicholson, who leads US and international forces in Afghanistan, said in November the country had "turned the corner."

More than 2,400 US forces have died in the war. (Tolo news)

(2) 'Terrorists' May...

possible that terrorist groups will move to the neighboring countries, Russian defense minister Sergei Shoigu said on Tuesday at a meeting with his Uzbek counterpart Abdusalam Azizov, TASS news agency reported.

According to Shoigu, military cooperation between Russia and Uzbekistan "is totally specific and very important."

"It refers, first and foremost, to the risks and threats coming from areas bordering Uzbekistan," the Russian defense minister noted. "In this regard, one cannot but point to the growing threat of international terrorism that has been moving from Syria to other countries, including Uzbekistan," he said.

"We cannot say that the situation in Afghanistan is getting safer and more stable as groups leaving Syria are particularly moving to Afghanistan. That said, it is highly important to train the military that would be able to protect the state in case the need arises," he added.

This comes a day after Russia's President Vladimir Putin's special envoy for Afghanistan, Zamir Kabulov said the US will have to talk directly with the Taliban on the eventual pullout of American troops from Afghanistan or face a grinding and bloody war for years to come.

The US's refusal to talk with the group is "why we are at a dead-end," Kabulov, said in an interview in Moscow with Bloomberg last week.

Without such contacts, "the war and bloodshed will drag on for years," he added.

President Ashraf Ghani in February made a peace offer to the Taliban but the insurgent group has responded by stepping up attacks. The Taliban on Friday offered members of the Afghan military and security forces an amnesty if they quit "enemy ranks."

US President Donald Trump's administration, which has accused Russia of arming the Taliban, has poured more troops into Afghanistan and waged a series of air strikes as it seeks to regain the military edge. Russia denies the allegations though it says it's in dialogue with the group.

Bloomberg reported that Taliban representatives told Kabulov they won't meet with the National Unity Government, which they consider a "puppet" administration, without first holding negotiations with the Americans, whom they consider as "occupiers."

A top State Department official in March said talks with the Taliban should not include the US. "We certainly cannot substitute for the Afghan government and the Afghan people," said Alice Wells, the principal deputy assistant secretary for South and Central Asian affairs.

"We went through this when Soviet troops were there, it was a very similar picture," said Kabulov, who forecasts increasing Taliban control of the

war-torn country. "Another 5,000 or even 50,000 troops won't help. It's not going to get any better."

The US charges that Russia is exaggerating the strength of Daesh in Afghanistan to legitimize the actions of the Taliban and counter the American influence there, according to Bloomberg.

Russia rejected a Taliban request to provide it with money to buy weapons, said Kabulov. (Tolo news)

(3) Interior Ministry...

have worked on a plan on how to maintain security at voter registration centers in districts, especially in insecure districts," he said.

The Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan (IEC) on Monday said currently almost 26 percent of voter registration centers have not yet opened in various regions of the country.

According to the IEC, from the total number of 5,121 voter registration centers in districts, 607 centers are closed on a permanent basis.

Based on IEC statistics, election material has also not yet been sent to 410 centers in 41 districts.

Over 20 percent of the centers will not open due to security threats, said Ezmarai Qalamyar, head of operations at the IEC.

According to the IEC, 354 centers face serious security threats.

"Election materials have not been sent so far to 410 centers and these 410 centers are located in 41 districts; the majority of these centers are in Ghazni; as you know, Ghazni has 17 districts where 132 centers have been established. The problems which occurred there, have not been resolved so far and material has not been sent there; we will send the remaining material by air to 24 districts, which are located across the country," said Qalamyar.

The IEC said that 123 voter registration centers have not opened in provincial centers while eleven districts are at risk of collapsing.

According to IEC statistics, over 2.3 million Afghans so far have registered to vote in the elections with 29 percent of them constituting the women. (Tolo news)

(4) Ghazni to Collapse...

They said the government should resolve the shortage of military equipment and food to security forces and take officials to justice who remained idle in critical situation of Ghazni.

A day earlier, President Ashraf Ghani reviewed the security situation of Ghazni province during a meeting with security bosses in Kabul.

The president ordered interior, defense ministers and intelligence agency chief to visit and assess the security situation of Ghazni and take action accordingly. (Pajhwok)

(5) UN Chief Urges...

were killed or injured in six countries affected by conflict: Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Somalia, and Yemen.

"The most effective way to protect civilians is to prevent conflicts and to end them," Guterres told the Council. "This is why prevention, resolution conflict and peacebuilding are, and will remain, the highest priorities for the whole United Nations system."

Guterres's report first calls on governments to develop national policy frameworks to offer more protection for civilians caught up in fighting.

Countries are also asked to support efforts by the UN and others to engage with non-state armed groups to develop practical codes of conduct for them, and action plans that address civilian protection.

Guterres said 17 groups have already signed action plans with the UN on ending child recruitment, adding that "we need more of these initiatives."

Finally, he urged countries to ensure accountability for serious violations to end what he called "the climate of impunity."

Steps include conducting credible national investigations and giving full support to the work of the International Criminal Court, which prosecutes individuals charged with atrocities such as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

Guterres's speech highlighted numerous ways lives have been upended by war, such as being subjected to rape and other human rights violations, or enduring the horrors of bombing and shelling in densely populated areas.

More than 108,000 people have been displaced in Afghanistan since the beginning of the year due to conflict and natural disasters, the report said, adding that a total of 108,440 people were displaced between January 1 and May 13, the UN Office for Coordination of

Humanitarian Affairs said on May 22. That is 22,000 more than the previous week. The highest number of displaced people was in eastern Ghazni, where there were some 10,000, followed by northern Baghlan with more than 4,000.

More than 10,000 people were displaced temporarily due to the Taliban taking over parts of Farah city on May 15.

More than 445,000 people were displaced due to conflict in the country in 2017. (Tolo news)

(6) Murad Says...

was worrying.

According to Ibrahim, corruption, not giving the right jobs to the right people and people's lack of trust in police are key challenges faced by the police. "The work (past work) in the interior ministry has created a bad picture of police in people's minds. While our police suffer the most fatalities in defending the country and the people," said Ibrahim.

Interior Minister Wais Ahmad Barmak in the meantime acknowledged that food did not always reach the police forces and that some people are embezzling money meant to be spent on food.

Barmak said although millions of dollars has been given to the interior ministry over the past few years, the police forces still lack modern weapons.

"I call on all the people, on the private sector of Afghanistan, on Afghanistan Chamber of Commerce and Industries and on the contractors to please make an oath and promise the Afghan people that you will not give money (bribes) to corrupt police officers," said Barmak. (Tolo news)

(7) Joint Garrison...

members and some civil society activists termed the new joint garrison a great step.

Israrullah Murad, a provincial council (PC), said the proposed garrison would be better than the present joint military commissions because it would work under one plan and order.

Asadullah Larwai, a civil society activist, said both military and garrison forces would do their job. He added such joint garrison units could help protect urban centers. (Pajhwok)

(8) Efforts Underway...

Earlier, officials of the Land Authority had said more than 63,000 acres of land had been forcibly occupied in the province. But the current director called the figure inaccurate. He promised the exact situation of the state land emerge in a few months.

Jilani Farhad, the governor's spokesman, emphasised on wresting back state-owned lands from strongmen. The department concerned was striving hard in this regard, he said.

A joint commission involving officials from various government departments has been working to prevent the usurpation of state properties in Herat. The panel is striving to get back grabbed lands. (Pajhwok)

(9) Senators Worried...

Senate Chairman Fazl Hadi Muslimyar also expressed concern over the security situation across the country and urged security officials to dispatch reinforcements to areas under threat.

He also complained about the NATO mission and said they should support the Afghan security forces besides providing equipment and training. Voter registration in provincial capitals and districts

According to IEC information, the voter registration drive will complete in two phases --- first in cities and the second phase in districts centers and villages.

However, the IEC extended the voter registration deadline for a month both in districts and provinces.

But the upper house today demanded one month more extension in the voter registration deadline in provincial capitals and districts.

Senator Mir Hatam Tarakhel from eastern Laghman province told today's session if the voter registration process was not extended, a large number of people would be missed out.

Muslimyar also made the same demand from IEC. In more than a month, above 2.3 million people have registered themselves across the country to vote in Oct 20 Wolesi Jirga and district council elections, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) said Monday. (Pajhwok)

(10) Women Make...

register as voter had increased.

"There is no hurdle to women to register as voters at registration centers of Paroon and adjoining districts", she

added.

Faizan said her department also worked for creating voter awareness and women were asked to register as voters.

Provincial Council (PC) head Eng. Saeedullah Nuristani told Pajhwok Afghan News that little work had been done so far in the area of voter awareness in Nuristan.

In the beginning, people were unaware why stickers were attached to their Tazkera, but later the process got momentum as potential candidates surfaced.

Gulalai, a resident of Nuristan, alleged lawmakers from her province had never done good to the province. She said she would vote for a candidate who could serve the people of Nuristan and women.

In more than a month, above 2.3 million people registered themselves across the country to vote in Oct 20 Wolesi Jirga and district council elections, the Independent Election Commission (IEC) said Monday.

The voter registration process for the upcoming elections has been ongoing since April 14 and the commission has accelerated its efforts at holding free, fair and transparent polls.

According to the IEC information, the voter registration drive would be completed in two phases --- first in cities and the second phase in districts centers and villages.

However, the IEC extended the voter registration deadline for another month both in districts and provinces. (Pajhwok)

(11) Diplomat Sees...

another terrorist attack in Kandahar that reportedly killed 16 and wounded over 30 civilians."

Salarzai added the utter disregard for human life, as demonstrated by such attacks, constituted a clear violation of international humanitarian law.

"While being at the forefront of fighting international terrorism, our brave security forces have valiantly defended our territorial integrity and safety and security of civilian population," he commented.

The deputy permanent representative said the Afghan government had developed and improved strategic, operational and tactical measures to protect civilians in conflict.

H outlined a string of measures Kabul has taken to protect civilians, including the endorsement of the National Policy on Civilian Casualty Prevention and Mitigation.

Kabul ratified the 1980 Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons, including all amendments and protocols in August 2017, which will result in improved protections of civilians.

In 2010, an Inter-Ministerial Steering Committee on Children and Armed Conflict was set up. The following year, the committee developed a National Action Plan to end the recruitment of children in defense and security forces.

At least 21 Child Protection Units have been established with the Afghan National and Local Police recruitment centers that have prevented over one hundred underage voluntary enlistment.

For the majority of civilian casualties, the diplomat blamed the Taliban and other terrorist groups. "Terror, violence and insecurity in our country are rooted in factors that lie outside Afghanistan, with regional and global dimensions."

H expected the Security Council, tasked with maintaining international peace and security, to help ensure the protection of Afghan civilians, who were being senselessly killed and maimed on a daily basis. (Pajhwok)

(12) Taliban Seize...

On the other hand, the Taliban also confirmed the incident. Their spokesman Qari Yousf Ahmadi claimed 33 security forces were and 21 others captured alive in the Ajristan district. (Pajhwok)

(13) IEC Urged...

He said holding elections in provinces where major areas were insecure would plunge the country into crisis and the elections in such a situation would lack credibility.

The voter registration process began in districts six days ago, but people are still unaware about it, he said, adding the deadline for the registration should be extended in districts otherwise many people would be deprived of their right to enfranchise.

Munawar Shah Bahaduri, a lawmaker from western Herat province, said, "Most of voter registration centers are not open due to security problems, it is a great injustice with people to deprive them of voting." He said security organs should take

serious measures for ensuring security of voter registration centers and the Independent Election Commission (IEC) should also extend the registration deadline.

Rangina Kargar, who represents Faryab people in the lower house, said that some provinces including Faryab, Farah, Ghazni and Kunduz were in critical security situation and holding elections in such a situation would not be acceptable.

"Faryab has 14 districts and most of them are besieged by the Taliban and people cannot participate in voter registration process," she said.

Wolesi Jirga speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahim also expressed concern about the security situation in the country and said the IEC and security officials would be summoned to the Wolesi Jirga next Saturday to brief lawmakers about the election process and security situation.

"Ensuring security for public is the government's responsibility and we request the government to pave the ground for people's participation in elections and remove hurdles in this area," he said.

The IEC, while announcing election schedule, had said the first phase of voter registration would start in provincial capitals from April 14 to May 12, the second phase would start in districts from May 12 to May 28 and a third phase would start in villages from May 28 to June 12.

However, the commission extended the deadline by one month in provincial capitals following suggestion of the parliament. The MPs also stressed that the time of voter registration should be also extended in districts and villages in case of need.

According to the IEC, two million people have registered so far as voters since the beginning of the registration process. The Wolesi Jirga and district council elections are scheduled for October 20. (Pajhwok)

(14) Toll from...

He said many people had been missing and security forces were searching for them.

The area where the blast happened was called Fabreka Srai where cotton and animal hide were being sold and some mechanic workshops and Urugan vehicle parking also exist there.

There was no claim of responsibility for the blast. The Presidential Palace and the Kandahar governor's office strongly condemned the coward act of terrorism and termed it a crime against the people of Afghanistan in the holy month of Ramadan. (Pajhwok)

(15) Security Situation...

to look beyond individual assaults. He noted Afghan security forces had defended strategic territory and prevented the long-term capture of any provincial capital.

"Our commitment to Afghanistan is unwavering. The United States and the international community will continue to stand with the government and people of Afghanistan as they work towards peace," the spokesperson said.

"For information on military operations, we refer you to the Afghan Ministry of Defense and the Department of Defense," the spokesperson said, when asked what measures were being taken to control the situation. (Pajhwok)

(16) Local Taliban...

Doctors at the Herat regional hospital said that the victim was first taken to the Herat Maternity hospital for emergency treatment but is now at a mental health center at the central hospital.

Doctors said the child has been badly traumatized and is now terrified of men.

"This incident will be one of the most bitter incidents in her life and she may face further psychiatric disorders, especially depression," said Wahid Noorzad a doctor.

Herat police have not arrested the culprits.

"Police have started investigations," said Abdul Ahad Walizad, Herat's police spokesman.

A number of women's rights activists say insecurity and social anomalies are causing people to do such things.

"The law with violence against women clearly indicates if the perpetrator rapes, the perpetrator of the case will be imprisoned and if the person who has been raped dies, the perpetrator will be sentenced to death," Marya Bashir a woman's rights activist said. Statistics show that since the beginning of the solar year, seven rape cases have been reported at the Herat Provincial Hospital. (Tolo news)