

**(1) After 17 Years...**

He now suspects the U.S. and its ally Pakistan deliberately sowed chaos in Afghanistan to justify the lingering presence of foreign forces — now numbering around 15,000 — in order to use the country as a listening post to monitor Iran, Russia and China.

"They have made a hell, not a paradise for us," he said.

Afghanistan is rife with such conspiracy theories. After last month's assassination of Kandahar's powerful police chief, Gen. Abdul Raziq, social media exploded with pictures and posts suggesting he was the victim of a U.S. conspiracy. Recent insider attacks, in which Afghan forces have killed their erstwhile U.S. and NATO allies, have attracted online praise.

"In 2001 the Afghan people supported the arrival of the United States and the international community wholeheartedly," said Hamid Karzai, who was installed as Afghanistan's first president and twice won re-election, serving until 2014.

"For a number of years things worked perfectly well," he said in a recent interview. "Then we saw the United States either changed course or simply neglected the views of the Afghan people and the conditions of the Afghans."

He blames the lingering war on the U.S. failure to eliminate militant sanctuaries in neighboring Pakistan, the bombing of Afghan villages and homes, and the detention of Afghans in raids.

Others blame the notoriously corrupt government, which Karzai headed for more than a decade, and which is widely seen as yet another bitter fruit of the American invasion.

"All the money that has come to this country has gone to the people in power. The poor people didn't get anything," said Hajji Akram, a day laborer in Kabul's Old City who struggles to feed his family on around \$4 a day. "The foreigners are not making things better. They should go." It's not just Afghans. The United States' own inspector general for Afghanistan's reconstruction offered a blistering critique in a speech in Ohio earlier this month. John Sopko pointed out that the U.S. has spent \$132 billion on Afghanistan's reconstruction — more than was spent on Western Europe after World War II. Another \$750 billion has been spent on U.S. military operations, and Washington has pledged \$4 billion a year for Afghanistan's security forces.

The result?

"Even after 17 years of U.S. and coalition effort and financial largesse, Afghanistan remains one of the poorest, least educated, and most corrupt countries in the world," Sopko said. "It is also one of the most violent."

Hamidullah Nasrat sells imported fabrics in the capital's main bazaar on the banks of the Kabul River, a fetid trickle running through a garbage-filled trench. He remembers welcoming the overthrow of the Taliban, who had shut down his photography studio because it was deemed un-Islamic.

"After the Taliban we were expecting something good, but instead, day by day, it is getting worse," he said. "How is it that a superpower like the United States cannot stop the Taliban? It is a question every Afghan is asking."

The U.S. and NATO formally concluded their combat mission in 2014. Since then, the Taliban

have carried out near-daily attacks on rural checkpoints and staged coordinated assaults on major cities. Authorities stopped publishing casualty figures earlier this year, deeming them classified. An Islamic State affiliate has meanwhile carried out massive bombings against the country's Shiite minority. Afghans who have recently served on the front lines complain of faulty equipment, inadequate supplies and reinforcements that show up late and ill-equipped, if at all.

Tameem Darvesh served in the Afghan army for nearly five years in the southern Helmand province. This year he went on holiday and never returned, trading his \$180 monthly salary for work as a day laborer making much less. He said morale is at an all-time low, with many soldiers expressing sympathy for the Taliban.

Jawad Mohammadi served for more than seven years in the security forces until 2015, when he stepped on a land-mine he was tasked to clear and lost both his legs. He was just 25 years old.

He recalls how the foreign instructors told him to always check his mine detector by waving it over a piece of metal before heading out into the field. But whenever a device failed to respond, his Afghan commander would tell him to use it anyway.

"I was told that's all we have. That's what we were given, you just have to use it," he said.

The next time he went out with a faulty device, his foot found a bomb the detector had missed.

"I felt myself being thrown through the air. I looked and I saw my legs were near me and there was so much blood. I yelled: 'Please help me.'" (AP)

**(2) HPC Says Khalilzad...**

issues as in the past. The issue was that we should agree to the withdrawal of foreign forces from Afghanistan," said Attaullah Salim, deputy head of HPC. Khalilzad is currently in the region and after visiting Kabul on Sunday flew to Pakistan. He is also scheduled to visit the UAE and Qatar before returning to Kabul.

Hours before Khalilzad arrived in Pakistan, Islamabad released two Taliban officials — Abdul Samad Sani, a US-designated terrorist who served as the Afghan Central Bank governor during the militants' rule in the late 1990s, and a lower-ranking commander named Salahuddin.

"The release of the Taliban members can be helpful for peace in Afghanistan," said Abdulkhabir Achqon, the HPC deputy head.

Meanwhile sources said that the Islamic National Movement of Afghanistan, also called Junbish-e-Milli, as well as Hraakat-e-Islami and Jamiat-e-Islami parties have introduced their representatives to Khalilzad for an inclusive peace negotiations team.

This came soon after Moscow said that Washington has failed in its Afghanistan mission.

"The United States is far away. Afghanistan is literally the lower part of Russia's abdomen. National interests as well as security of the Russian Federation and our allies are at stake here. That's why we can't stare blankly at how it's being done (in Afghanistan)." The head of the HPC delegation said that Taliban had admitted that they have had talks with the Americans which were not made public.

This comes as the Afghan government and the High Peace Council called on countries in the region

and the world's powers to put aside their rivalry in Afghanistan's peace process and help end the violence and war in the country. (Tolo news)

**(3) Army Chief Arrives...**

This comes as heavy clashes are underway in Malistan and Jaghoori districts of Ghazni province since the last few days. (KP)

**(4) ISIS Claims...**

October's parliamentary elections had to be postponed by a year. Last August, Taliban fighters briefly took the city of Ghazni, before government forces pushed them back out. But the insurgents control many parts of the province.

The Taliban is currently trying to keep pressure on the Afghan government ahead of potential peace talks. Its influence in the country has been steadily growing in recent years, with fighting in around two-thirds of the country. And now Russia has stepped in as mediator. Russia said the U.S. has failed to broker peace in Afghanistan, which is why it is now focusing on peace efforts in the country.

A delegation from the Taliban met with representatives from Afghan government in Moscow last Friday. It described the meeting as a small step toward further talks. The Taliban has come to the negotiating table in the past, with earlier mediation efforts initiated by Qatar, but until now it has refused to talk directly to the government in Kabul.

An official from U.S. government attended Friday's meeting in Moscow as an observer. But the U.S. is also making diplomatic moves of its own, with the U.S. Envoy to Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad, in the region visiting Pakistan, Afghanistan and Qatar over the next week.

The U.S. military said it continues to support Afghan government forces in the fight against the Taliban in Ghazni with air support and intelligence gathering. The Taliban has been fighting to regain influence in Afghanistan since it was toppled from power in 2001. (Fox News)

**(5) Saddened Families...**

Ghazni province, also took part in burial of Kabul bombing victims.

He condemned the yesterday attack and said: "We don't know why we have been killed when we raise up for justice. The more we are killed the stronger we emerge for justice," he vowed.

He said heavy fighting was underway in Malistan and Jaghoori district and thousands of families had been displaced. (Pajhwok)

**(6) Russia, U.S. May...**

Afghanistan was held in the Russian capital with the participation of deputy foreign ministers, special representatives and observers from Russia, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, Iran, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and the United States. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani sent a delegation to the meeting and the Political Office of the Taliban in the Qatari capital Doha also participated.

"It's a fact that representatives of the opposing sides were in the same room and were ready to talk to each other, which is the first step towards full-length talks in Afghanistan," Kabulov said.

The Taliban agreed to talk with the Afghan government only after reaching an agreement with the United States on a schedule for the withdrawal of all foreign troops from Afghanistan, Kabulov said.

They also demanded the release of all political prisoners and the abolition of anti-Taliban sanctions imposed against them in 1997 "as a preliminary measure of confidence," he said.

The Taliban expressed their readiness to take part in the next meeting of the Moscow format of consultations, Kabulov said, without specifying when such a meeting may take place. (Xinhua)

**(7) Ghani Expresses...**

of senior Afghan general Abdul Raziq, by a shooter who Kabul says trained in Pakistan, has "brought an intense level of distrust."

"We equally offer peace to Pakistan to put an end to the undeclared state of hostilities between our two countries," Ghani said. (Pajhwok)

**(8) TAPI and...**

Herat and Kandahar, and finally, reach the Fazilka settlement located near the India-Pakistan border. The total length of the pipeline is 1,814 km, the preliminary cost of the project is \$10 billion. Annual capacity of the gas pipeline will be 33 billion m<sup>3</sup>.

On February 23, 2018, the construction of the Afghan section of the TAPI gas pipeline, which will export gas from the Galkynysh field in Turkmenistan, was launched. (Monitoring Desk)

**(9) China-Afghanistan...**

offering connectivity for China and Pakistan, but it is for the whole region. I believe it would connect central Asian states with Pakistan's Gwadar port through Afghanistan in future," said the senator.

On the occasion, Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Yao Jing hailed the trilateral dialogue as a significant and important initiative which can play a positive and conducive role to sort out the regional issues.

"There is a great potential for further development of China's relations with the two important neighbors, Pakistan and Afghanistan," said Yao, adding that both neighbors figure very high in China's advocacy for a community of shared future and that China is playing its role for the social development in the two countries.

Emphasizing peace as the basic foundation of the development, Yao said a political solution is more relevant and appropriate for peace in Afghanistan.

The event also featured participation from key intellectuals from all three countries, who spoke on various topics, including the Belt and Road Initiative and CPEC, and potential for trilateral cooperation and promotion of the cultural connectivity.

Outgoing Afghan Ambassador to Pakistan Omar Zakhilwa expressed that connectivity between China, Pakistan and Afghanistan and Central Asian states is very natural and the connectivity can bring an economic revolution in the region.

"Regional economic cooperation based on connectivity is the only way forward and we should focus on people-to-people connections, cultural exchanges and tourism to make our relations stronger," said the Afghan diplomat.

Highlighting the importance of CPEC and its positive effects on Afghanistan, Zakhilwa stressed on the need of the extension of CPEC to Afghanistan because "the majority of the Afghan regions have potential to be connected with CPEC." (Xinhua)

**(10) 11 People...**

wounded.

Khogyani rejected the blast on public uprising group members.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the blast. (Pajhwok)

**(11) Dabs Calls on...**

downed pylons and electricity lines is high and that they have faced many such issues this year. According to Ghalib, in some parts of the country local powerful men try to participate in the installation of electricity cables and sometimes local people ask for money in order to let DABS employees connect disconnected lines on their land.

Ghalib also said this year DABS paid over eight million AFs to repair three pylons that collapsed in Kunduz province.

"There are problems in this regard. We cannot pay money to people every time cables are disconnected from pylons on their land," Ghalib said.

Critics have meanwhile blasted members of the public that do this and said the power network and infrastructure is a national asset and that the people should protect them.

Economic analysts meanwhile say that in some parts of the country local powerful men see infrastructure as part of their own income source.

"Unfortunately, a number of power projects in the country have become an income source for powerful men and government cannot do anything in this respect," Eraj Faqiri, a lecturer at the American University of Afghanistan said.

Based on DABS information, it costs about \$200,000 to repair every downed pylon. (Tolo news)

**(12) 4 Civilians...**

was critical, Qaderi added.

In a separate incident, he said that Taliban insurgents attacked fuel tankers on the same highway this morning. However, he did not provide further details about the incident.

Meanwhile, Chaharbolak district chief, Zabihullah Zabih, told Pajhwok that Taliban militants torched a fuel tanker and took away the second one on Mazar-Shebrghan highway on Tuesday morning.

It is unclear where the tankers were moving and whom they belonged, he said. Zabih added that a policeman was also injured during a clash on Monday.

However, Taliban did not comment about the incidents happened on Mazar-Shebrghan highway. (Pajhwok)

**(13) Pakistan Releases...**

against him that included collecting funding to purchase supplies and ammunition for Taliban commanders and fighters engaged in combat in Afghanistan.

Pakistan had arrested Sani in Balochistan in October 2016 along with Suleman Agha, the Taliban governor for Daykund province. Foreign Office Spokesman Dr Faisal said this month that Pakistan freed Baradar at the US request in order to 'move forward

on the shared objective of pursuing a political settlement in Afghanistan'. "The decision was taken following the visit of US Special Envoy on Afghan Reconciliation Ambassador Khalilzad to the region and his meetings with Taliban representatives in Doha," Faisal had said during a weekly press briefing on November 8.

Khalilzad met Taliban political envoys in Qatar last month, in a second meeting by any US officials with the Taliban as part of their direct contacts to explore ways for a political solution to the conflict. (Agencies)