

(1) US Must...

they are problems with the way the United States government operates," he said. He said the Pentagon and the U.S. Agency for International Development suffer from corruption as well as poor planning, oversight and accountability. He said they often fail to coordinate with one another or measure programs' effectiveness.

In October, SIGAR reported on a compressed natural gas filling station in Afghanistan's far north that cost \$43 million to build but has never been used because there is no demand for the fuel. A similar station built in neighboring Pakistan would have cost a little over \$300,000, SIGAR said. It said the Pentagon was unable to explain how the Afghan plant "produced no discernible macroeconomic gains and a discounted net loss of \$31 million." In May, Sopko wrote to Secretary of Defense Ash Carter about the building of a \$36 million warehouse in the main Marine Corps base in Afghanistan. The warehouse was never used for anything, he said. Other programs have suffered from outright fraud. In September, SIGAR reported that one current and three former U.S. soldiers had been sentenced to four to eight years in prison by a North Carolina court for their involvement in a bribery scheme in southern Kandahar province that resulted in the theft of more than \$10 million worth of fuel. Since it was created in 2008, SIGAR has identified more than \$1 billion in potential savings to U.S. taxpayers and published hundreds of reports, including 50 audits of reconstruction projects. "The money that's been wasted has been wasted," Sopko said. "But we have still got \$10 billion that has been authorized, appropriated but not yet spent. And we're probably going to put in \$6 billion to \$10 billion a year, for years to come - because if we don't, the Afghan government will collapse." The intensifying war with the Taliban and the withdrawal of aid groups and investors has devastated Afghanistan's economy and sent unemployment soaring to 24 percent. Officials say unemployed youth are increasingly joining the insurgency out of economic desperation, helping the Taliban to expand its footprint across the country. U.S. personnel are increasingly holed up in embassies, making it difficult to visit project sites. Tours last 6-12 months, so there's little continuity or institutional memory. "People have to realize that you can't do diplomacy in an environment like this without some risk, and we are becoming more and more risk-averse," Sopko said. "We cannot continue to do diplomacy with this totally 100-percent risk-free mentality because we are going to lose." Sopko said it's time to "hit the reset button and take a look at what worked and what didn't work." The biggest failure of the reconstruction effort, he said, was the outlay of nearly \$8 billion since 2001 to eradicate poppies, the main ingredient in heroin and Afghanistan's chief export. The crop is worth some \$3 billion a year and is a key source of income for the Taliban. "It's the gorilla in the room we just want to ignore, but that gorilla will eat this room," Sopko said. SIGAR found last year that the U.S. had spent \$7.6 billion on counter-narcotics efforts in Afghanistan since 2001. Opium production has dropped by 50 percent this year, not because of eradication efforts, but because of drought, pests and other environmental factors, Sopko said. "Any metrics you give - price, purity, addiction rates, production - the only improvements we have seen have been caused by Mother Nature," he said. (AP)

(2) \$13m Projects...

Baghlan since the start of the peace process in the province. However, the majority of projects carried out were not successful," said chairman of Baghlan peace council. He said that much of the money had been embezzled and that if the money had instead been given to local officials, more effective projects would have been accomplished. "Baghlan peace council did nothing constructive. The council held only one meeting since the start of the current year which shows that the council is not effective. From the total amount of \$13 million USD, if \$5 million of it had been spent in the right way, today there would be no war in Baghlan province," Shamsul-haq Barakzai, a member of Baghlan provincial council said. But civil society activists in Baghlan have said that those who spent the money should be held accountable. "\$13 million USD is a huge amount, the money was embezzled. Those who spent the money should be held accountable," head of Baghlan provincial council Mohammad Atif Arifan said. 13,000 insurgents have however joined the peace process since the high peace council officially launched

its activities in the province. Despite this, insecurity in the province has increased and fewer insurgents are currently laying down their weapons. (Tolonews)

(3) Erdogan-Putin...

meeting at the level of heads of state has been delivered to the president," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Friday. Ties between Moscow and Ankara have seen unprecedented level of tensions after the latter downed a Russian warplane on Tuesday over airspace violation claims. Speaking to France 24 news channel on Thursday, President Erdogan said he has called Putin, but the Russian President did not return his phone call. Turkey's downing of a Russian Su-24 warplane has dealt a "devastating" blow to the bilateral ties between Russia and Turkey, Kremlin said Thursday. "It will be very difficult to mend bilateral relations after such quite devastating damage. It is a too serious incident that serious consequences are unavoidable... and we are still waiting for realistic explanations from the Turkish side," Peskov said. (Xinhua)

(4) Russia Increases...

and Tajikistan and Russian forces are monitoring the border due to security concerns. Tajik officials meanwhile believe that they are sure Russia will support them if needed as they are one of their closest allies. Governor of Badakhshan province in Tajikistan Shadi Jamshid Khan said. "Considering the fact that Russia is one of the closest friends of Tajikistan; it will definitely defend Tajik soil. No doubt." Analysts from Tajikistan who are concerned about the ongoing war in Afghanistan, say that Tajikistan can help Afghanistan in cultural and economic fields. "Tajikistan can help Afghanistan through several ways and under the international agreements as well as the agreements which have been signed between the two countries," said Ismail Rahmatzoda, a Tajik analyst in political affairs. But the rising border tension comes after insecurity has dramatically increased in northern provinces - especially Kunduz, which is one of the bordering provinces with Tajikistan, in recent months. (Tolonews)

(5) Selecting ...

"We are waiting for Presidential decree to hold the first session and we begin to work," said Naeem Ayoub Zada, member of the selecting committee. The previous presidential election was followed with full of crisis and members of electoral commission were severely criticized and even in some cases accused of involving in electoral frauds. "We are trying to introduce new and impartial commissioners based on defined criteria and mechanisms," added Ayoub Zada. Reforms in electoral system was one of the pre-conditions of the National Unity Government agreements. (ATN)

(6) Ghani Fires ...

They (local police) will be accountable to government. I want to give the last warning to illegal armed groups to join the security forces or face action. No group is allowed to collect levies from the people in Kunduz," he said. Deeply concerned by rumors about Taliban recruiting children and teenagers in Kunduz, residents on Thursday asked the government to take firm steps to eliminate the Taliban in their area. "The concerning issue is that Taliban confiscated tanks and armed vehicles from security forces and the group will likely use them against us," acting governor of Kunduz Ahmadullah Danish said. Unemployment and dire economic issues are problems faced by many people in Kunduz. "Mr President - create jobs for our educated youths and how it is possible to save Kunduz with only four police stations," head of Kunduz provincial council Yousuf Ayoubi said. (Tolonews)

(7) Global Landmine ...

drop is still highly significant because recording has improved over time, Thursday's report said. The vast majority - about 80 percent - of reported casualties were civilians. "The new use of antipersonnel mines by non-state armed groups in... Ukraine and Yemen, and the continuing large-scale use of victim-activated IEDs in Afghanistan and Iraq, are particularly worrisome," said Mark Hiznay, senior researcher at Human Rights Watch. New landmines were laid in only a small minority of countries, but existing ones are still present in 57 nations. Mozambique declared itself mine-free in September, the 28th country to do so since 1999. At least 200 square kilometres of mined areas worldwide were reported cleared last year, most of them in Afghanistan, Cambodia and Croatia, a slight increase from 2013. The 1999 Ottawa

Convention prohibits the use, stockpiling, production and transfer of anti-personnel landmines. While backed by most countries, the treaty has not been endorsed by the United States, Russia, China and India. (Reuters)

(8) Seminar ...

ethnicity and language, religious perspective and gender. In the sense that you are a woman and I am a man, you are a boy and I am a girl. He is a leader whose nation trusts him and he trusts the nation," Khalili said. "Over the years, Afghan youths have been used as tools by certain individuals and political circles and were burnt like fuel in election campaigns and demonstrations," Afghan journalist Shah Hussain Murtazavi said. Some Afghan lawmakers in parliament also criticized the previous government's policies in the past for 'sidelining the youth'. Lawmakers declared the youth a key element which has the potential to bring about change and reform in the country. They urged government to take steps and consider the role of youth in the nation building process.

"We must give the youth a chance and stop ignoring them. We must realize that they are a dynamic generation and can bring change," MP Bashir Ahmad Tayyanj said. Some Afghan youths also added their voices to the mix and raised questions over whether government actually wanted to help them overcome their problems.

"Until now the government does not have an integrated program to ensure the development of the youth. Youths who have been able to grow is only because of individual efforts," a member of Afghanistan Social and Cultural Association, Ahmad Fayaz Bakhi said. This comes amid the growing refugee crisis in Europe which has seen tens of thousands of young Afghans flee the country in search of a better life. (Tolonews)

(9) Hekmatyar...

and establish their own choice of government," Hekmatyar said in a videotaped message to Associated Press. However, the political analysts believe Hekmatyar could no longer have influence over the political or security situation of the country. Political analyst Ali Mohammad Ali told Associated Press that Hekmatyar can no longer run a private army because "most of his people have joined the Taliban" or other militant groups, including the emerging ISIS affiliate which has established a presence in Hekmatyar's former strongholds in eastern provinces bordering Pakistan. (KP)

(10) A New Initiative ...

district of Kabul has also provided jobs to 400 people. "By creating factories, the employment opportunities will be provided for our youths," said Kamal Sadat, deputy Minister of Information and Culture. (ATN)

(11) Kunduz Residents ...

next attack on Kunduz city," he claimed. Meanwhile, Ghulam Rabbani Rabbani a member of Kunduz provincial council called the activity of some security force units as merely symbolic. "What can we do with the Pami 20 Unit and the Speen Zar 808 Zone Command that have come here [Kunduz] to show off? Why have they not launched any operations?" he asked. He called on the security forces to speed up their military operations as winter closes in.

"Now we need security and this is a good time for the security forces to launch military operations against the militants," he added. The acting governor of Kunduz Hamdullah Danish meanwhile said there are enough troops to defend the province. "There are enough forces to clear areas and secure the insecure parts in the province and they [the security forces] will do it in a good coordination," he said. This comes after President Ghani on Thursday visited Kunduz and promised residents that security would be improved. (Tolonews)

(12) \$28b Worth ...

half of the gross profits, as the major heroin benefits are made by traffickers on the retail markets. The report, entitled 'Drug Money: the illicit proceeds of opiates trafficked on the Balkan route', shows that the total value generated by Afghan heroin and opium trafficked in Europe and through the Balkan route is one third bigger than the entire GDP of Afghanistan itself, which, in 2014, amounted to some US\$21 billion. Other findings indicate that the negative economic impact of heroin and opium is greater in Europe and the Balkan route countries than in Afghanistan itself. The report also shows Iran and Turkey as the two countries which intercept the greater percentage of heroin and opium destined for Europe. Iran seizes about 30 per cent of the 155 tons of heroin

and opium entering its territory every year, while Turkey seizes 17 per cent. All other countries in Europe intercept an average of six per cent of heroin in their territory. Data show that the impact of illicit profits in the national licit economy across countries is significant, with heroin and opium traffickers gaining between 0.2 to two per cent of their country's GDP. For some countries this share is bigger than the public expenditures dedicated to drug policies - if all drugs, and not only heroin and opium, are considered. The large amounts of money generated through this illicit activity can distort the licit national economies in the region. The launch of the report coincides with a new UNODC Regional Programme for South Eastern Europe, which was also unveiled today as one of the Office's responses in assisting countries in interdicting illicit financial flows. At the launch, Executive Director of the UNODC, Yury Fedotov, noted that information such as that contained in the new report is crucial to UNODC's work in the region. "UNODC is experienced at undertaking research that builds a detailed picture of the problem, while assisting Member States through effective and tailored projects and programmes," he said. He noted that by providing a detailed analysis, "the report can strengthen our evidence base for effective action in South Eastern Europe." Set to run from 2016 to 2019, the Regional Programme will cover a wide range of activities, including: countering illicit drug trafficking and transnational organized crime; strengthening criminal justice, integrity and legal cooperation; and prevention treatment and care. Its work is undertaken in collaboration with Government partners and civil society, recognizing the challenges related to the links between illicit drug trafficking and organized crime and terrorists and extremists. It ultimately aims to strengthen local law enforcement to help combat these phenomena. (WAM)

(13) Ghani Appoints ...

president within a week. The decree has mentioned that the Attorney General Office (AGO), the National Security Council (NSC), the government minister's office in parliamentary affairs, the Ministry of Information and Culture, and the ministries of Interior and Defense have been directed to cooperate with the team during their investigation. (Tolonews)

(14) Smart City ...

but have neglected to hand over their documents," said Osmani. Osmani went on to say: "The Smart City (project) - based on technical and legal issues - was related to security organizations, the Attorney General's Office (AGO), the Urban Development Ministry, Kabul municipality, the president's (suspended) legal advisor and the Kabul Bank clearance department." Meanwhile Hafizullah Hafiz, former head of the complaints department within the AGO blames President Ashraf Ghani's suspended legal advisor Abdul Ali Mohammadi for acting outside the parameters of his authority and said the signing of the Smart City contract and the release of Ferozi from prison as having been against the law. "The contract was signed on September 1 this year between Nabi Wardak (a construction company) and Khalil Ferozi. Where the contract has been signed Mohammadi must answer to this," Hafiz added. According to Hafiz, Mohammadi not only worked outside the parameters of his authority but also interfered in the affairs of other departments including that of the AGO. "Clear interference of Mohammadi is visible and Mohammadi was adviser to the president and his duty was only to give advice to the president nothing else," Hafiz added. (Tolonews)

(15) Insurgents ...

commuters. As concerns over the volatility of the Kabul-Jalalabad highway grow, Laghman governor Abdul Jabbar Naemi on Friday said that the provincial government has been in contact with the central government in Kabul in an effort to push security institutions to come up with concrete measures to secure the road. "Certain profiteers and armed opponents inflict harm on the people. We raised the issue with the leaderships of ministry of defense and interior. They have taken a number of steps in this regard. We will continue our engagements with them until security is restored completely," he said. Insurgents frequently appear in Tangi, Mashala Kamar and Aziz Khan Kasai areas where they also search passengers and create problems for them, Laghman provincial council said. Amid the growing security threats, passengers have called on the security institutions to take measures and ensure security of the high-

way. "Gun shots are heard here on a daily basis. They [insurgents] do not care whether they are firing on security personnel or ordinary people," one motorist who uses the Kabul-Jalalabad highway Bashir Ahmad said. "Looters exist in Surkhakhan area near the square and also in Kasai," said another driver Bahar. "Shootings on Kabul-Jalalabad and Laghman highway occur on a daily basis. Firings and attacks by armed groups on security check points have increased and this is very unfortunate," said a member of Laghman provincial council Zahir Hussainkhalil. "It is not only Laghman that has to deal with security threats where insurgents create issues for the people but the entire country is at war. We are trying to improve security in joint cooperation with the people," another member of the provincial council Abdul Rahimzai said. (Tolonews)

(16) Pakistani ...

strike. The Pakistani officials' claims have not yet confirmed, partly because of the remoteness of the site and the restrictions on journalists' access to the area. According to local elders, Taliban commanders were meeting to resolve the growing differences among the various Taliban offshoots when the drone struck. "Sajna was a leading figure of the Pakistan Taliban," said a senior Peshawar-based Pakistani military official who agreed to discuss the commander, a founding member of Tehreek-e-Taliban, the umbrella organization known as the Pakistani Taliban that was formed in 2007 and has been carrying out a bloody insurgency in Pakistan. "Both Pakistani security forces and Americans were after him for long time," the military official added. If the commander's death is confirmed, "it would certainly be a big blow to the Taliban, both in Pakistan and Afghanistan," said another Pakistani Taliban commander in an interview who did not want to be named. (ATN)

(17) 5 Afghan...

month salary of \$700 and Iranian residency permit. The Afghan militants are fighting on both sides of the Syrian war, in support of the Syria Bashar al-Assad and the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) militants, with estimates earlier this year showing some 3,000 Afghan nationals have been deployed to take part in the ongoing conflict.

Informed sources in the Afghan government also confirmed earlier this year that the number includes Iranian-backed Shiites fighting a proxy war in support of Syrian President Bashar al-Assad and against Islamic State and other rebel groups. The participation of Afghan militants in Syria war has sparked concerns among the Afghan officials some will return to fight in Afghanistan under Islamic State's banner. (KP)

(18) Taliban...

days. "In a bid to defend their area, residents of the Marja district have joined commander Mawollah (local police commander in Marja) and these residents are defending their district and their dignity," Hashim Alkozai a senator said. However, clashes in Helmand in general have been ongoing for more than a month in some parts of the province. (Tolonews)

(19) Pregnant ...

officials expressed their commitment to stamp out the problem in the country. The event was attended by officials, the first lady Rula Ghani, civil society activists and other concerned parties. According to officials, violence against women in last six months in the country has increase by thirty-two per cent against the previous six months. (Tolonews)

(20) Forensic ...

that were used during the first presidential era in Afghanistan - Daud Khan's era - which was in the 1970s. "Their clothes were also in the grave and there were seven pairs of shoes," said Sayed Rahman Shahid, a resident of Bagرامي district. The Human Rights Commission has not yet commented but the Civil Society and Human Rights Network has suggested government launch an inquiry into the matter. (Tolonews)

(21) Tables Groan ...

Class John Ross, a 23-year-old native of Mountain Home, Idaho. About 10,000 American servicemembers remain in Afghanistan. A stubborn insurgency challenging Afghan forces has delayed plans to withdraw almost all those troops by next year. Coalition allies also seemed to enjoy the holiday fare and over-the-top decorations. "I think the Polish were into it more than the Americans," Ross said. Some troops braved a muddy field full of puddles, rocks, and the occasional metal stake to

play a game of touch football. Some young airmen on their first deployments said, despite the limited festivities, it felt like any other day. "I haven't been home for Thanksgiving since I joined the Air Force three years ago," said Senior Airman Kyle Maldonado, 22. Back home in Tucson, Ariz., his wife and two-year-old daughter are celebrating with family. (Agencies)

(22) Security ...

border. The ongoing crackdown against the Taliban in southern Helmand province has left 11 insurgents dead since Wednesday. "Units of the national army have killed 11 armed insurgents in Narh-e-Saraj, Gereshk and Sangin districts since Wednesday and captured 11 others," a statement of the national army's public relations unit said Thursday. Moreover, a mine planted by the Taliban in Khakriz district of southern Kandahar province claimed the lives of three police and injured two senior officers, spokesman for Kandahar provincial government Samim Khapalwak confirmed Thursday. (Xinhua)

(23) Over 1 Mln ...

within the country, and renewed clashes in September created an additional 39,000 internally displaced people in Bangui. A further half a million people are living as refugees in neighboring countries. Even in those areas not affected by the fighting, communities continue to need support. Around one third of the population has no access to safe drinking water and 41 percent of children under five are chronically malnourished. (Xinhua)

(24) NATO Split...

NATO foreign ministers decide whether to launch accession talks with tiny Montenegro -- an event at which they will be expected to give an update on Tbilisi's aspirations. The United States sees expanding NATO as key to its strategy for dealing with Russia. But as NATO nations seek Moscow's help to defeat Islamic State militants in Syria and to resolve the crisis in Ukraine, others argue for caution over enlargement, which Russia views as a direct threat to its security. (Reuters)

(25) Cameron...

ernment's comprehensive strategy for tackling extremism, Cameron wanted "to increase cooperation with countries around the world to share best practice and identify new approaches to countering poisonous ideologies," a Downing Street statement said. (Xinhua)

(26) Queen Elizabeth...

more than 2 billion people on five continents, including large countries like India, Australia and Canada and small island states like Tonga and Vanuatu. Elizabeth, who said the Commonwealth is based on shared values, received a standing ovation from the Commonwealth's leaders. She was accompanied to Malta by her husband Prince Philip, her son Prince Charles, the heir to the throne, and Charles' wife, Camilla. (AP)

(27) Slovakia to ...

Integrated Stabilisation Mission to restore the integrity of Mali and to facilitate the unrestricted exercise of central power in Mali's capital Bamako. A total of 23 countries are participating in EUTM Mali, and the mandate is valid until June 30, 2016. Slovakia hadn't taken part until now. (Xinhua)

(28) Iran, Tajik

between the two countries, is of prime importance. Relations between Iran and Tajikistan are very amicable and based on mutual respect and interest, he said. Attribution of Daesh Takfiri and other terrorist groups to Islam is a strategic mistake as Islam is cradle of tolerance, brotherhood and equality, he said. (IRNA)

(29) Pakistan Plans...

or council of elders. Jirga has long been the only accepted way to settle disputes among the tribesmen; however, hundreds of tribal elders have been killed in target attacks allegedly by the Pakistani Taliban and other militant groups, disrupting the tradition. (Xinhua)

(30) Iran Says...

is home to the Iranian-backed Shiite movement Hezbollah, allied with President Bashar al-Assad in the Syrian civil war, who Riyadh has repeatedly urged to stand down. Roknabadi's body was identified by DNA in Saudi Arabia but secondary testing will be used to determine if he died in the stampede, the ISNA news agency quoted his brother as saying. (AFP)