

Afghan Links

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Afghan Links is a free e-newsletter for readers who have a keen interest in Afghanistan and its history, people and culture. It invites news and articles from anyone who wishes to create and maintain constructive links between Afghanistan and other countries by sharing their expertise, information and ideas in any field.

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SECURITY

Into the valley of death: UK troops head into Afghan war zone

With the Army in a new abuse scandal and no exit strategy from Iraq in sight, UK troops head into another war zone

Suicide bombings and firefights, Western troops under attack, sectarian clashes between Shia and Sunni, foreigners taken hostage. Days of escalating violence have left dozens of people dead and more than a hundred injured. This is not Iraq but Afghanistan, a conflict which has now overtaken on the grim league table of body counts - 89 killings in the last eight days in Afghanistan compared with 54 in Iraq during the same period. It is into this maelstrom that the Royal Marines - the first batch of 5,700 British troops being sent to Afghanistan - will begin deploying this week in a mission lasting at least three years at a cost of £1bn.

With no exit strategy from Iraq in sight, British forces are entering another deadly conflict. Tony Blair's insistence that there should be no sizeable withdrawal from Iraq until the security situation appreciably improves means that contingency plans for a large-scale reduction in numbers have had to be shelved. But last week John Reid, the Secretary of State for Defence, appeared to pave the way for a "significant" withdrawal from Iraq even if the country continued to face serious problems.

Senior commanders are deeply concerned about fighting a "war on two fronts". General Sir Mike Jackson, the chief of the Army, has written to Lieutenant General David Richards, the British commander who will lead Nato forces in Afghanistan, asking if he has enough troops to cope with the spiralling turmoil. Lt Gen Richards is believed to have asked for another infantry battle group, about a thousand men, but this is not feasible with the continuing commitment in Iraq. Lord Guthrie, the former chief of defence staff, said: "The British Army is already dangerously overstretched and maintaining a force even of this size over the years will be difficult."

There are now lethal similarities in the methods used by the insurgents in Afghanistan and Iraq. Nato commanders acknowledge that terrorist techniques are being imported from Iraq to Afghanistan and Islamist fighters are entering the country in ever-increasing numbers from Pakistan. The place where this is most evident is the province of Helmand, where most of the British forces will be deployed, and where a resurgent Taliban and their al-Qa'ida allies have killed almost 100 US and Afghan troops in the past few months - the total number lost by British troops in the Iraq war.

Senior British officers have expressed concern about the apparent lack of clear direction.

Ministers have said that one of the main roles of the British troops would be to help eradicate Afghanistan's massive opium crop. But the task force would be deployed under a Nato mandate which does not allow eradication.

British commanders say they are also aware that Helmand is potentially more hazardous than Basra, where British forces have not actively engaged the Shia militias who have infiltrated the police force in large numbers.

The situation, they believe, will be more akin to central Iraq where American forces have borne the brunt of the resistance. **For the full article with startling statistics see Reference 6_J.**

Source: Kim Sengupta and Jerome Taylor – Independent Online – 14th February 2006 - Published: 13 February 2006. [home](#)

Afghans call on US to improve security

Local leaders in southern Afghanistan have called on the US to put pressure on Pakistan to quell cross-border terrorist attacks ahead of a visit by President Hamid Karzai to Islamabad later this week.

A delegation of tribal elders, mullahs and elected politicians in the southern city of Kandahar called for more US help to stem a growing tide of violence during a visit at the weekend by Lt Gen Karl Eikenberry, who heads the 21,000 strong US-led force in the country.

"We need security, not roads, bridges and schools," said Zarghuna Kakar, a delegate from the newly elected provincial council at a meeting on Saturday. "Security must come first, and then we can do reconstruction."

The comments came after 13 people were killed when a suicide bomber struck a police headquarters in Kandahar on Tuesday - the latest in a wave of Iraq-style attacks across the south and east of Afghanistan.

"Pakistan is producing terrorists and sending them to conduct suicide attacks on our innocent people," said Hayatullah Aliko, a tribal elder in the city, echoing earlier accusations by Assadullah Khalid, Kandahar provincial governor.

Mr Eikenberry said Pakistan had been important in securing peaceful presidential and parliamentary elections, putting 70,000 troops along the rugged 2,000km border. But he conceded there was more work ahead.

"There is a challenge on both sides of the border with al-Qaeda and associated movements. This is something which has developed over 30 years and so this is going to take time and commitment from the US and Pakistan to work our way through," he said.

Afghan officials have blamed foreign militants for the rising violence in the south and east that has seen more than 20 attacks in the past four months, saying they are launching attacks from tribal areas of Pakistan where they can operate with greater impunity.

"President Karzai will raise this issue when he goes to Pakistan. We will have frank discussions," an Afghan intelligence official said.

A senior Pakistan foreign ministry official said last night that General Pervez Musharraf, the country's military ruler, would tell President Karzai that Pakistan remained committed to blocking the entry of Islamic militants through its Afghanistan border.

Mr Eikenberry, who was on a two-day visit to Kandahar and neighbouring Zabul province, said there was evidence of greater sophistication in the attacks.

"The tactics being used in Iraq are being mimicked here to achieve attention and publicity. "There is more use of assassination and attacks on civil society targets like mosques and government buildings," he said.

Southern Afghanistan looked like a "chequerboard" with security varying greatly between different districts and provinces where Nato troops would deploy in the spring. "The enemy will test the will of any forces that come in here," Mr Eikenberry said.

Additional reporting by Farhan Bokhari in Islamabad

Source: Financial Times by Rachel Morajee in Kandahar – 12th February, 2006.

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Chinese prostitutes arrested in Kabul 'restaurant' raids

Afghan police rounded up scores of suspects in a series of raids across Kabul yesterday. But this time the prisoners were not Taliban insurgents or Al-Qa'ida suspects. They were Chinese women - the notorious Chinese prostitutes of Kabul.

In the four years since the fall of the Taliban, an extraordinary number of "Chinese restaurants" have opened in Kabul. Although they have bright neon signs and menus, and they do sell food, most are simply fronts for prostitution.

In fact, so synonymous have Chinese restaurants become with brothels in Kabul that it is not a good idea to tell anybody you are going for a Chinese meal - in case they get the wrong impression.

Nobody is really sure how the Chinese came to dominate the market. But in Kabul, traditional Chinese lanterns outside a restaurant can mean more is on offer than just good food. By day you can spot the prostitutes hanging around the restaurants, often wearing skimpy clothes that would be unimaginable for any Afghan woman.

For years the police have turned a blind eye to the brothels, but now they are cracking down. The Interior Ministry said 46 foreign women had been arrested for prostitution and for selling alcohol to Afghans. Privately, the ministry said they were all Chinese.

The crackdown comes after newly elected members of parliament said they would go after the government over Kabul's widespread prostitution.

The brothels are seen as a corrupting effect of the West. Most are located in the expensive neighbourhoods like Wazir Akbar Khan and Shar-e Now, amid the expensive restaurants and bars frequented by the plethora of foreign diplomats, UN staff and NGO workers who live in Kabul.

These are liberal areas and no brothel would last long in the traditional Afghan neighbourhoods that make up most of the city: they would be chased out by local sentiment.

Undeniably the brothels attract foreign clientele. They also attract a steady stream of Afghan men.

Adding to the controversy are Afghanistan's laws on the consumption of alcohol, still illegal for all Afghan Muslims. But it is allowed to sell alcohol to foreigners, who can freely drink it. The illegal status of the Chinese restaurants has meant, however, that many have also sold alcohol to Afghan men, which has added to their notoriety.

There is a growing backlash to the Western presence in Kabul from Afghans embittered at a lack of economic progress since the fall of the Taliban. Intolerance of Westerners' drinking and foreign women not covering their heads in public is growing.

The Interior Ministry said the women arrested yesterday would be deported. Under the Taliban they would have faced a public lashing or being stoned to death.

Source: Justin Huggler – Independent Online - Asia Correspondent – 10th February 2006.

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Afghanistan New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) - Guards of Ammunition Depots in Panjshir to Receive Salaries

NEWS CONFERENCE

Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP)

GUARDS OF AMMUNITION DEPOTS IN PANJSHIR TO RECEIVE SALARIES

Kabul, 11th February 2006

On Sunday 12th February, the Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme (ANBP) and the Ministry of Defense (MoD) will proceed with the payment of the backpay salaries for the last 10 months of 112 guards watching over 9 ammunition depots in Panjshir. All the guards are former combatants of the 1st Division of Panjshir, whose units have been disbanded in the framework of the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) process.

With the completion of disarmament and demobilization, and consequently the MoD ceasing payment to Afghan Military Forces (AMF) units - including the 1st Division of Panjshir – ammunition depots guards claim that they have not received salaries for the last 10 months although performing their duties. ANBP raised this issue with the MoD, which agreed to pay the guards a ten-month salary equivalent to what they were earning with the AMF. The MoD will continue to pay the guards as long as depots will need to be guarded.

Payment will take place in Dashtak (Panjshir) at 10 am.

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Afghans Reluctant To Lose Us Troops

Whether they love the American forces or hate them, few people want to see them go.

Plans to reduce the United States troop presence in Afghanistan have sparked deeply contradictory reactions in the country.

On the one hand, Afghans, historically uncomfortable with the presence of foreign troops on their soil, are anxious to see the back of even a small proportion of the nearly 20,000 American soldiers. This is especially true following the furore set off last year by a media report that US

interrogators had desecrated the Koran while questioning detainees in Guantanamo Bay.

Reports of prisoner abuse at Bagram Air Base and a widely distributed video of American troops burning the bodies of dead Taleban fighters have also sparked outrage.

Many complain about what they see as the arrogant, sometimes aggressive conduct of US soldiers in Kabul and elsewhere. Such behaviour has done little to win the hearts and minds of average Afghans.

But most people are also keenly aware that peace in Afghanistan remains fragile. They wonder whether Washington is beginning to lose interest in their country, and whether the expanded NATO force that is expected to assume responsibility for security in southern parts of the country is up to the task.

In December, the US Department of Defence confirmed that it would be reducing the number of troops deployed in Afghanistan by about 2,500, from 19,000 to 16,500. At the same time, the Pentagon said NATO would be sending an additional 6,000 soldiers to the country this year, including some 3,000 British forces and a 1,200-strong contingent from the Netherlands.

Some see the planned US-force reduction as a first step by Washington towards leaving Afghanistan altogether.

"If America once again forgets Afghanistan and abandons it to the internal and foreign wolves who are lying in wait, it will be a very great betrayal of the Afghan nation," warned Habibullah Rafi, a political analyst and member of the Afghan Academy of Sciences.

"If America pulls out its troops, the Taleban will soon come back and Afghanistan will again become the nest of terrorism that it was in the past," said Abdul Hafiz Mansoor, the former head of Afghan National Radio and TV and currently the editor of the Payam-e-Mujahed newspaper. "So it will be dangerous not only for Afghanistan, but for the entire region."

There are no alternatives to the American forces, argues Mansoor. The Afghan National Army does not yet have the necessary capacity, and NATO forces have a different mandate altogether. "NATO is supposed to maintain peace and security," he said. "They are not ready for combat."

Mansoor voiced the concerns of many, who say they fear that the NATO force, with a primarily peacekeeping role, will be unable to battle the mounting insurgency in the south.

Afghanistan's military dismisses such fears as groundless.

"The troops which are replacing the US-led Coalition forces in southern Afghanistan are stronger than the Coalition forces. I believe they will be much more effective. [The handover] is not a matter of concern for us," said General Abdul Rahim Wardak, the Afghan defence minister. **Please see Reference 6_B for the full article.**

Source: Hafiz Gardesh - IWPR local editor in Kabul and Wahidullah Amani an IWPR staff reporter in Kabul – Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR'S) AFGHAN RECOVERY REPORT, No. 202, February 10, 2006 [home](#)

GOVERNANCE, RULE OF LAW AND HUMAN RIGHTS

An Agenda for State-Building in the 21st Century

Please see Reference 6_A for the paper by Dr Ashraf Ghani, Clare Lockhart and Michael Carnahan. [home](#)

Funding - The Post-Elections Sub-grants Program Proposal Guidelines - January 31, 2006 – Asia Foundation

Invitation for Proposals - Post-Elections Sub-grants Program

The Asia Foundation is a non-profit, non-governmental organization committed to the development of a peaceful, prosperous, just, and open Asia-Pacific region. **The Foundation supports programs in Asia that help improve governance and law**, economic reform and development, women's empowerment, and international relations. Drawing on 50 years of experience in Asia, the Foundation collaborates with private and public partners to support leadership and institutional development, exchanges, and policy research.

1. What is the Post Elections Sub-grants Program?

The Post Elections Sub-grants Program provides financial support for small to medium-scale Afghan civic education initiatives that:

- ❖ increase public awareness and knowledge of democratic political processes, including elections, and the roles and responsibilities of citizens and public servants;
- ❖ creatively use print, audiovisual, and other media as well as training and other means of capacity building to increase public awareness and knowledge; and
- ❖ focus on civic education methods that are participatory for the public, particularly for Afghan women and other disadvantaged groups, and are culturally relevant and appropriate.

2. Who can apply?

Grants can be awarded to non-governmental groups, for-profit organizations, academic institutions, and communities groups.

3. What are the criteria for grant awards?

All proposals will be reviewed based on the following criteria and, as such, successful proposals will address these.

- ❖ Projects that are well planned and feasible for full implementation and completion within eight months.
- ❖ Projects that do not duplicate existing projects.
- ❖ Projects that can demonstrate costsharing.
- ❖ Projects that are sustainable are more likely to receive support.
- ❖ Project funds must be spent in country. Materials and supplies required for projects must be procured locally on the domestic market and, where feasible, in the national currency.
- ❖ Projects that are in the range of \$20,000 - \$50,000. Projects with larger budgets may also be considered in exceptional cases, strictly on the basis of proposal merit and ability to complete implementation within eight months.
- ❖ Projects that favor gender equality will be given preference. Equal participation and integration of both genders in project, from design through execution is encouraged. However, quotas or percentage targets will not be assigned and project proposals may not necessarily be penalized.

5. Post Elections Sub-grants Program Funding Information

A project or activity could range from a minimum of \$20,000 to a maximum of \$50,000. Projects with larger budgets may also be considered in exceptional cases, strictly on the basis of proposal merit and ability to complete implementation within eight months. Projects/activities must be completed, all funds disbursed and reports completed within a eight month period falling between March and October 31, 2006. Grant funds will be provided on a one-time, non-recurring basis. Organizations are eligible to receive one grant only. All projects/activities will be closely monitored to ensure they are being implemented in conformity with the Foundation's signed Grant Agreement guidelines.

Project/activity proposals may be submitted at any time prior to and up to close of business, (4:30 PM) February 20, 2006. A technical committee will review all received applications. Selected and approved projects/activities will be communicated to the organizations within two weeks of approval. **Please see Reference 6_C for the full details.** [home](#)

INFRASTRUCTURE AND NATURAL RESOURCES

Landmark Meeting of Trans-Afghan Pipeline Begins Monday in Turkmenistan

Ashgabat - The long-dormant Trans-Afghan Pipeline project (TAP) for shipment of natural gas from Turkmenistan via Afghanistan to Pakistan and possibly India, could finally be poised to step off the drawing board. A crucial meeting of the pipe planners would start Monday in Ashgabat.

This would be the ninth meeting of the steering committee of TAP.

Pakistan is sending a powerful delegation headed by Amanullah Khan Jadoon, minister for petroleum and energy. Mukhtar Ahmed, advisor to the government of Pakistan on energy issues is also included in the delegation. Other members include Ahmed Waqar, secretary for petroleum and energy, Jahangir Khan, Tariq Osman Hyder, and three top energy experts of Pakistan.

Afghanistan has confirmed participation of Mir Mohammad Sediq, minister for mines and industries and other senior officials.

According to unconfirmed reports, a high level Indian delegation would attend the meeting as observer. It has been learnt that India's participation as full member has been approved by the TAP planners and the matter could come up for formal vote during the meeting.

The meeting and the site visits would help pick the slack that has developed over the past few months.

In a very direct way, the meeting could establish whether the project can generate enough steam on its own.

If all goes well, the construction work is likely to start sometime late this year.

The project planners have made it clear that TAP is not in conflict with any other project and there is any scope for several project of this nature.

Turkmenistan has assured that enough gas reserves are available to meet the commitments of all projects that are under consideration.

Source: NewsCentralAsia – 2nd December 2006.

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Ghazni joins the TOLO TV and ARMAN FM family

ARMAN FM and Tolo TV began their terrestrial free-to-air transmissions today in Ghazni city , Ghazni province.

The recent expansion to its broadcasting abilities will enable another 500,000 Afghans around the greater Ghazni city area to tune into the popular radio and television stations. Already TOLO TV and ARMAN are available in Kabul, Balkh, Parwan, Kapissa, Ghazni, Wardak, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Herat, Logar, Samangan, Jowzjan, Sarre Pul, Khost, Kunar and Laghman.

ARMAN FM and TOLO TV's satellite transmissions enable a growing regional audience to view the station in Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Central Asia and western India and eastern Gulf states. Saad Mohseni, director of TOLO TV and ARMAN FM stated, "The expansion of TOLO TV and ARMAN FM in Ghazni is yet another milestone that will once again link Ghazni city – one of Afghanistan's most dynamic cities – to the rest of the nation."

Mohseni said that the next step will be to commission free to air transmitters in at least 5 other major cities over the two months for both TOLO TV and ARMAN FM.

Source: Tolo TV – Kabul – 11th February 2006.

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EDUCATION

Consortium to assist the Afghanistan educational system

A consortium which includes Indiana University's (IU) Center for Social Studies and International Education has received a \$38 million grant to restore and improve the educational system in Afghanistan.

During the next five years, IU faculty will focus on teaching future and current Afghan teachers about contemporary teaching methods, and also how to understand and teach English, a key element in the war-torn country's international re-emergence.

"Culturally, economically, socially and politically, speaking English is a valuable means for communicating in the global community," said Terrence Mason, who directs the Center for Social Studies and International Education, located on the IU Bloomington campus.

The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) awarded the grant to the Academy for Educational Development, a Washington, D.C.-based agency that specializes in international educational programming. IU, which will receive \$4 million, and the University of Massachusetts Amherst round out the consortium. The consortium will send a team to Afghanistan to work on the project, which involves working closely with the country's Ministry of Higher Education, USAID, the U.S. Embassy and a variety of non-governmental organizations involved with other projects in

the country. Mitzi Lewison, an associate professor in the IU School of Education's Department of Language Education, will be part of this visiting team.

Mason said the overall goal of the Afghanistan Higher Education Project is to help re-establish teacher education programs in Afghan colleges and universities to support the growing demand for secondary schools across the country.

"With the political events over the last couple of decades, there have been huge difficulties for schools," Mason said. "Teachers were dismissed; they fled the country. Now, refugees are returning. Part of the effort at stabilizing the country involves restoring the educational system, which requires qualified and competent teachers."

Cultural fluency will be important and challenging as U.S. educators address democratic themes that include enhancing the role of women in the educational system, and creating greater equity and participation among the many ethnic and linguistic groups.

Much of the project's work will involve improving the information technology infrastructure at 16 teacher education programs in the country to provide a way to deliver courses to education majors without having to navigate the paperwork-laden obstacles of international travel. IU's part of the project, however, does involve exchanges between the countries. At least 24 Afghans will travel to Bloomington to pursue master's degrees in education, with some of the students focusing on teaching English as a second language so they can teach the language to future teachers when they return to Afghanistan.

Staff from IUB also will travel to Afghanistan to work with teachers, Mason said.

Mason's center, which is affiliated with the IU School of Education, until recently was called the Social Studies Development Center. For more than 25 years it has developed social studies curriculum and worked on a variety of international projects involving social studies and civic education.

Its expanded mission allows it to follow the lead of both the School of Education and the university in addressing international issues. Such a move is important, Mason said.

"Politically, economically, in many ways we're linked more closely with other parts of the world," he said. "Events that occur in Central Asia or elsewhere in the world have implications for our own security, and our own economic and political development."

Source: <http://www.homepages.indiana.edu> - Tracy James, Published February 10, 2006. [home](#)

HEALTH

"How the Healthcare Rebuilding Goes in Post-Conflict Afghanistan"

February 7, 2006. Cambridge, MA: Management Sciences for Health and the [REACH project](#) in Afghanistan are pleased to announce the publication of: "**How the Healthcare Rebuilding Goes in Post-Conflict Afghanistan**" by Bill Newbrander and Fred Hartman in the January 2006 issue of The Hospitalist magazine. This magazine is produced by the Society of Hospital Medicine in Philadelphia, which invited REACH to submit this article. You can read the article at www.hospitalmedicine.org or ask for Reference 6_F..

This article describes the process of setting standards and the results of the Hospital Management Improvement Initiative in Afghanistan. Bill and Fred conclude that "The principal lesson learned through this hospital management improvement initiative is that combining clinical and management improvements can create innovation in a developing country. Improvements are made throughout a hospital, not just in one clinical area. Mentoring has proven essential as a follow-up to training—training alone will not bring about significant positive changes. Finally, setting standards is key to the sustainability of improvements."

For additional information or to arrange for a press interview, please contact Julie O'Brien, Director of Communications and Knowledge Exchange at 617.250.9436 or jobrien@msh.org.

Management Sciences for Health is a private, non-profit organization that works collaboratively with health care policy makers, managers, providers, and clients worldwide to improve the delivery of health services through the application of practical management tools. MSH has 30 years of experience providing training and technical assistance in drug management and other health areas in over 100 countries. [home](#)

AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT SOCIAL PROTECTION

Oxfam Require a Learning and Development Coordinator for their Rural Development Programme

JOB TITLE: Learning and Development Coordinator

DIVISION / DEPARTMENT / LOCATION: International/Afghanistan/Kabul with travel

SALARY: National plus

OXFAM PURPOSE: To work with others to overcome poverty and suffering

TEAM PURPOSE: The Oxfam GB Programme in Afghanistan is working to provide an integrated rural development programme with elements of Humanitarian assistance and service delivery in an insecure environment.

JOB PURPOSE: The Learning and Development Coordinator will lead on implementing and institutionalising the country L&D strategy to capacity build the programme and effectively ensure programme quality.

DIMENSIONS:

- Managing/ supervising resources within defined boundaries or a specialist area, which may include people, assets and/or budgets.
- Providing professional advice to senior managers on areas of work covered in their remit.
- Influences the development of strategy and ensures and supports operational implementation.
- Develops solutions to diverse and complex problems within organisational policy.
- Interprets and applies operational and specialist information in a variety of formats from a variety of sources.
- Flexibility to anticipate and resolve challenges within corporate or divisional parameters, with moderate scope.
- Decisions are made, with a specialist/ divisional context, to further the objectives of Oxfam and the division with reference to the external HR environment.
- Impact of this role is significant within the department and division(s), and could have some impact Oxfam-wide.
- Contribute to and influence operational planning.
- Influence managers, staff and volunteers in Oxfam and develop effective networks with external bodies.
- Organise learning and development opportunities for staff to achieve corporate goals
- Working with Staff Representatives for the organization
- **Please see attachment 6_ H for full details and how to apply.** [home](#)

SOCIAL PROTECTION

UNHCR Country Operations Plan Overview – Afghanistan Planning Year 2006

Please ask for Reference 6_G.

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ECONOMIC GOVERNANCE AND PRIVATE SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

Tax Exemption Policy

Please see Reference 6_I for the Tax Exemption Policy.

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Fruit Exports Earn Millions for Afghanistan

The export of both dry and fresh fruit in the year past by Kandahar has earned over US\$17 million for the war-torn country, officials said on Thursday.

Director of the Provincial Chamber of Commerce Abdul Raziq Rafiq said they had exported 21,000 tons of raisin, figs, walnut and 16 tons of fresh fruit including pomegranates, grapes and melons to foreign countries.

Local traders sent these fruits to Ukraine, Bangladesh, Germany, South Korea, Singapore, India, Pakistan, Japan and Saudi Arabia via Ariana airlines company planes, he said.

He said it was a big achievement for the war-torn central Asian country, adding "the fruits could replace poppy crops if they had similar yield and market in future." Despite such market for fresh and dry fruits a number of people had still turned to growing poppy in the region because of apprehension over a low market for the fruits.

However the farmers who had got good crop and market intend to cultivate fruit instead of poppy in future.

Ghulam Darwish, one of such farmers who cashed in on the good market and quality yield, said "I want to plant other saplings and grow another orchard though currently I have two gardens of grapes over three acres of land." Another farmer Abdul Malik, while working in his grapes garden in Bagh-e-Pul, lying in 3km west of this southern city, said he was delighted with the last year's grapes produce.

Agriculture analyst Said Salih Muhammad Wijdan believes that gardening could be a good alternative for poppy and urged growers to focus on growing more fruits.

On one hand export has brought good income to country, but on the other hand people have expressed deep concern over rising fruit prices at home.

Tila Muhammad, a fruit seller, said the price of pomegranate had doubled as comparing with the last year.

"I don't remember that I have sold 7 kilos of pomegranate for more than 120 afghanis but this year I sold it for more than 250 afghanis," he added.

The unexpected hike in demand for Afghan fruit in foreign markets has increased the ratio of food storage in the province.

Admin of the Provincial Chambers of Commerce Faridullah Habib said they had set up fruit storages in Shurandam district of the province with the help of India. The godowns could store more than 500 tons of fresh fruit, he contended.

He said there was another similar storage in Panjwaie district that could house 44,000 tons of fruit. The government appointed a committee last year to prepare a draft to remove taxes from dry and fresh fruit exports.

Source: Pajhwok – Kandahar City – 10th February 2006.

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Here's how the world can avoid abandoning Afghanistan - George Soros - chairman of the Open Society Institute and the Soros Fund Management

While the unremitting violence in Iraq grabs the world's headlines, Afghanistan still struggles for peace. The country's Parliament is packed with warlords, the drug trade is thriving, and violence is on the rise.

Recently, world leaders had an opportunity to steer developments onto a new and more hopeful path when they met in London to forge a new compact with Afghanistan. The compact built on the 2001 Bonn Agreement, which laid the framework for a democratic Afghanistan but left much to be done to overcome that war-torn country's tragic legacy. The need for renewed attention to Afghanistan could hardly be greater. Decades of neglect coupled with foreign intervention left the country in ruins, with reverberations across the world. It is now in everyone's interest to help Afghanistan rebuild.

The drug trade exemplifies the far-reaching impact of domestic instability. Last year, the value of drugs produced in Afghanistan - the world's largest supplier of opiates - is estimated to have reached up to 25 percent of GDP.

Security, too, remains a serious concern. In 2005, more than 125 Coalition troops were killed, while suicide bombing emerged as a new and increasingly common tactic of the insurgency. Corruption is rampant, with government officials accused of cronyism and drug trafficking. Several members of the newly elected Parliament are known warlords with bloody records. With international aid poorly coordinated and the United States reducing its troop strength, many Afghans believe that the outside world is abandoning them.

But the massive scale of the challenges facing Afghanistan should not overshadow the opportunities for positive change. The Bonn process established the principle of democratic accountability, gave Afghanistan its first directly elected president, and provided a new Constitution that - approved after genuine debate and compromise - created a legitimate central government. It also paved the way for a Parliament in which over a quarter of the members are women - this in a country where, just five years ago, women were not allowed to leave the house without a male relative.

Moreover, most of the 20,000 village councils were elected through secret ballot. In a nod to the importance of the councils to realizing change at the most local level, the World Bank and its partners have adopted a highly innovative program that channels rural development aid through

the councils, which have been empowered to decide how the funds are spent. At the national level, the government recently approved a new development strategy that goes far to advance a vision for Afghanistan's future stability and growth.

Public opinion reflects widespread support for the latest changes. A recent poll shows that Afghans overwhelmingly favor their country's new direction - backing the participation of women in public life and international intervention against Al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and the drug economy. But Afghanistan's potential for progress must be bolstered by concerted international action. World leaders should support the counternarcotics strategy recently approved by the Afghan government, which would reduce economic dependence on opium production, punish traffickers and dealers, and provide sustainable economic alternatives for poppy farmers. Afghanistan is grappling with the world's biggest narcotics problem and donors must commit to a long-term drug control strategy. The European Parliament should also pass a resolution to consider whether Afghanistan should become one of the countries licensed to produce opium for medical purposes. Furthermore, instead of pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into technical assistance and short-term capacity-building programs, Afghanistan's friends should strive to help meet the Afghan government's benchmark for equipping young people with the skills and education necessary to lead their nation to a future of peace and prosperity. International support could help educate 40,000 Afghans each year in urgently needed fields, such as engineering, management, agriculture, law and economics.

Judicial reform is another pressing issue. Currently, the judiciary is incapable of trying a case of petty theft much less of ensuring human rights. A Supreme Court dominated by conservative factions has selected judges and prosecutors, and Afghans have little legal redress in a system that allows local commanders, who hold sway over the judiciary, to act with impunity. www.e-ariana.com

Without a viable legal system, foreign investment will remain elusive. Even Afghan expatriates in the Gulf states, who have invested roughly \$5 billion in regional and global trading networks, are reluctant to invest in their homeland.

Reform is nonetheless clearly possible. Last month, the Afghan leadership finally adopted - albeit half-heartedly - a transitional justice plan that could remove from power the biggest war criminals who have consolidated their grip on the country over the past five years. Implementation of this plan would not only give a boost to the rule of law, but also would enhance security and lead to better governance.

Failure to act would mean a betrayal of the Afghan people, who in 2001 welcomed the United States military and NATO forces as liberators. For their sake, and ours, we must not let them down.

Source: George Soros – The Daily Star – 11th February 2006.

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FUND-RAISING EXHIBITION - PICTURE THIS - War Child and Cobalt Fine Arts Present A Selling Exhibition - 17.02.06 - 05.03.06 | the Bargehouse | Open Daily | Admission Free

About War Child

War Child believes that children should never be the victims of armed conflict. For those children who become victims of armed conflict, War Child believes that their security and access to quality health, education and recreational facilities and services should still be a right and that, wherever possible, they should benefit from the love and care of their families and communities.

War Child are currently running and supporting projects in Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Bosnia Herzegovina and Iraq. The money made from this exhibition will help to improve and expand these activities and fund new projects in conflict zones across the globe.

Probably best known for their 'Help' albums, War Child have worked with high profile musicians including **Radiohead, David Bowie and Oasis**.

In the art world they have worked on projects with the **Proud Gallery, Eyestorm and Christie's** and have strived to support young artists wherever possible. Their patrons include **Keane, Billy Bragg, Marianne Faithfull and Robin Denselow**.

About Cobalt - Cobalt is an exhibition based team that combines expertise in successfully running galleries, profiting from holding stands at numerous trade events, sourcing funding for the curation of public and private events along with experts in marketing, public relations and design.

About Oxo Gallery and the Bargehouse

The Bargehouse is one of London's most versatile and dynamic exhibition spaces. Virtually derelict, the 4 storey warehouse will challenge the audience's perception of the gallery experience as well as providing a unique blank canvas for exhibiting artists.

The Exhibition

Essentially a conventional selling exhibition, **Picture This** aims to raise awareness and funds for War Child through the sale of established and up-coming artists' work.

The versatility of the space will allow the presence of large installations and video pieces. This will add a further dimension to the exhibition

War Child's presence at the exhibition will involve a display of decommissioned weaponry as well as audio and video pieces about the work of the charity.

Featuring works by

Sam Taylor- Wood, Tom Phillips, Damien Hirst, Peter Blake, Natasha Law, Banksy, Rankin, Helen Cass, Freya Douglas Morris, John Carter, Peter Kennard, Anne Sweet, Claire Burke, John Squire, Catherine Jacobs, Russell Hand, Rod Billington, Katusha Bull, Andrew Fyvie, John Leach, John Worthington, Douglas McDougal, David Stanley, Charlotte Jonerheim
More information, photos and quotes from Kerry at War Child kerry@warchildmusic.com | 0207 916 9276. [home](#)

Letters to the Editor – THE HILL - From 22 Afghanistan specialists and former State Department officials – 8th February 2006

From 22 Afghanistan specialists and former State Department officials:

We the undersigned group of Afghanistan specialists and former government officials are today sending a letter to House and Senate leaders urging them to support actively and provide the appropriate level of U.S. funding to implement the Afghanistan Compact, agreed to last week by the United States and over 60 countries and organizations at the London Conference on Afghanistan.

Much has been accomplished in Afghanistan since the Taliban and al Qaeda were overthrown by U.S.-led military forces following Sept. 11, but Afghanistan is still a nation at risk, and success in turning it into a functioning democracy and an economically viable state is not assured, with serious national-security implications for the United States.

The London conference provided the international community another opportunity to match its stated commitment to see Afghanistan rebuilt with the resources necessary to accomplish that task. Two previous donors conferences fell short, generating less than half of the \$28 billion the Afghan government (and the World Bank) believes is required for rebuilding.

We welcome Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice's announcement in London that President Bush will ask Congress for \$1.1 billion in reconstruction aid for Afghanistan in next year's budget but believe that Congress should consider a 50 percent increase in this amount (to \$1.6 billion) and signal that this new level of aid represents the floor, not the ceiling, for the annual U.S. contributions to the international rebuilding effort in Afghanistan over the five years envisioned by the compact.

The Afghanistan Compact is the latest manifestation of the international community's commitment to helping that country overcome decades of war and destruction and never again become a haven for terrorists. But the security, governance, development and counternarcotics goals contained in the compact will not be achieved without the active engagement of the United States Congress. In the bipartisan spirit that has characterized U.S. policy toward Afghanistan since Sept. 11, we are now calling on House and Senate leaders and their colleagues to provide their support to the fullest possible extent.

The signatories: *Dr. Walter Andersen, School of Advanced International Studies, Johns Hopkins University, former State Department senior analyst for South Asia; Dr. Thomas Barfield, department of anthropology, Boston University; John S. Blackton, former mission director, U.S. Agency for International Development, Afghanistan; Dr. Stephen Philip Cohen, the Brookings Institution, former member, State Department policy planning staff; Stephen F. Dachi, Elliott School of International Affairs, George Washington University, retired Foreign Service officer; Ambassador James Dobbins, former special envoy to Afghanistan; Dean Thomas Gouttierre,*

international studies and programs, University of Nebraska at Omaha; Selig S. Harrison, Center for International Policy, co-author of Out of Afghanistan: The Inside Story of the Soviet Withdrawal (1995); Ambassador Karl F. Inderfurth, Elliott School of International Affairs, former assistant secretary of state for South Asian affairs; David Isby, Committee for a Free Afghanistan; Dr. Elie D. Krakowski, American Foreign Policy Council and School of Advanced International Studies; Ambassador Dennis Kux, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, former State Department South Asia specialist; Ambassador William Milam, Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, former ambassador to Pakistan; Ambassador Robert Oakley, Institute for National Security Studies, National Defense University, former ambassador to Pakistan; Dr. Barnett R. Rubin, Center on International Cooperation, New York University; Ambassador Howard B. Schaffer, Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University, former U.S. ambassador to Bangladesh; Ambassador Teresita C. Schaffer, South Asia program, Center for Strategic and International Studies, former director, U.S. Foreign Service Institute; Ambassador Grant Smith, former ambassador to Tajikistan; Dr. S. Frederick Starr, Central Asia-Caucasus Institute, School of Advanced International Studies; Alex Their, U.S. Institute of Peace, former legal adviser to Afghanistan's constitutional and legal commissions; Dr. Marvin G. Weinbaum, Middle East Institute, former State Department senior analyst for Afghanistan and Pakistan; and Dr. Larry P. Doogson, Army War College.
Affiliations are listed solely for identification. [home](#)

Production and Marketing of Red Meat, Wool, Skins and Hides in Afghanistan – A Case Study from Kabul, Kandahar and Kunduz Provinces

Production and Marketing of Red Meat, Wool, Skins and Hides in Afghanistan – A Case Study from Kabul, Kandahar and Kunduz Provinces – by Euan F. Thompson, Philippe Chabot and Iain A. Wright – Macaulay Institute and Mercy Corps.

Please see attached as Reference 6_E an interesting Case Study recommended by Royce at the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit in Kabul. [home](#)

Barney Rubin Article on Central Asia and Africa

Please see Reference 6_D.

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If you want further information on any of the above subjects please email Jeanne Bryer at Afghanlinks@aol.com NB. All information contained here identifies the source and is shared with readers in good faith. If you find any incorrect details please let me know and they will be rectified immediately. Afghan Links is produced by Jeanne Bryer who formerly worked for the British and Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group and who currently works for Khorasan Orphanage in Kabul and the Kathy Evans Afghan Education Trust. If you no longer wish to receive the Afghan Links Newsletter please send an email to Jeanne Afghanlinks@aol.com and your address will be removed.

