

# AFGHAN LINKS

ISSUE – 16 – 4th May 2005 (TOTAL NO. 25)

*Afghan Links is a free newsletter for readers who have a keen interest in Afghanistan, 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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## **CALL FOR PAPERS**

### **New Voices, New Perspectives**

In order to create a space for new voices in the spheres of academia, policy-making and practice, INSTRAW is launching a research-paper series entitled New Voices, New Perspectives. Directed towards post-graduate students worldwide, this paper series will be an opportunity for students enrolled in gender-related programmes to contribute to global debates and to our communal sphere of knowledge on women's and gender issues. The research conducted by graduate and post-graduate students is often lost to the archives of university libraries. INSTRAW's new paper series seeks to make this cutting-edge research visible and accessible. This year's call for papers focuses on some of INSTRAW's priority research areas:

- **Gender and Remittances** exploring gender differences in the sending of remittances by migrant women and men, the use of remittances by recipients, and the impact of remittances on household and gender relations.
- **Gender and Information and Communication Technology (ICTs)** looking at the gender digital divide and focusing specifically on good practices in the use of ICTs for women's empowerment (e.g. case studies).
- **Gender and Security Sector Reform** exploring the gender dimensions of security sector reform processes, focusing specifically on one area of the security sector (e.g. military, police, etc.), and emphasizing the inclusion of women in the design and implementation of reforms.
- **Gender and Political Participation at the Local Level** focusing on good practices for increasing women's political participation and representation at the local level (in community-based or municipal government) and for fomenting dialogue between local women's groups and national governments.

Deadlines: Submission of abstracts (and CVs) 15 May 2005, Notification to authors of selected abstracts 1 June 2005, Final papers due 1 August 2005

Further information: Jeannie Ash de Pou, UN INSTRAW, Tel: 1+809 685-2111, Fax: 1+809 685-2117

[www.un-instraw.org/en/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=888&Itemid=1](http://www.un-instraw.org/en/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=888&Itemid=1),

[www.un-instraw.org](http://www.un-instraw.org)

**Source** : Codep Email Newsletter No 92, Edited By Peace Direct [www.peacedirect.org](http://www.peacedirect.org) April 2005. [home](#)

## **COMMEMORATION DAY**

### **Victory Day No Cause for Celebration**

The official commemoration of mujahedin victory is seen by many as an insult to the victims of the wars that followed.

It was 13 years ago that the communist government of President Najibullah was overthrown by the the mujahedin, an event that will be marked this week as Afghan Victory Day.

But while preparations are under way in the capital to celebrate the anniversary on April 28, few of the city's residents are in festive mood.

That's because many here recall that Najibullah's ousting in 1992 was followed by years of factional violence, the deaths of tens of thousands of Afghans and the wholesale destruction of Kabul.

It's no wonder, then, that few here see any reason to celebrate Asht-e-Sawr, the name given to the anniversary because it falls on the eighth day of Sawr, the second month in the Afghan calendar.

"I hate Asht-e-Sawr," said Adam Khan, standing just 100 metres from the parade grounds where many of the ceremonies are to take place.

"That was the day a rocket hit my house, setting it on fire and injuring me," he said, showing his deformed left leg.

The holiday to him is a bitter reminder of the bad years, when ordinary people were caught in vicious power struggles among local commanders. "My house was looted three times after the mujahedin took over," said Khan. "Having a celebration on this day is like rubbing salt in people's wounds."

Amir Malik told IWPR he came to Kabul as a mujahedin fighter just three days after Najibullah fell. "When I saw mujahedin fighting with each other and robbing people, I gave up the jihad," he said. "I fought this holy battle in God's name, not to loot or set fire to people's houses. I am a mujahed, but I hate this day."

Mujahedin leaders are proud of Asht-e-Sawr, despite the unsavoury reputation it has acquired. Mohammad Nasim Faqiri, a spokesman for Jamiat-e-Islami, one of the key factions involved in the civil war that lasted from 1992 to 1996, said that celebration was a legitimate one that was set down in the constitution.

"The mujahedin fought the holy battle for 14 years and defeated one of the world's most powerful giants, the Soviet Union. The battles that later took place among the mujahedin factions cannot destroy the reputation of the jihad," he said.

However, some mujahedin leaders admit that the warlords have a lot to answer for.

"On behalf of the mujahedin, I apologise for the destruction of Kabul city," said Ahmadshah Ahmadzai, former deputy leader of the Ittihad-e-Islami faction. "It was not good, and was a very great act of disloyalty to the nation. Anyone who fails to admit this is not an Afghan."

Still, Ahmadzai insists the holiday should be celebrated because "the current government and the peace [we have] are both outcomes of mujahedin sacrifices".

Political analysts differ on the mujahedins' legacy.

Abdul Wahab Mujir, from Mazar-e-Sharif, accepts that the day is historically significant and believes it is worthy of celebration. "It was on this exact day that the communist regime fell; it is a historic occasion," he said.

But Mohammed Akbar, a political analyst based in the eastern city of Jalalabad, deemed the day a tragedy, "This day should be condemned rather than celebrated. Since Asht-e-Sawr, our country has not seen one day of peace. Only an idiot would celebrate a day that brought him such misfortune."

Every Afghan, it seems, has a tale of tragedy to tell.

Habibullah, of Kabul, lost his 18-year-old son and 12-year-old daughter in the fighting. "Every year on this day, I remember how I tried to find my children in the soil. They were dismembered by a rocket explosion," he said.

Ruhullah, a shopkeeper in Mazar-e-Sharif, shares this sense of bitterness, "This is not the people's festival. It belongs to those who destroyed homes with tanks, who thought up various ways of killing people, and who cut off women's breasts.

"Celebration of this day makes it clear that murderers are still in power." **Source:** By IWPR staff in Kabul – 27<sup>th</sup> April 2005. [home](#)

## **COMMUNICATIONS**

**Afghanistan launches international competitive tenders for two additional GSM mobile licenses**

### **MEDIA ADVISORY**

The growth and vitality of the telecommunications sector in Afghanistan is one of the few remarkable success stories of the recent past. Since 1382 (2003-2004), when the first two licenses were issued for GSM mobile services, the mobile telephone subscribers have increased from zero to close to 800,000 users. More than US\$ 250 million has been invested in modern infrastructure, now reaching 32 urban areas nationwide.

Afghanistan will now issue two additional GSM licenses (in 900 & 1800 MHz) with service to commence on 10 January 2006. It is expected that these new licenses will generate large amount of revenues for the government in license fees, attract more than US\$ 200 million in new foreign direct investment and create thousands of skilled, well-paying jobs.

The GSM tender package will be available to all interested parties on 15 May 2005 at noon from the Telecom Regulatory Board (TRB), located on the 10<sup>th</sup> floor of the Ministry tower in Kabul. There will be a 500,000 Afghani non-refundable fee for the documentation and registration. The deadline for the submission of bids will be 16 July 2005 and it is expected that the final announcement and award will be on 22 August 2005. **See attachment 1.16 for the Afghanistan Country Report – Telecommunications – April 2005.**

The timetable for the GSM license tender is as follows:

23 April – Press conference

15 May – Release of tender package to bidders

7 June – Bidders conference (Q+A allowed until the end)

16 July – Deadline for bids

22 August – Announcement of winning bids

**Source:** Oliver Dziggel, Telecom Regulatory Board (TRB) office +93-20-210-1179  
[www.trb.gov.af](http://www.trb.gov.af)

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## **ELECTIONS**

- **2005 *Wolesi Jirga* Election for Kuchis**



### **FACT SHEET**

#### **2005 *Wolesi Jirga* Election for Kuchis**

**All eligible Kuchis in Afghanistan will be able to vote for Kuchi representatives in the *Wolesi Jirga* election on 18 September 2005. Candidate nomination, registration and voting for Kuchis will take place in all provinces in Afghanistan**

- In order to ensure Kuchi participation and the inclusion of Kuchi interests the new Government of Afghanistan, a certain number of seats in the *Wolesi Jirga* are reserved for Kuchis.
- There will be one ballot for the Kuchi *Wolesi Jirga* election. All eligible Kuchis in Afghanistan will vote for the list of Kuchi candidates on this ballot on the 18 September 2005. Eligible Kuchis will cast only *one* ballot for the Kuchi *Wolesi Jirga* election.
- Eligible Kuchis will be able to vote in specially allocated polling stations across Afghanistan. This is unlike procedures for non Kuchi Afghans – who will have to vote in the province named on their registration card.

#### **Kuchi Candidate Nominations**

- Kuchis can apply to stand as candidates for the 2005 Kuchi *Wolesi Jirga* election at the Nomination Office located at the Provincial JEMBS Election Office in any province.
- Kuchis must fulfill the candidate requirements as stipulated in the Constitution, the Electoral Law and JEMB regulations. The list of at least 300 legitimate signatures required in support of the Kuchi applicant's candidacy must be obtained from persons voter registered as nomads.
- Successful Kuchi candidates will appear on the ballot for the Kuchi *Wolesi Jirga* election. There will be one ballot for the Kuchi *Wolesi Jirga* election.
- Kuchi candidates, like all other candidates in the *Wolesi Jirga* election will be allocated symbols framed in squares. At the time of submitting their application for candidacy, Kuchi candidates will draw three symbols and choose one of the three. The chosen symbol will appear next to the name and photograph of the candidate on the ballot. Candidates can use their chosen symbol on their campaign material to help their supporters identify them on the Kuchi ballot.

#### **Kuchi Registration and Voting**

- In order to vote for the Kuchi *Wolesi Jirga* election on 18 September 2005, all Kuchis over the age of 18 years by Election Day must have a voter registration card. Voter registration cards from the Presidential Election are still valid for the 2005 Kuchi *Wolesi Jirga* election. Kuchis who did not register, or who lost their voter registration card, will be able to register at any registration center in any province in Afghanistan during the registration period.
- Kuchis will need their voter registration card to vote on Election Day. Kuchis will be able to vote for their preferred candidate on the Kuchi *Wolesi Jirga* ballot, at any polling center in Afghanistan.
- Kuchi voters will cast one ballot and will choose one candidate on the ballot.

*2005 WOLESI JIRGA ELECTION FOR KUCHIS\_ENG-JEMBS/O5-FS0*

**Key Messages:**

- Kuchis will vote on the 18 September 2005 for the *Wolesi Jirga* election for Kuchis.
- There will be a single nationwide Kuchi ballot for the Kuchi *Wolesi Jirga* election.
- Kuchi candidate nominations can be made at the Nomination Office located at the Provincial JEMBS Election Office in *any* province in Afghanistan.
- Kuchis need a voter registration card to vote. Kuchis who do not have a voter registration card from the Presidential election, can register at any registration center in *any* province during the registration period.
- Kuchis will be able to vote in specially allocated polling stations.

**Source:** UNAMA FACT SHEET.

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- **JEMB Press Release - MAY 1 2005**

**CANDIDATE NOMINATION PERIOD BEGINS**

Afghans across the country have begun offering themselves as candidates in their country's first post-conflict legislative and Provincial Council elections.

The Candidate Nomination process for the September 18 Wolesi Jirga (House of the People) and Provincial Council elections opened on Saturday in all 34 provincial capitals.

A total of 31 people across Afghanistan submitted their candidate nomination papers on the first day of the three-week Candidate Nomination period.

On Saturday, 26 people nationwide, including six women, nominated themselves as candidates for the Wolesi Jirga (Lower House of the National Assembly). Another five people submitted candidacies for the Provincial Council elections.

Hundreds more Afghans including members of the Kuchi (nomad) community turned up to Candidate Nomination offices across Afghanistan to collect Candidate Nomination kits.

"The Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB) is very encouraged by the strong level of interest already visible on the first day," said JEMB Chairman Bissmillah Bissmil.

"We are particularly pleased to see six women already step forward to submit applications to become Wolesi Jirga candidates. I urge more Afghan women to follow their lead. Afghan citizens who meet the criteria and wish to represent their people should take advantage of these coming three weeks to collect the details of your supporters and submit your candidate nomination papers."

JEMB Candidate Nomination offices are open in every provincial capital from 8.00 am to 4.00 pm, Saturdays to Thursdays, until May 19.

"The Candidate Nomination process is the first big step towards the Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council elections," said Chief Electoral Officer Peter Erben.

"This is a very important opportunity for Afghans to participate in the future of their land, by either running as a candidate, or deciding to support someone as a candidate."

Candidate Nomination figures will be regularly updated on the JEMB website.

A preliminary list of candidates will be publicized from June 4 to 9, during which challenges may be made against candidates who do not meet eligibility criteria. After adjudication of these challenges and a five-day appeal period, the final list will be certified by the JEMB and made public on July 12.

For further information please consult our website [www.jemb.org](http://www.jemb.org) or contact:

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## EXHIBITIONS

### Four Major Exhibitions in Kabul



#### **KABUL INT'L SPRING TRADE FAIR 2005**

*Turning Business Opportunities Into Success!!!*

**Loya Jirga Convention Center  
Kabul, Afghanistan  
June 8 - 13, 2005**



#### **AFGHANISTAN BOOK, COMPUTER & STATIONERY TRADE FAIR 2005**

*The Dark Phase is Gone!!! Now is the Time for Learning!!!*

**Loya Jirga Convention Center  
Kabul, Afghanistan  
June 8 - 13, 2005**



#### **REBUILD AFGHANISTAN EXHIBITION & CONFERENCE 2005**

*The Long Journey Ahead: Int'l Exhibition for Reconstruction, Investments, Infrastructural Development of post-war Afghanistan*

**Loya Jirga Convention Center  
Kabul, Afghanistan  
September 5 - 8, 2005**



#### **AFGHANISTAN WATER, ELECTRICITY & POWER EXHIBITION 2005**

*Water Means Life! Energy Means Progress! Together They Mean Future!*

**Loya Jirga Convention Center  
Kabul, Afghanistan  
October 1 - 4, 2005**

Source: <http://www.afghanistan-exhibitions.com/>

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## HUMANITARIAN AFFAIRS

### **Snowmelt Displaces Thousands - The effects of a hard winter take their toll as flooding hits rural areas**

Spring's floods caused by the heaviest snowmelt in six years are being blamed for causing at least 14 deaths, leaving thousands homeless and swamping Afghanistan's modest flood-prevention programme.

At least 19 of the country's 34 provinces sustained serious flooding, according to an emergency commission created by President Hamed Karzai before the current crisis.

The commission is funded with 11.4 million US dollars from the national budget and foreign aid organisations. Afghanistan's contribution - 6.2 million US dollars - was earmarked for emergency engineering works along the Amu Darya river, which runs along part of the northern border with Central Asia.

However, aid groups soon found themselves scrambling to provide blankets,

food, medicine and shelter all over the country as people were driven from their homes by unrelenting floodwaters.

The Amu Darya, which flows from the Pamir mountains, this year swamped at least 168,000 hectares of land, washing away crops and orchards.

Agriculture Minister Obaidullah Ramin recently told Balkh provincial government officials that stabilising the river would take 12 years and cost about 240 million dollars. Each year, it threatens about 300,000 people living in low-lying areas.

Elsewhere, on March 18, the Helmand river flooded large areas of Uruzgan province. Then, on March 29, the Band-e-Sultan dam, north of Ghazni city, ruptured, killing at least six and sending floodwaters into the provincial capital, 30 kilometres to the south.

Meanwhile, several hundred residents of Chak, about 40 kilometres north of Band-e-Sultan in Wardak province, remain threatened by floodwaters building up behind a dam that is much larger than the one at Band-e-Sultan.

Engineers at Chak, 90 kilometres southwest of Kabul, are working to create a controlled release from the overflowing reservoir, trying to open floodgates that have remained locked during six years of dry weather.

At least 80 families are uncertain whether to return home, said Gulam Sakhi, 61, whose house sits just 200 metres from the dam and says that thousands of hectares of nearby farmland have been rendered useless for crops this year.

Meanwhile, the start of classes has been delayed at Chak's primary school, built by the United Nations last year at a cost of 200,000 dollars, but now tilting dangerously due to the rising water table. **Source:** IWPR's Afghan Recovery Report, No. 170, April 29, 2005 by Amanullah Nasrat - IWPR staff reporter in Chak and Mohammad Jawad Sharifzada - IWPR staff reporter in Kabul. [home](#)

## **HUMAN RIGHTS**

### **Afghanistan: U.N. Rights Monitoring Still Needed**

Afghanistan's perilous human rights situation demands ongoing monitoring by the United Nations, Human Rights Watch said today.

Human Rights Watch urged the U.N. Commission for Human Rights, now conducting its annual meeting in Geneva, to keep Afghanistan on its agenda and to increase the number of human rights monitors in the country.

"There is still a human rights crisis in Afghanistan," said Brad Adams, Asia director of Human Rights Watch. "Warlords and armed factions still dominate many parts of the country and routinely abuse human rights, especially the rights of women and girls."

Donor nations, and specifically the NATO countries, have been slow in meeting their commitments to Afghanistan. As a result, Afghans countrywide continue to complain about extortion and robberies by militias and political repression by local strongmen.

Increased human rights monitoring would be especially important with parliamentary elections planned for September. During presidential elections last year, the international community fielded only a small number of election monitors who were hard-pressed to lend legitimacy the process. Human Rights Watch documented intimidation of civil society groups and journalists during the presidential campaign. Parliamentary elections, which are more competitive at a local level, are expected to be more fiercely contested and thus more vulnerable to political intimidation.

Human Rights Watch called on the Afghan government to press for greater international support in monitoring human rights conditions throughout the country.

Human Rights Watch also urged the United States to help increase human rights monitoring. There are indications that the U.S. delegation to the U.N. Commission on Human Rights in Geneva has opposed continued U.N. monitoring in Afghanistan by the U.N. independent expert on human rights in Afghanistan, Cherif Bassiouni. Bassiouni had criticized the United States last year for its policies of holding detainees in Afghanistan without legal protections.

"The U.S. should be helping Bassiouni and other U.N. monitors to do more in Afghanistan, not less," Adams said. "Otherwise, U.S. opposition to U.N. monitors in Afghanistan could be interpreted as motivated as a desire to silence critics."

**Related Material**

[Afghanistan: Human Rights Concerns for the 61st Session of the U.N. Commission](#)

**Source:** Human Rights Watch – 20<sup>th</sup> April 2005.

<http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/04/20/afghan10515.htm>

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**INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MIGRATION**

**IOM in Afghanistan - Issue - 15 International Organization for Migration April 30, 2005**

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- IDP Spring Return Operation Begin
- Border Police Training: Kabul Airport
- IOM Afghanistan Website Launched
- Return of Qualified Afghans Programme (RQA): Beneficiary Views
- Afghan Officials Participate in Bali Process Conference on Migration and Security
- Participation in AEU Population Movement Conference

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Website (HQ): [www.iom.int](http://www.iom.int) **For the full Newsletter see attachment 3.16.**

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**RECONSTRUCTION AND STABILIZATION**

**Post-Conflict Stabilization And Reconstruction: What Have We Learned From Iraq And Afghanistan?**

Key lessons are emerging from the complex operations of the post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction missions in both Iraq and Afghanistan. The U.S. Institute of Peace has undertaken the most systematic efforts to date to gather "lessons learned" from civilian Americans returning from these operations. On the occasion of the publication of its two special reports -- *The Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience with Public Security in Iraq* and *The Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience with Economic Reconstruction in Iraq\** -- the Institute convened a distinguished panel of experts to discuss critical lessons learned during their post-conflict work in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The panelists at the April 14 event on "Security, Governance and Reconstruction: What Have We Learned in Iraq and Afghanistan?"\*\* were: Rick Barton, Senior Advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and Co-Director of the CSIS Post-Conflict Reconstruction Project; Rajiv Chandrasekaran, journalist in residence at the International Reporting Project at the Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies (SAIS) and former Washington Post Baghdad bureau chief; Martin Hoffmann, Executive Director of the Afghanistan Reachback Office at the Department of Defense; and Robert Perito, Coordinator of the Iraq and Afghanistan Experience Projects at the Institute of Peace. Daniel Serwer, the Institute's Vice President and Director of Peace and Stability Operations, moderated the event. The following summary is based on their presentations and does not represent the views of the Institute, which does not take positions on policy issues.

### **Security must be a priority...**

» **Lesson Identified: In the immediate aftermath of combat, local security forces are unwilling, unable, or unavailable to deal with civilian violence and lawlessness.**

Following the U.S. capture of Baghdad, a significant, yet predictable, breakdown in law and order occurred. Looting, street crime, and general lawlessness were rampant because the U.S. military initially lacked orders to provide law enforcement and Iraqi security forces were unwilling to ensure public safety. According to the Institute's Robert Perito, an expert on post-conflict security, "...this initial experience undermined local support for the coalition and allowed a climate of impunity to take hold." Given these problematic consequences, Perito, who was echoed by other panelists, stressed the importance of ensuring law and order immediately following the end of major combat operations. Because local security forces cannot be relied on to provide effective law enforcement, he claimed that international police advisors and police trainers must be a part of the intervention force.

» **Lesson Identified: Local police require extensive retraining and equipping, but are ultimately only as good as the institutions that stand behind them.**

As in Bosnia, Haiti and Kosovo, international police advisors were needed in Iraq to retrain, equip, and supervise local security forces. Yet, instead of international police advisors, the task of standing up the Iraqi Police Force initially fell to five members of the U.S. Department of Justice. "This critical mission thus quickly became a mission impossible," according to Perito. Training, equipping, and supervising local police must be a priority in post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction operations. Rick Barton of CSIS, who recently returned from Afghanistan, suggested that public security has not been properly prioritized, as the Afghan National Police continue to require a great deal more training and an increase in pay to ensure success and sustainability. Several panelists stressed that police are a critical component of ensuring public safety, but they alone cannot ensure law and order, which is ultimately contingent upon establishing a functioning judicial system, including courts and prisons. **For the full report see 2.16 - \*** For copies of *The Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience with Public Security in Iraq* by Robert Perito and *The Coalition Provisional Authority's Experience with Economic Reconstruction in Iraq* by Anne Ellen Henderson, please visit the Institute's website at [www.usip.org/pubs/](http://www.usip.org/pubs/) [home](#)

## **SECURITY**

### **Afghanistan: Security Advisory: Threat Of Abduction/ Kidnapping**

Information received from the Ministry of Interior indicate that a member of the organised crime gang that had been involved in the kidnapping of the three UN Staff members in October 2004 had been arrested.

You are advised that this arrest may be the trigger for a follow-on kidnapping of an International staff member of the UN or an INGO/ IO with the aim of securing the release of the arrested person(s).

Although it is our assessment that such threat may primarily be focused in the Central Region, the likelihood of it happening in other regions can not be discarded.

All UN international staff are thus cautioned to be aware of this potential threat, and are advised to comply to the present security measures that are in place in the region that they work in. You are specifically advised on the following:

1. Do not walk alone on the streets of Kabul. I acknowledge the fact that the weather is now so nice in Kabul that one would like to walk to work or to the bazaar. Do this in a group, or NOT AT ALL.
2. Carry a hand-held radio with you at all times when you move in the city - this gives you direct access to at least a Radio Room for you to communicate with in the case of an emergency.
3. Comply to the curfew timings and movement restrictions of the region.

ASCs and AFSCOs are advised to revisit the threat assessment of the environment in which they work, and to adjust the security measures, not only on the present threat warning for kidnapping, but also for the threat indicators that had been developing over the past few weeks. **Stay Safe.**

**Source:** Jean Lausberg, UN FSCO: Afghanistan – 30th April, 2005

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## **TALIBAN**

### **AFGHANISTAN: Hit and Run in the Countryside**

Apparently what's left of the Taliban is concentrated mostly in the southeast, especially in Kandahar province. There are several reasons for this, not least the proximity to Pakistan's Northwest Frontier region, still only lightly controlled by the Pakistani government. But a major contributing factor is the inability of the Afghan central government to bring the corrupt provincial governor, Gul Agha Shirzai, fully under control. The Taliban has been heavily working its claims to be able to provide "good government" based on Islamic traditions against the corrupt secularists, who are supported by infidels. It helps to have a corrupt governor in office.

The Afghan government has been having a fair amount of success disarming the warlords and is slowly integrating their militias into the new regular army. Warlords who cooperate are being given plumb assignments -- though often posts with little real power. For example, Abdul Rashed Dorstam, a leader of the northern Uzbeki community, has recently been made Chief of Staff to Army Headquarters, while still being permitted to remain as head of his old faction, now converted into a proper political party.

The central government has become increasingly concerned about the extent of Iranian intelligence penetration of the southwestern region. During the Taliban years, this area was the scene of an unofficial war between Iran and the Islamists movement, since the Shia leadership in Iran was concerned about keeping the Taliban out.

Armed Taliban are operating in groups of one to three dozen men. Traveling in pickup trucks, they try to attack police stations, or ambush army patrols. This has become increasingly dangerous, because more Afghan police and soldiers have good radios, and can immediately call for reinforcements. These often include American helicopters and aircraft (A-10s, UAVs, fighter-bombers). If the Taliban cannot get far enough away to fade into the woodwork, the American aircraft will find them, and coordinate air and ground attacks. This often results in the surviving Taliban scattering into the hills or villages, and escaping. However, at that stage, another Taliban marauder group is out of action until its members can get back together and maybe try again.

**Source:** [www.strategypage.com](http://www.strategypage.com) – military news about Afghanistan – 25<sup>th</sup> April, 2005.

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**If you want further information on any of the above subjects please email Jeanne Bryer at [Afghanlinks@aol.com](mailto:Afghanlinks@aol.com)**

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