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## Newsletter

Your weekly news update on the electoral process in Afghanistan

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### Ghani reaffirms pledge to clear Kunduz of militants

Javed Hamim Kakar, 01 October 2015

KUNDUZ CITY (Pajhwok): President Ashraf Ghani on Thursday directed security officials to go ahead with an ongoing operation to purge Kunduz and the entire northern zone of militants. Speaking to military officials through a video link, the president pledged that officials, whose negligence caused the fall of Kunduz City to the insurgents would be punished. He discussed the latest security environment in the restive province with senior officials and directed them to take care of civilians and make sure they were not harmed in any way. But the Taliban asserted they retained the control of Kunduz City and had captured more areas from the security forces. Earlier, government official claimed security forces had recaptured Kunduz City. On September 29, hundreds of Taliban gunmen stormed Kunduz City from various directions and captured it after a few hours of clashes with security forces. Sediq Siddiqui, the Interior Ministry spokesman, told Pajhwok Afghan News security forces conducted an operation on Wednesday night to drive militants from the city. He said the security forces were able to take control of the entire city during the operation that continued until 3:30am. NATO forces provided air support, Siddiqui added. The Tala wa Barfak district of northern Baghlan province has been overrun by the Taliban, who also captured the Khawaja Ghar town of Takhar province, residents and officials said on Thursday. The Kunduz governor was not present when the province fell to the Taliban, according to sources, who said Mohammad Omar Safi fled to Europe after the strategic city collapsed. Safi had been in Tajikistan, from where he was trying to reach London, a government official said on the condition of anonymity. An Afghan diplomat in Dushanbe also wrote on his Facebook wall the governor of Kunduz had moved to Uzbekistan from Tajikistan before reaching Turkey on his way to Europe. He wrote after obtaining Tajikistan's visa, Omar wanted to go to Europe.

### Abdullah acknowledges security flaws in Kunduz

Mohammad Hassan Khettab, 05 October 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): Chief Executive Officer (CEO) Abdullah Abdullah on Monday said terrorism did not have any religion, ethnicity or tribe, but in some cases the scourge and Taliban atrocities were justified. Speaking at a cabinet meeting, Abdullah said the recent Kunduz incident was a major conspiracy, assuring all residents the government would leave no stone unturned to ensure their security. “The Kunduz attack showed that today's Taliban and the previous ones have no differences when it comes to crimes and barbarism. The crimes that were

committed in Kunduz should not be justified,” he remarked. A week ago, the Taliban overran Kunduz City and took control of the provincial capital for three days, before being driven out by the security forces. Abdullah acknowledged shortcomings in Kunduz security, saying it meant that the government had not done its job properly. However, it remained accountable to the masses, he added. “The fundamental question of Kunduz people is that they came here many times and presented their observations about the situation in their province,” Abdullah pointed out. “Months ago, there were predictions of attacks on Kunduz, but why it wasn't prevented is a question we should have a satisfactory answer to,” said the ex-foreign minister. The CEO said terrorism did not have any religion, nation or tribe, but it was unfortunate that the menace and crimes by Taliban were justified at times by the government's position. Abdullah said in justification for the enemy should not be allowed from inside the government and there should be a clear distinction between the enemy, terrorism and Taliban and the government and the people. “Whatever differences we have should be put aside, but against the enemy we should stand in a single line,” he stressed, saying appointments of officials in the provinces with higher security threats be reviewed. Abdullah said different groups interfered in the security sector and hampered the decision-making process. He welcomed offers of support from the people and mujahideen groups to security forces. “In case of necessity and in the framework of government, we will utilize the services of our people.”

### Senators want govt to review top-level appointments

Khawaja Basir Ahmad, 06 October 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): The Meshrano Jirga -- or upper house of parliament -- on Tuesday urged the government to review appointments of the past one year to prevent a Kunduz-type debacle. Mohammad Dawood Ghafari, a lawmaker from Ghor, criticised the appointment of Governor Sima Joyenda, arguing: “A woman can't manage one million people. There is conflict in Ghor; nobody listens to a man, much less a woman.” If not given due attention, Ghor would face the same fate as Kunduz did, he warned, saying if the government did not reverse recent appointments in various provinces, the security situation would deteriorate further. Rahmatullah Achakzai, senator from Kandahar, also blasted the appointments made in the past year or so. “Our experience over the past year shows appointments based on nepotism and friendships have no positive outcome.” Those who had satisfactory performance should be rewarded and those who could not work or even created trouble should be prosecuted, the senator demanded.

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“ Dand Ghori has become a safe haven for them.”

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### WJ session adjourned amid uproar over Baghlan pact

Khawaja Basir Ahmad, 03 October 2015

KABUL (Pajhwok): Some lawmakers on Saturday said the Dand Ghori accord with Taliban in northern Baghlan province amounted to giving the insurgent group concession, but others defended the agreement. The Wolesi Jirga (WJ) session ended on an inconclusive note after some lawmakers entered a verbal clash. The Presidential Palace appointed a five-member delegation led by Border and Tribal affairs Minister Mohammad Gulab Mangal last month to evaluate the security situation in Dand Ghori area near the provincial capital of Baghlan province. Mangal told the Wolesi Jirga during their 10-day stay in Baghlan, they spoke to people from different walks of life and finally concluded an agreement with some elders of Dand Ghori. Under the agreement, local elders would not allow Taliban to stage attacks on Qarghan security check posts and security forces would also not detain anyone without permission of local elders. Some provincial council members in Baghlan province had blasted the agreement, saying the accord meant surrendering Dand Ghori locality to insurgents. But Mangal insisted the accord had been signed with local elders and no law had been violated. Mangal said the delegation had been appointed by the President for evaluation of the security situation in Dand Ghori and the accord was signed with local elders in the presence of civil and military officials. After nine months of clashes, he added, the situation had improved in Dand Ghori. He said during the nine months of unrest, 52 civilians had been killed and 116 more wounded. About 226 houses and 22 mosques were damaged and government suffered huge financial losses, he added. He denied security forces had retreated from Dehna Ghori locality, saying “throughout my life I have defended our national values and in the past ten years of my service I haven’t done anything against our national interest. Based on the 9th article of the agreement if the security forces have evidence they can act without informing local elders.” He said such agreements were beneficial. “The officials in Baghlan can

use the temporary peace that has been ensured as a result of this agreement to bring permanent peace.” Haji Allah Gul Mujahid, a lawmaker from Kabul, welcomed the accord, saying war could not bring peace. He said the Dehna Ghori experience should be followed in other parts of the country as well. Eng. Sahib Khan from Logar also voiced support for the agreement. “Now as it has become clear that the agreement had been signed with local people, then there is no issue. This is for the benefit of Dand Ghori residents.” MP Hamid Lalai from Kandahar province also supported the agreement, saying based on it the residents would not allow Taliban’s activities in their area. But some other lawmakers voiced strong opposition to the Dand Ghori agreement. Farhad Azimi from northern Balkh province said: “Past experience shows such agreements had failed. Signing the agreement with local elders who have no authority is nothing but giving opportunity to Taliban.” Ahmad Behzad from Herat province called the agreement as giving concession to the insurgents. “Dand Ghori has become a resting, equipping and financing centre for Taliban.” He said the agreement did not benefit the government and the people and it was nothing but a project to turn northern Afghanistan into northern Waziristan. Ahmad Shah Ramazan, another MP, said: “The Taliban who face defeat in Baghlan, Kunduz, Samangan and other provinces have taken refuge in Dand Ghori. The place has become a safe haven for them.” He admitted security had been ensured in the area, but said there was no guarantee the Taliban would not stage attacks on highways or on government forces. Dr. Mohiuddin Mahdi, another lawmaker from Baghlan province, addressing the borders minister, said: “based on the president’s directions, you should have evaluated the situation not ceding a part of the Afghan soil to the insurgents.” “You have committed national treason with this work. Afghanistan is an undivided country but you have divided it,” he said, calling for the minister to be referred to the Attorney General’s Office. At the end of the session, lawmakers Dr. Zaheer Sadat, Ahmad Shah Ramazan and Hamidzai Lalai started exchanging hot words. As their verbal clashes intensified, Speaker Abdul Rauf Ibrahimidi adjourned the session without any decision.

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“One military corps cannot be responsive to all the needs in the north.”

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### Security bosses brief senators on latest developments

**Khwaja Basir Ahmad, 04 October 2015**

KABUL (Pajhwok): A senior intelligence official on Sunday acknowledged the existence of the “5th pillar within the government” while the deputy defence minister stressed on the need for full equipping Afghan forces to foil enemy’s designs. Briefing the Mesharano Jirga or upper house of parliament, Interior Minister Noorul Haq Ulumi said “a negative campaign” in the appointment of some security officials had led to the fall of Kunduz City, the capital of northern Kunduz province. Deputy Director of the National Directorate of Security (NDS) Abdul Matin Baig told the house that the government did not launch new anti-militants offensive in Kunduz in order to protect four Tajik officers who had been kidnapped by the Taliban. While Abdul Khaliq Sarwari, the first deputy defence minister, said the National Security Council (NSC) had not ordered a halt to any offensive in Kunduz this year. The upper house summoned these top security officials to brief lawmakers about the overall security situation in the country and explain reasons behind the fall of Kunduz. On the night between Sunday and Monday, hundreds of Taliban gunmen stormed Kunduz City from various directions, capturing the strategic city after a few hours of clashes with security forces. Earlier, Interior Ministry spokesman Sediq Siddiqui told Pajhwok Afghan News security forces launched a special operation on Wednesday night to drive militants from the city. He had said the security forces were able to take control of the entire city during the operation that continued until 3:30am. NATO forces also provided air support, Siddiqui added. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) had confirmed the security forces wrested back Kunduz City despite strong resistance from militants. In a statement, the MoD claimed 150 insurgents had been killed and 90 others wounded in the offensive. The forces had reached Bala Hesar hilltop, pushing back the Taliban from Pul Rahmat Khan area. Sarwari acknowledged the fall of Kunduz was a debacle which the government lacked words to say sorry for. Had the NSC prepared a strong army 14 years back, the incident in Kunduz would not have happened, he said. He warned if security forces could not grow professionally after one year, the country would be under direct attack from intelligence agencies of neighboring

countries. He said currently the military was dealing with multiple problems, but the ground forces would be supported timely under direct attack from the enemy. Sarwari told the senators that last alone as many as 315 Afghan National Army (ANA) soldiers had been killed and 824 wounded during incidents of violence. The NDS deputy director told the house that intelligence information about Kunduz city had been provided to the authorities concerned, but they did not takje it serious. Earlier, the NDS director had claimed the spy agency did not allow military operation in Kunduz before the Taliban captured the provincial capital. According to Baig, “the fifth pillar” of the government did exist inside the government and search for such individuals was underway. Sulaiman Kakar, National Security Council deputy director, rejected claims that military operation had been prevented in Kunduz. He asked lawmakers that enemy wanted to divide the Afghans by spreading such rumours.

### Jawzjan forces facing combat gear shortage

**Hamid Tamkin, 06 October 2015**

SHIBERGHAN (Pajhwok): A security meeting on Tuesday observed that northern Jawzjan province was struggling with shortage of military gear and personnel. The meeting between a delegation of the Interior Ministry and local officials took place in Shiberghan, the provincial capital. Lotfullah Azizi, Jawzjan governor, after briefing the delegation about the law and order situation in his province, suggested that it was necessary to establish another military corps in the presence of the 209th Shaheen Military Corps in the north. He added the Shaheen Corps were busy fighting insurgents on many fronts in Kunduz, Baghlan, Badakhshan, Jawzjan, Sar-i-Pul, Faryab and Takhar provinces and they could not respond to all conflict-related needs in the northern zone. “We face military equipment shortage and the presence of only one military corps cannot be responsive to all the needs in the north,” he added. The suggestions come as Darzab, Manjigak and Khamab districts of Jawzjan have recently been the scene of clashes between Taliban insurgents and security forces. According to local officials, more than 20 insurgents have been killed, including Mullah Qadir, the shadow district chief for Manjigak, during the clashes, but the Taliban denied their district chief had perished. Sayed Jalal, a member of the

“Kunduz incident is a bad experience for us. Officials should be active and the people should shun differences and support their government.”

provincial council, said security forces were underpaid

and they lacked enough equipment.



### **Kandahar elders link Kunduz collapse to negligence**

**Bashir Ahmad Nadem, 03 October 2015**

KANDAHAR CITY (Pajhwok): Dozens of tribal elders offered condolences to the families of the victims of Kunduz violence, saying the city had fallen as a result of government's negligence. During a gathering in the provincial council office, the elders from different parts of Kandahar asked the government to take urgent measures to bring to justice all those who contributed to the debacle. Kandaharis are deeply saddened by the Kunduz incident, the deputy head of provincial council, Hajji Abdul Qayyum, told the gathering. He called on the government to investigate the incident. First of all, the lives and properties of the people should be secured during operations and it was the duty of the security personnel to fight against militants who spread fear among the people, he added. Another tribal elder, Sabitullah Khan, asked the government to strengthen security personnel to prevent repetition of such incidents, which the Afghans could not tolerate. Another public representative, Haji Niamatullah Sherdali, shared his grief with the victims' families, saying all Afghans had been shocked by life and property losses suffered by the Kunduz residents. "Kunduz incident is a bad experience for us. Officials should be active and the people should shun differences and support their government," he said. Such fiascoes could occur in other provinces as well, warned another member of provincial council Attaullah Atta, who urged the people to swing behind the government to contain the militant onslaught. A tribal elder, Hajji Abdul Majeed Khan, accused the authorities of negligence. He advised the government to be win the hearts and minds of the people and protect them from injustice.

### **Corrupt officials to face music: Kunar governor**

**Zeerak Fahim, 04 October 2015**

ASADABAD (Pajhwok): Government employees involved in corruption would be brought to justice, the governor of eastern Kunar province said on Sunday. He was addressing a consultative gathering participated by district chiefs, members of provincial councils and peace council, district development and social councils. Governor Wahidullah Kalimzai said people betraying the

government and the nation and facilitating the disruption of situation would be dealt with sternly. He asked security and detective organs to identify such people and bring them to justice, urging the meeting participants to assist the government in removing corruption and maintaining security. The governor said they had decided to hold meetings with religious scholars, tribal elders and youth of all the districts to combat corruption and insecurity in the province. Deputy head of the provincial council, Jamaluddin Sayar, suggested the governor to identify people having links with insurgents and who got personal benefits from both the government and the insurgents.

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