



Legislative Newsletter

11 October 2012, Vol.8, No. 6

NEWS:

MPs react to Presidential statement on Afghanistan strategic relations.

President Karzai's recent statement that Afghanistan would buy weapons from Russia, China or India, if the US did not equip Afghan soldiers with heavy weapons, came under discussion in the Wolesi Jirga (WJ) plenary of 8 October 2012. Following the statement, while MPs questioned the value of the US-Afghanistan strategic partnership agreement, the dominant view was that the president should not have publicly announced to the media that Afghanistan does not have the power to fight terrorism, and the international community did not support Afghanistan to defend its territory.

At a 4th October press conference, president Karzai threatened Afghanistan would consider acquiring weapons from Russia, China or India if the United States did not supply Afghanistan with heavy weapons needed to fight the insurgency. Mr. Ali Akbar Qasemi (Ghazni) said, "We did not expect the president to tell the media that Afghanistan doesn't have the power, and the international community didn't support Afghanistan to defend its territory." He further suggested the House should take a position on rocket shelling by Pakistan on Kunar province.

Disagreeing with the president's statement that Afghanistan does not have military power, talking to APAP, Ms. Zefnone Safi (Laghman) accepted that Afghanistan needed heavy weapons but according to her, "If you look at Afghanistan's history the nation (common people) have always defended the country, we may not have heavy weapons and a strong army but if anyone invades this country, all people will rise up and they will not look to heavy weapons to defend the country."

Some MPs appeared to agree on the inadequacy of the Afghanistan-US strategic partnership agreement in ensuring the protection and defense of the Afghan territory from attacks by neighbor countries. Mr. Ghulam Sarwar Usmani (Farah) said the United States signed the Strategic Partnership Agreement with Afghanistan, but has never been loyal to it. He further added, "Neither the United States nor NATO forces help Afghanistan to defend its territorial integrity, and on the other hand Pakistan is supporting terrorism." It was his view the people of Afghanistan should decide on their defense and purchasing heavy weapons to defend their country was an option.

The presidential statement comes after continuing attacks from Pakistan on Afghanistan's border provinces, and demands for a definitive response from Kabul. President Karzai has confirmed the possibility of conditionally signing a strategic pact with Pakistan, only if Islamabad first stops "terrorists" and "suicide bombers" from crossing into Afghanistan. The MPs were overwhelming

in their view that Afghanistan should not sign an accord with Pakistan, if the country is not committed to fighting terrorism. In this regard, Ms. Humaira Ayoubi (Farah) said, “Afghanistan should not sign the strategic partnership Agreement with Pakistan until Pakistan begins to help the Afghan government in fighting terrorism sincerely.”

Linking the recent International Crisis Group to the discussion on national security, Mr. Fakori Behisheti (Bamyan) referencing the claim in the report that the Afghanistan state would collapse after 2014, said, “although international forces are still available in Afghanistan, the insecurity is becoming a serious issue.” He requested parliament to work on a draft security plan and share it with the government, “since Afghans themselves should build their country.”

Meanwhile, the plenary of the 8th also saw MPs splitting over the Law on the Structure of the Attorney General office (AGO). Some members questioned the procedural handling of the law, complaining that the House’s commissions had not debated the piece of legislation, while Mr. Mohammad Mohaqeq (Kabul), chair of the Justice and Judiciary commission that has primary responsibility over the law, claimed the law was sent to his commission six months ago. Calling for a vote on the law, he added, “Seven joint sessions have been held so far.”

In terms of the internal rules of the Wolesi Jirga, while a commission is designated as a primary commission, a draft law should be sent to all the commissions of the Wolesi Jirga to allow them to provide their inputs. The other commissions are then required to provide their comments to the primary commission. This did not happen with the Law on the Structure of the Attorney General’s Office.

The law was not approved due to the lack of quorum and the Justice and Judiciary commission was instructed by the Administrative board of the WJ to send it once again to all 18 commissions of the House.

Senators React to the International Crisis Group Report

The Meshrano Jirga (MJ) has reacted strongly to the report of the International Crisis Group (ICG) on the possible scenarios in Afghanistan post 2014. Senators labeled the report illusory, untrue and unhelpful to the government of Afghanistan, lamenting that it had the potential to not only demoralize the people of Afghanistan, but also could in itself incite and excite people to unrest. They called on the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) to take a serious diplomatic stance against persons who expressed views such as contained in the report.

A recent report from the International Crisis Group warns that Afghanistan's government could collapse after NATO troops leave the country in 2014. Senators condemning the report, expressed views that such a report can have a negative impact on Afghans living in the country. “I reject and condemn the report of the International Crisis Group regarding the situation of Afghanistan after 2014. I think such reports demoralize the people.” Mr. Ali Akbar Jamshidi (Daikundi) said. He further added that the report of the ICG has direct linkages with the American elections, and is being used by the candidates to garner support for themselves to win the elections. “I am sure the

Afghan system and government will continue after 2014.”

Contributing to the Senators discussion, Mr. Daoud Assas (Zabul) expressed his concerns about the recent report of the International Crisis Group. In particular he took issue with the open publication of the report, given its contents. In this regard, he said, “The International Crisis Group (ICG) shouldn’t broadcast such reports about Afghanistan.” He however also added, “ICG should not only point out the problems but the solutions. The government should pay attention to the problems; some governmental officials are involved in destabilizing the government and creating turmoil.”

Mrs. Gulalai Akbari (Badakhshan) termed the recent report of the International Crisis Group, dangerous and interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan. According to her, “The report of the ICG will demoralize the Afghans.” In her view the report did more harm than good at this particular time.

Senators were of the view that while it was easy to articulate the negative points, analysts should take the time to assess all situations and outline solutions in a constructive manner. Mr. Nesar Ahmad Harris (Appointee) who was also displeased with the report called the report more harmful for the international community’s efforts and investment against terrorism, according to him this is not the first time that the International Crisis Group is publishing such reports, he asked the Afghan government to take a strong stance on the report, “The Afghan government should take a strong position and reject the report.” He further accused ICG of being a spying network. “The ICG is a spying network like other intelligence agencies, bent on creating turmoil in the region as we are witness of in the Turkish and Syrian conflicts.” He claimed that the Afghan people will support their security forces after 2014 and will defend the country. “The media should not play a negative role by broadcasting such reports and propaganda to demoralize the people,” he charged.

Mr. Farukh Shah Janab (Faryab) and Mr. Ghulam Mahiuddin Munsif (Kapeesa) expressing their disagreement with the report, said that the ICG should apologize to Afghanistan, “I don’t accept the report of the International Crisis Group... I think the collapse of the current system will be a failure of the western countries,” Mr. Junab said. Agreeing with Senator Janab, Mr. Munsif added, “The international crisis group should apologize to Afghanistan, the ICG is creating turmoil.”

Meanwhile, the Senators called on Parliament to take a final decision regarding the renaming of Education University. The student’s protests over the renaming of Education University to Burhanuddin Rabbani University have continued for more than two weeks and have at times turned violent.

Meshrano Jirga expresses gratitude to Afghan Athletes.

The Meshrano Jirga (MJ) on Sunday, 6 October honored Afghan athletes who participated in the 2012 Olympic Games. The Speaker of the House Mr. Fazal Hadi Muslimyar called their

achievements “a great honor for the entire nation,” and emphasized the need for government to provide more facilities for sports persons. “The performance of our athletes was excellent and they obtained a medal for Afghanistan, I think this is great honor to us all.” He remarked.

Rohullah Nikpa won the sole medal for Afghanistan at the 2012 Olympics. The achievement is a second for the athlete after four years ago at the Beijing Olympics, he secured the country’s first ever medal. Rohullah Nikpa once again become the hero after beating Britain’s Martin Stamper to win a bronze medal in Taekwondo during the recently ended London games.

Mr. Zahir Aghbar, Director of Afghanistan Olympic Committee in his comments to the MJ, emphasized that the achievement by Afghan athletes was significant in that “ it did not belong to a specific region or ethnicity, they are Afghans and they represented the nation at the Olympic Games.” He added, “I am really proud that the MJ is appreciating these athletes or their sons. Our athletes proved that they can achieve medals, they can defeat athletes of famous countries who have spent millions of dollars or Euros preparing for the games.”

Senators were unanimous in appreciating the athletes as symbols of hope for a war-torn Afghanistan. They expressed the view that and people love the athletes because they fly the Afghan flag and bring relief to a nation faced with other challenges. “They need more attention from the government, to be encouraged and supported, their achievements can prevent a lot of youths from addiction to drugs and other vices.” Mr. Mukaram Khan Nasiri (Laghman) told APAP.

Citing examples of Mr. Nikpa, the Taekwondo athlete and the Afghan cricket team, Mr. Rafiullah Haidari (Kunar) told APAP that, “because of these players and athletes Afghanistan is now part of the international sporting community, we should appreciate their efforts and continue support to them.”

The House presented appreciation letters and medals to the athletes, directors and members of the Afghan Olympic Committee. Mr. Rohullah Nikpa thanked the House for the appreciation letters and medals. “Athletes are representing Afghanistan and we need your support and prayers,” he said, expressing his gratitude.

The Newsletter will begin covering key plenary deliberations and legislative developments in the next issue.