



House of Commons
Defence Committee

**UK operations in
Afghanistan:
Government Response
to the Committee's
Thirteenth Report of
Session 2006–07**

**Thirteenth Special Report of Session
2006–07**

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The Defence Committee

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Report

The Defence Committee published its Thirteenth Report of Session 2006–07 on UK Operations in Afghanistan on 18 July 2007, as House of Commons Paper HC 408. The Government's response to this report was received on 19 September 2007. This is appended below.

Appendix: Government response

Introduction

1. The Government welcomes the House of Commons Defence Select Committee's (HCDC) report on the UK operations in Afghanistan.

2. The Ministry of Defence (MoD) joins the Committee in recognising the scale of the challenge in Afghanistan. The country has come a long way since the overthrow of the Taliban regime but the size of the challenge was, and remains, vast. As the Committee highlights in its report, Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world; with weak government authority outside the capital, limited infrastructure, and where educating women used to be a criminal offence. The Secretary of State and other government officials have always made clear that addressing these problems will take a number of years.

3. Yet despite the scale of the challenge, real progress is being made, bringing tangible changes to the lives of ordinary Afghans. Seven million children are now in school and there are ten universities operating around the country, against one (barely functioning) under the Taliban. 83% of the population now has access to medical facilities, compared to 9% in 2004. In addition, 4.8m Afghan refugees have returned to their homeland, safe from the oppression they suffered under the Taliban. Significant progress is also being made at a Provincial level. In Helmand alone, the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team has implemented over 150 projects, often with engineering support from the military. Examples include the building, extending or refurbishing of 12 schools, the construction of three new parks including a women's park, 6 projects improving local healthcare facilities including the construction of a twenty-room midwifery hostel, and 5 projects improving the rivers and irrigation canals that enable local farmers to earn a living. While there is much still to do, the International Community is making good progress in helping Afghanistan recover from decades of civil war and Taliban rule.

4. We are grateful to the Committee for recognising the efforts made by the MoD to increase the number of UK Forces, the firepower they have at their disposal, and the selection of vehicles available to Commanders in theatre. Protecting our troops is paramount and although it is impossible to protect them from every eventuality, we do as much possible to provide the best protection we can. We also welcome the Committee's recognition of the increase in the number of helicopters that the MoD has provided since the initial deployment in 2006. We keep our force package in Afghanistan under continual review to ensure that commanders have all that they need to achieve the ISAF mission.

5. We note the Committee's concern about the difficulties NATO is experiencing in providing resources to meet the shortfalls in the Combined Joint Statement of Requirements (CJSOR). It is the MoD's belief that NATO Allies should do more to meet the shortfalls in requirements. The UK continues to emphasise to Allies the importance of providing more in terms of military and non-military resources but we have also accepted that if more is required in the demanding environment of the South and East, there are only a small number of nations that have the military capability to do more in those areas. Equally the UK does not underestimate the importance of Allies' continuing contributions

in the North, West and Capital regions where the relatively good security situation needs to be maintained and exploited.

6. The MoD would like to address a number of the conclusions and recommendations made by the Committee. In particular, we do not believe that the International Community's counter-narcotics policy lacks 'clarity and coherence'. Detailed responses to a number of the Committee's conclusions are set out below.

7. Finally, the MoD would like to join the Committee in paying tribute to those Service people who have lost their lives or suffered injury in Afghanistan. Our sympathies are extended to all of their families and friends.

Afghanistan has experienced 30 years of strife. In the short term, ISAF's primary purpose is to secure stability and deny the Taliban and Al Qaeda the environment in which to operate. In the longer term, it will require a sustained military and financial commitment by the international community, working with the Government of Afghanistan, to create the environment in which enduring democratic institutions can be established. If that commitment is to succeed, its size and strength must be very great, and in our view considerably greater than the international community is at present willing to acknowledge, let alone to make. (Paragraph 24)

8. We share the Committee's view of the long-term nature of the commitment. The British Ambassador to Afghanistan has said that the UK and international effort in Afghanistan will last for decades. We are determined that Afghanistan should not be allowed to become a failed state again. Additional military and financial support from the International Community would always be welcome; we can never have too much. Yet as alluded to above, real progress is being made with the current resources and as the work of the International Community continues to bear fruit, the capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) increases and the Afghan Government begins to take greater responsibility for its own affairs, the shape of the support provided by the International Community will change to reflect the differing circumstances. We are under no illusion about the amount of time it will take to address all of these problems, but we are confident that success can be achieved.

Coordinating the international effort in Afghanistan is a huge task. The Government should encourage the United Nations to work towards the appointment of a high-profile and authoritative individual with responsibility for coordinating the international effort in support of the Government of Afghanistan. (Paragraph 30)

9. We entirely agree that ensuring a co-ordinated international effort in Afghanistan is both vital and a significant challenge. The United Nations has a key role to play in bringing true coherence to the international community's efforts in Afghanistan. Both the Secretary of State and colleagues in the FCO regularly raise this with interlocutors including the UN Secretary General.

While we note the assertion made by the MoD that the Taliban does not present a "strategic threat" to security in Afghanistan, we are concerned at reports that violence is increasing and spreading to the relatively peaceful Kabul and the Northern Provinces. We are also concerned about the increased use of improvised explosive devices and suicide bombings in Afghanistan. (Paragraph 35)

10. We share the Committee's concerns over reports of increased levels of violence in certain provinces of Afghanistan, and the trend towards more asymmetric methods of warfare. The increased use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and suicide bombings is of concern, both to NATO and to the Afghan Government, but it will only serve to turn the local population against the Taliban, since it is they who invariably suffer as a result of such tactics. Indeed, a reliance on asymmetric tactics was to some extent an inevitable reaction to the inability to face NATO and Afghan forces in combat and to a steady stream of losses at all levels of the Taliban command structure. ISAF continues to adapt to the threats posed by the insurgents, utilising the expertise of its counter-IED cell and training ANSF in how to recognise and react to suicide bombers. It remains our assessment that the Taliban does not present a strategic threat to security in Afghanistan.

We regret the number of civilians killed as a result of military activity in Afghanistan. Our Forces try their utmost to minimise civilian casualties on operations and it is to be hoped that the introduction of precision weapons such as the Guided Multiple Launch Rocket System should help minimise civilian casualties further. Every life lost is a tragedy, causing misery to families and destruction to communities. Moreover, civilian casualties undermine support for ISAF and the Government of Afghanistan and fuel the insurgency, further endangering our troops and the objectives of their mission. (Paragraph 38)

11. We are grateful to the Committee for highlighting the extensive effort made by our Forces to minimise civilian casualties. The loss of innocent lives is a tragedy and ISAF and coalition forces seek at all times to avoid civilian casualties. Our targeting process, weapons selection, doctrine, training and rules of engagement are all designed with this as a priority. Civilian casualties are, however, made more likely by the tactics of the Taliban. The deliberate use of suicide bombs, mounting attacks from amongst civilians and the use of public buildings such as schools, hospitals and mosques as bases actively seeks to place civilians in danger.

While we note the progress that has been made in reducing national caveats, we remain concerned that national caveats risk impairing the effectiveness of the ISAF mission. The Government should continue to press ISAF partners to reduce further the restrictions placed on the use of their Forces. (Paragraph 45)

12. We will continue to work with our ISAF partners to ensure that national caveats are kept to a minimum and do not impinge upon ISAF's operational effectiveness. The nations deployed alongside us in the South well understand the challenging operational environment there, and the need for few caveats and appropriate rules of engagement.

Despite the Secretary of State's assurances, we remain deeply concerned that the reluctance of some NATO members to provide troops for the ISAF mission is undermining NATO's credibility and also ISAF operations. In response to our report, the Government should explain its strategy for engaging other NATO Governments in addressing the deficit in the CJSOR. (Paragraph 49)

13. The MoD concurs with the Committee's assessment that NATO Allies should do more to meet the shortfalls in the CJSOR. NATO Allies have made a collective commitment to Afghanistan; they must live up to it. Over the past twelve months we have seen substantial

additional contributions from the US, Poland and Australia in addition to important further contributions from a number of other countries such as France, Germany and Canada. We continue to urge other nations in bilateral meetings and international fora to keep Afghanistan at the forefront of discussions.

14. The UK continues to engage other nations on the political and military fronts, to emphasise the importance of providing additional contributions to the ISAF mission. Every Ally has to judge its ability to contribute against the capabilities it has available, the domestic political background and its existing engagement in Afghanistan. It is impossible to say to what extent further contributions, such as those announced at the NATO summit in Seville, are a result of the lobbying efforts of the UK and other ISAF Allies. But it is important to remember that our military involvement in Afghanistan is only part of a much broader effort. We must take advantage of the security and stability our forces bring to rebuild Afghanistan. Many countries made very generous pledges at the London Conference and more recently at the Rule of Law Conference in Rome, and we are working to help ensure those pledges are converted to real improvements to the lives of the Afghan people.

The MoD, in consultation with NATO colleagues, should consider the feasibility of extending the operational tours of key personnel. This would allow sufficient time to build and maintain relationships with Afghans and other key figures in Afghanistan. (Paragraph 51)

15. The MoD recognises the value of extended tour lengths for key personnel and has implemented such a policy where appropriate. For instance, General David Richards the former COMISAF did nine months in post, precisely for reasons of continuity and relationship building. Major General Page is currently serving nine months as Commander Regional Command South for the same reasons. However, we must be cognisant of the effects that extended tour lengths have on the welfare of individuals and their families.

We note the widespread concerns about the Afghan National Police reform programme. Police failure and corruption alienate support for the Government of Afghanistan and add to grievances which fuel the insurgency. The formation of a well-trained and disciplined ANP is vital to the long-term security of the country. The Government should work to create a greater coherence to the international effort to establish an effective ANP. (Paragraph 61)

16. Reform and development of the Police in a post-conflict environment is always difficult and invariably more challenging than developing Armed forces. There are a number of reasons for this but simply put an Army serves the state; the police serve the law. Generating that ethos in societies for whom the police force has been little more than a body for keeping local order requires a host of different strands of development. Policing is complex in concept and complex in implementation. By comparison, whilst security is also often complex in implementation, it is much simpler in principle.

17. In recognition of this, HMG has committed to providing 10% of the EUPOL policing mission, including key positions such as the Deputy Head of Mission and the Head of Mentors. The EUPOL mission draws together many donor nations into a single structure with the aim of delivering additional quality and better co-ordination in relation to the

training and development of the Afghan National Police (ANP). The Government is also working very closely with the US, including through a policing experts visit to CENTCOM and Washington in July. We will continue to work closely with them in-country through engagement on the International Police Co-ordination Board, which brings together the EUPOL and Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC-A) missions. We also have regular bilateral contact with the CSTC-A Police Development Programme, and intend to provide additional civilian expert personnel to further reinforce international co-operation in improving the effectiveness of the ANP.

18. In Helmand the UK is currently providing two Police Mentor Teams and will provide a further six with the deployment of 24 Royal Military Police personnel. These will be supplemented by a further three specialist civilian police mentors.

The MoD should, in its response to this report, clarify the purpose of the Auxiliary Police in Southern Afghanistan and provide detail about how its members are recruited. (Paragraph 62)

19. The purpose of the Afghan National Auxiliary Police is to provide additional static policing functions such as guarding for checkpoint operations to enable the Afghan National Police to focus on other elements of law enforcement. The Afghan National Auxiliary Police is a temporary force and its members are on one-year rolling contracts. Recruitment processes are the same as for the Afghan National Police and applicants are subject to screening through the Combined Strategic Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC-A) programme in the same manner as the Afghan National Police.

The Government should press the international community to give greater emphasis to the judicial reform programme. This should include measures to address alleged corruption in all areas of society. (Paragraph 65)

20. The Government works closely with the Afghan government to promote judicial reform. The establishment of the counter-narcotics Criminal Justice Task Force (CJTF) is an example of the work that has been carried out to date. Following on from the Rome Rule of Law Conference on 2–3 July 2007, we are assisting the Afghan government and other donors in the drafting of a justice sector strategy and the setting up of a national priority programme for justice. Anti-corruption measures are factored into all of our programmes. HMG also intends to deploy anti-corruption specialists as part of our support to law enforcement in Afghanistan. We continue to make representations at the highest levels on the importance of visible action against corruption.

Improving relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan is of vital importance to both countries and the wider region. We note the recent move towards increased cooperation between Afghanistan and Pakistan, and call on the UK Government to continue to encourage dialogue between the two countries. (Paragraph 70)

21. We agree with the Committee on the vital importance of good relations between Pakistan and Afghanistan. We will continue to encourage such relations, both bilaterally and through international fora. As the Committee's Report notes, relations between both countries have improved in recent weeks, and we welcome the outcome of the Joint Peace Jirga held in Kabul on 9–12 August, whilst recognising that it is only one step in the process. In this context, we are pleased that the Jirga agreed on regular meetings, which will

form part of an enhanced and more formalised bilateral dialogue. The Government will support this process, and complementary steps taken by the G8 and by Turkey with both countries, in any way it can.

We note the role Iran has taken in undertaking development work in Western Afghanistan and welcome Iran's pledge to check the flow of narcotics across its border with Afghanistan. We also note with concern reports that explosives originating from Iran have been used by insurgents in Afghanistan. This underlines the urgent necessity for the West, particularly the US and UK, to foster constructive dialogue, and to build confidence in relationships, with as many parts of the Iranian Government and its offshoots as possible. (Paragraph 75)

22. Iran has publicly expressed its support for stability in Afghanistan and it is in Iran's interest to work with the Government of Afghanistan and the rest of the international community in supporting efforts against the Taliban. Nevertheless, we have concerns that elements of the Iranian regime are pursuing a policy of supporting a range of parties and interests in Afghanistan including the provision of support to the Taliban. We have made it clear that any Iranian links to illegal armed groups such as the Taliban, either through supply of munitions, training or funding, would be completely unacceptable.

The UK's mission to bring stability to Helmand will require a long-term military and humanitarian commitment if it is to be successful. We recommend that the Government clarify its planning assumptions for the UK deployment to Afghanistan and state the likely length of the deployment beyond the summer of 2009. (Paragraph 89)

23. We share the Committee's assessment of the long-term nature of the mission. The UK is completely committed to a better and more stable future for Afghanistan which will entail the provision of diplomatic, military, development/reconstruction and financial support beyond 2009. The scale and duration of that commitment will evolve as we continue to make progress and as the Afghan Government takes even greater responsibility for its own affairs. Therefore we will not speculate on the shape that our future commitment will take.

The Platoon Houses in Northern Helmand were established at the request of the then Governor of Helmand Province—in other words at the request of the civilian power. The long-term military consequence of this strategy is unclear. (Paragraph 101)

24. The NATO led ISAF has deployed to Afghanistan at the request of a legitimate civilian authority, the Government of Afghanistan. We should remember that before UK troops came to Helmand, areas such as Sangin were beyond the control of the Afghan government. The establishment of platoon houses in Northern Helmand helped establish the authority of the Helmand governor and began to create the security conditions in which development is occurring, in line with the Afghan Development Zones concept.

While we welcome the additional commitment of helicopters since the initial deployment in 2006, we recommend that the MoD make even greater efforts to increase the provision of appropriate helicopters to UK Forces and sufficient trained air and ground crew. UK helicopter operations in Afghanistan are not sustainable at the present intensity. (Paragraph 116)

25. The MoD acknowledges that our helicopters fleet is working hard and we continue to keep our helicopter requirements under review to ensure that we have sufficient helicopter support to meet current and anticipated tasks. We have allocated additional flying hours and are working hard to generate more. More helicopters were deployed in September and October 2006, with further Sea Kings deploying this October. UK troops in the South also have access to a significant number of other helicopters provided by our Allies in the ISAF mission.

26. As the Committee acknowledged, in March this year, we agreed to buy new Merlin helicopters, which will be available within a year, and to convert existing Chinook Mark 3 helicopters currently estimated to be available to operations in two years. The complete package will cost around £230 million.

The MoD acknowledges that reconstruction and development, rather than military power alone, is the key to winning Afghan hearts and minds in Helmand. After a slow start, it seems that coordination between the military and government departments has improved and development work has begun. The people of Helmand will need to see tangible improvements soon or else ISAF and the UK will lose support for the mission. (Paragraph 127)

27. The Committee is correct to recognise the increased coordination between government departments in the PRT (now referred to as the Helmand Executive Group (HEG)) in Helmand. This has translated into an acceleration in the pace of development projects in the province with over 150 projects either in progress or having been completed. Examples include the building, extending or refurbishing of 12 schools, the construction of three new parks including a women's park, 6 projects improving local healthcare facilities including the construction of a twenty-room midwifery hostel, and 5 projects improving the rivers and irrigation canals that enable local farmers to earn a living. The HEG will continue to engage with locals in a bid to identify and implement projects that will make the most difference to the lives of the Helmand community

The consent of the people living in Helmand province will not be gained through the deployment of superior military force alone. Once security has been established, it is vital that development projects follow swiftly. The military has provided much needed immediate reconstruction in Helmand. A balance has to be struck between quick impact reconstruction provided by the military and longer-term development best delivered by Government and NGOs in close cooperation with Afghans. Projects such as the ambitious Kajaki dam project will, in time, create jobs and demonstrate to Afghans the commitment of the international community; however, the Government should also ensure that smaller-scale projects are undertaken which involve Afghans closely in their design and construction. (Paragraph 132)

28. Once again, we agree with the Committee's conclusion that the consent of the people living in Helmand province will not be gained through military force alone. It is for this reason that Development and Influence Teams deployed immediately after major operations to engage with local leaders and establish local priorities for development projects. Development work, focused on improvements over the long term, and stabilisation activities which deliver immediate benefits for the people of Helmand, are both essential to progress in the region. There is indeed a need to strike a balance between

Quick Impact Projects and longer-term development. In addition to the QIPs projects described above, DfID is working with the Government of Afghanistan to initiate longer-term development in Helmand, by implementing the Government's National Programmes in Helmand, committing £30 million from 2006-09 to support this. This includes funding for the construction of roads and wells, the creation of Community Development Councils to identify and implement priority development projects at a community level, and funding for the provision of small loans to support licit enterprise. All of these activities help to create local jobs, and demonstrate the commitment of the Government of Afghanistan to stabilising and improving conditions in Helmand, supported by the international community.

29. As the Committee has noted, it is important that we cooperate closely with the Afghan government and civil society in implementing development and stabilisation activities. DFID has ensured that all of its interventions have been in close consultation with the Afghan government and civil society at the provincial level and increasingly with an Afghan lead, including in the design and construction stages. This approach has demonstrated to local communities that their Government can deliver improved basic services and demonstrated the longer-term commitment of the international community.

The Government should continue to support the Government of Afghanistan in its attempts to bring drug traffickers to justice. To have maximum impact, the particular focus should be on punishing those people involved in the funding and large-scale trafficking of narcotics. (Paragraph 139)

30. We agree that this is a key part of the counter narcotics (CN) effort. Targeting the trafficker is one of the four priorities in the Afghan's National Drug Control Strategy. The majority of the Afghan Drugs Inter-Departmental Unit's funding for CN is aimed at targeting the top end of the trade. The UK has supported the development of the Counter Narcotics Police of Afghanistan and the Afghan Special Narcotics Force—the Afghan law enforcement agencies charged with targeting drug traffickers and disrupting the trade. We are also helping to build the capacity of the Afghan government to convict drug traffickers. They have had some successes. Over 457 traffickers have been convicted in the last two years including five medium value targets as of 23 August. We are providing an additional £22.5 million this year for the Afghan interdiction forces, to disrupt the operations of influential traffickers and weaken their links to the insurgency.

We are very concerned at the indications of closer links between the Taliban and the narcotics trade. (Paragraph 140)

31. So are the Government, the Afghans and the International Community. In the South of Afghanistan, both the drug traffickers and the Taliban have a common interest in resisting Afghan government authority and international forces. There are indications of extensive financial and logistical links between Taliban and traffickers at all levels. The Taliban have encouraged farmers to grow opium poppy and resist Afghan government eradication efforts. This is why we need to make CN a fundamental part of a “comprehensive approach” in the South. We are working with ISAF to maximise military support for counter narcotics operations within the CN Annex of the NATO Operational Plan.

The MoD's position is that it will not take part in the eradication of poppy until alternative livelihood schemes are available. We call on the Government to ensure that this message is communicated clearly to farmers in Helmand. We are deeply concerned that uncertainty has arisen among Afghans about ISAF's policy towards, and role in, poppy eradication and that UK Forces, under ISAF command, may consequently have been put at risk. This uncertainty undermines the effectiveness of the entire ISAF mission. (Paragraph 146)

32. It is correct that ISAF and the UK Task Force do not carry out poppy eradication. Eradication policy and implementation is the responsibility of the Afghan Government. Their policy as set out in the National Drug Control Strategy (NDCS) is that eradication should be targeted where there is access to legal rural livelihoods. Under the terms of the OPLAN NATO forces can and do provide support to CN operations, such as training of Afghan counter narcotics forces and in extremis support (e.g. medical) to their operations within means and capabilities. They can also help the Afghan government explain its policies to the population. Of course, synchronising military and CN operations in theatre can be challenging. But together with the MoD, narcotics teams are working together to find ways to make things better.

33. As in previous years, there have been reports that eradication has adversely affected security. But resistance has, in fact, been limited, particularly given this year's lengthened eradication season and the greater numbers of Afghan government personnel involved. The eradication campaign is also accompanied by a carefully worded information operation, which makes clear that eradication is an Afghan policy and explains who the eradication forces are and what they are there to do and not to do.

Success in combating the narcotics trade will be crucial to the future stability of Afghanistan. We remain concerned that the coalition's counter-narcotics policy lacks clarity and coherence. We recommend that, in its response to this report, the Government set out in detail the international counter-narcotics strategy for Afghanistan, including its assessment of progress to date and targets for the years ahead. (Paragraph 151)

34. We agree that success in CN is crucial to Afghanistan's stability. The Afghan government's NDCS is based on the experience of countries like Thailand and Pakistan, which successfully eliminated opium production over a 15–20 year period. The strategy covers all key elements including law enforcement, developing legal livelihoods and targeted eradication, and has led to progress and reductions in cultivation in the North and centre of Afghanistan. But it is not working in Helmand and the South, where a significant drop in cultivation will only be achieved through the long-term extension of security, governance and development.

35. The UK sees the NDCS as the strategy for CN. The NDCS is a five-year plan of which we are currently in year two. CN is also included as a crosscutting theme in the Afghanistan Compact and the Afghan Government's interim Afghan National Development Strategy (IANDS). Both the NDCS and the Compact were launched at the London Conference on Afghanistan in 2005 with the full support of the International Community. We fully support the NDCS, the Compact and IANDS, and as Afghanistan's

G8 partner nation on counter narcotics, we lobby for continued and increased international assistance and support for counter narcotics.

36. The Afghan Compact outlines 42 benchmarks, of which five relate to CN, broken down into seventy targets. The Afghan government is also continuing to develop the IANDS, whose benchmarks are those of the compact as well and are designed to reinforce each other. Attached at Annexes A and B are a copy of the NDCS¹ and a progress sheet on Afghan CN.

We are concerned that the Government is not communicating key messages to the British public about the purpose of its operations in Afghanistan effectively enough. (Paragraph 154)

37. We recognise the importance of a greater understanding on the part of the British public about why it is crucial to get Afghanistan right. We need to explain what we are trying to achieve with our presence in Afghanistan, how we are working with the Afghan government and the rest of the international community on the ground. We have established a cross-Whitehall working group to make sure that we give a consistent and coherent government message. We are working with the UK and foreign media to explain the context and situation. We are in regular contact with NGOs, parliament and other opinion formers to do the same.

ISAF is bringing tangible improvements to the lives of Afghans, but there is evidence that news of such improvements is not being communicated effectively to Afghans. Indeed, there is a strong suggestion that the Taliban is ahead in the “information campaign”. We recommend that the Government work together with its allies to coordinate more effectively the presentation of ISAF’s objectives and the way in which developments in Afghanistan are reported. (Paragraph 158)

38. Communication is a key aspect of ISAF’s overall effort and the UK is working closely with international partners, NATO HQ and ISAF on the ground to work on improving ISAF communications. The relocation of the National Communications Centre into the President’s Office should provide greater coherence to the Afghan national communications strategy, which should help explain developments in Afghanistan to the population on the ground. This should, in turn, enhance ISAF’s own information campaign. In Helmand, UK forces, alongside Governor Wafa, have held Shuras with local leaders to prepare the ground for operations and explain the objectives of the Afghan Government and ISAF. Nevertheless, there are fundamental difficulties in conducting an information campaign in the kind of environment where word of mouth predominates and large portions of the population are illiterate and/or do not have access to reliable media. The situation is made even more complex when one considers that the Taliban are not constrained by the same burden of proof as the rest of the international community. Which is why it is important that we help the Afghan Government enhance the credibility and reach of its own messaging.

¹ Not printed. Available at www.fco.gov.uk/Files/kfile/NDCS%20-%20Final%20PDF%20version.pdf

CN Summary of Progress—August 2007

- Criminal Justice Task Force capacity (36 investigators, 34 prosecutors & 14 judges)—457 convictions since May 2005, including 5 MVTs. Over \$2.2m spent by UK on CJTF in 2006–07, and we recently allocated a further \$18m over 4 years.
- CN Police of Afghanistan—1,400 officers (planned expansion to 2,958 by 2008), forensic lab and intelligence unit operational, 9 Mobile Detection Teams operating, CN Training Unit established.
- Increase in seizures of opiate equivalents (88.9mt since March 2006).
- CN Trust Fund—\$87.1m committed by 13 countries, the EU & UNDP.
- Over 22,000 community projects financed.
- \$307m (£153m) grants dispersed for local development needs through over 17,000 Community Development Councils.
- Over 9,000 km roads reconstructed.
- Micro-finance—\$267m (£133m) through 739,352 small loans to over 364,786 Afghans.
- Drug treatment centres in Kabul, Paktia, Kandahar, Herat, Badakhshan, Faizabad, Gardez & Helmand. Over 3,800 addicts treated.
- Effective eradication figure of 19,047 hectares.
- 13 poppy free provinces.
- 13.1 million employment days have been created.
- Over 28,000 projects financed by the National Solidarity Programme (part funded by DFID)—water supply & sanitation, transport, irrigation, power, livelihoods, agriculture, education, rural development, public building, health and emergency response.