



House of Commons  
Foreign Affairs Committee

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# **Global Security: Afghanistan and Pakistan**

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**Oral and written evidence**

***Wednesday 24 February 2010***

*Rt Hon David Miliband MP*

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to be printed 24 February 2010*

## The Foreign Affairs Committee

The Foreign Affairs Committee is appointed by the House of Commons to examine the expenditure, administration, and policy of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and its associated agencies.

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# List of witnesses

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**Wednesday 24 February 2010**

*Page*

**Rt Hon David Miliband MP**, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, and **Karen Pierce CMG**, Director, South Asia and Afghanistan, Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Ev 1

# List of written evidence

---

- |   |                                                                                                          |               |
|---|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1 | Written evidence submitted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office                                        | Ev 19         |
| 2 | Letter to the Chairman of the Committee from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs | Ev 19, 23, 24 |

# Oral evidence

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## Taken before the Foreign Affairs Committee on Wednesday 24 February 2010

Members present:

Mike Gapes (Chairman)

Sir Menzies Campbell  
Mr. Fabian Hamilton  
Mr. David Heathcoat-Amory  
Mr. John Horam  
Mr. Eric Illsley

Mr. Paul Keetch  
Andrew Mackinlay  
Mr. Malcolm Moss  
Mr. Greg Pope  
Sir John Stanley

*Witnesses:* **Rt. Hon. David Miliband MP**, Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, and **Miss Karen Pierce CMG**, Director, South Asia and Afghanistan, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, gave evidence.

**Chairman:** Foreign Secretary, thank you for coming. This is the last chance in this Parliament to have you before us. We are pleased that you found the time to talk to us about Afghanistan and Pakistan because we know that you are extremely busy. Karen Pierce, you are well known to Members of the Committee from various roles over a number of years. We congratulate you on your new role. It is good to see you.

**Karen Pierce:** Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

**Q1 Chairman:** May I begin, Foreign Secretary, by taking you to the conclusions and outcome of the conference in London about Afghanistan? What is your assessment of the outcome of the conference?

**David Miliband:** Thank you for your welcome. I look forward to many more sessions in the next Parliament. *[Interruption.]* I am disappointed that Sir Menzies finds that such an amusing thought.

**Sir Menzies Campbell:** I am an admirer of optimism.

**David Miliband:** There are two ways of thinking about the outcomes of the London conference. One is the set of “deliverables” that were enunciated in the conference communiqué in the three areas of security, governance and regional co-operation. We could go through the highlights and weaknesses of those sets of deliverables. I think that they were substantive, whether in respect of the new security commitments or the IMF role. We can talk about that.

There is also something slightly less tangible but, in a way, more important: 70 Foreign Ministers went away from the London conference confident that there was not just a clear military strategy and a better civilian strategy, but that together they were both directed towards a political settlement in Afghanistan which, after all, is the only way in which this war can be brought to a close. That sense of clarity and confidence about the overall strategy is very important, because this is a war that has taken a great toll on our country but also in the other countries of the coalition, as well as in Afghanistan. At Prime Minister’s questions today the Prime Minister had to read out a list of seven further British soldiers who have lost their lives.

I think the 70 Foreign Ministers who came to the conference wondered three months before it whether the two disparate efforts of the military and civilian sides of the coalition, never mind with the Afghans, could produce a coherent game plan for 2010. They went away believing that there was one. That is not the same as them believing that there are no obstacles or risks to the implementation of the plan, but I believe it is important and honest to reflect that people felt this was the best shot and had an integrity and coherence that is very important.

**Q2 Chairman:** We shall come on to particular aspects of the situation in Afghanistan in a moment. You used the word “deliverables”. Is it the reality that you expect these things to be delivered or are they aspirations for the kind of outcome that we might have had for the past eight years, which have clearly not been delivered in many ways?

**David Miliband:** Some of them are within our own control: decisions of the IMF, to take one example. Others require decision making by the Afghan Government and so are less within our control. All of them have an aspect of aspiration about them, but some are easier to fulfil than others or can be more directly fulfilled by the international coalition. Some of them will take longer to measure in their effects.

**Q3 Chairman:** How are we going to measure what has happened? How is delivery of all these commitments going to be measured?

**David Miliband:** It’s not that difficult in some areas. In respect of the Afghan national army or the Afghan national police there are now quite detailed commitments about the build-up, so we can measure that. We can look at retention ratios, the ethnic make-up of the Afghan national army, and the quality of the training. That is not terribly difficult to measure. When it comes to corruption, to take another example, we know from a BBC poll that 95% of the Afghan people believe that local governance and police have an aspect of corruption. You can measure the output in terms of the consideration of the Afghan people. You can also look at some of the more notorious cases and how

they are dealt with. You can look at the new Minister for Counter Narcotics and have a high degree of concern. There are different ways of measuring the different “deliverables” or commitments in the communiqué.

**Karen Pierce:** In Kabul the UN is drawing up a matrix of who committed to what and what actions need to be taken. We will use the joint monitoring board in Kabul to try to push those commitments forward and track progress on each of them—both international and Afghan commitments. That will give us something that we can use day to day to measure. We hope we will be able to capture in the communiqué of the Kabul conference, when it takes place, what has been achieved and what more needs to be done.

**Q4 Chairman:** Who is in charge of that? Is that Mark Sedwill’s role or is it the new UN representative?

**Karen Pierce:** It will be primarily the new UN Special Representative, who is Staffan di Mistura.

**Q5 Chairman:** The London meeting also said there was to be a follow-up conference in Kabul. When is that going to be?

**David Miliband:** I think late spring, early summer—so April/May.

**Q6 Chairman:** Is that still under discussion or do you know when it will be?

**David Miliband:** No, it is more than under discussion. It is going to happen. The date has not been fixed. The Afghan Government are working hard to put in place the machinery on their side to take it forward.

**Q7 Chairman:** But it will definitely be happening in the first half of this year?

**David Miliband:** Yes.

**Q8 Sir Menzies Campbell:** Is there a matrix for President Karzai?

**David Miliband:** The matrix for any elected politician is from the people who elected him or her. President Karzai has a five-year term, and the primary accountability for him is to his own people. In respect of the commitments that we have made to him and he has made to us, our delivery of them obviously depends on his decisions. For example, the delivery of development aid through certain departments of state depends on the confidence we have that the aid will reach its desired targets.

**Q9 Sir Menzies Campbell:** And that depends upon the confidence you have in him.

**David Miliband:** No, it depends more on the confidence we have in the people who he appoints to run the departments.

**Q10 Sir Menzies Campbell:** If he appoints the people to run the departments, ultimately you have to have confidence that he will appoint people who will do the work properly.

**David Miliband:** President Karzai is not on trial for us—

**Q11 Sir Menzies Campbell:** Not even today, after he appears to have taken over the Electoral Commission?

**David Miliband:** He is not on trial for us. He is accountable as any elected representative to his own people, and he has also made commitments to us that we want to see followed through. Where those commitments are not followed through, it will have consequences for the sort of co-operation we will have. I gave you the example of development. In respect of the Electoral Complaints Commission, which I think is the body that you are referring to, he said he is going to make five appointments, and we will obviously be extremely concerned to see the names of the people who are nominated because the ECC is set up as a check on the so-called Independent Election Commission—the IEC. The ECC played a very important role in exposing some of the fraud that took place in the presidential election. With parliamentary elections planned for this September, it is very important indeed that that sort of check continues to be able to exercise independent influence.

**Q12 Sir Menzies Campbell:** Isn’t there a risk that the independence of that commission will be compromised?

**David Miliband:** The ECC international nominees played a really important role in the exposé of and investigation into the presidential elections last August. Led by a Canadian who did a very significant job, I think they showed their worth. These five nominees are going to be nominated by President Karzai, and we will have to see who he appoints because that will obviously be a very important indication of the sort of independence that might exist, or not, in the ECC.

**Q13 Sir Menzies Campbell:** The reason I am concentrating on this is, in part, because of the exchanges we heard at Prime Minister’s questions about the moral responsibility that those of us who support the deployment have to lay out clearly the case to the British people for our continuing involvement. Confidence in President Karzai is absolutely central to that, is it not?

**David Miliband:** I think that it is very important that we are able to have Afghan partners led by the President, who are able to deliver on the commitments that they have made. One mistake or error—that is perhaps too hard a way of putting it—one danger is that we forget that although Afghanistan is a presidential system it also has a critical role for its Cabinet and a very important role at local level for a series of sometimes elected and sometimes nominated politicians. Although it is true that all roads lead to the presidential palace in a presidential system, it is also the case that decision making by Cabinet members and decision making locally does have a degree of independence about it, and we should support very strongly President Karzai’s not just declared wish but visible intention to have a more independent role for his Cabinet Ministers. The London conference heard presentations from the Defence Minister, the

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24 February 2010 Rt. Hon. David Miliband MP and Miss Karen Pierce CMG

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Economics Minister and the Foreign Minister, who I think all distinguished themselves, and one of the features of the next five years—the second Karzai term—is going to be that those Cabinet members need to be given their head.

*Sir Menzies Campbell:* No further questions.

*David Miliband:* “No further questions” is what you guys say in the Old Bailey, so I don’t quite see it in those terms. At least you didn’t say “Your Honour” this time.

*Chairman:* We’ll come back to some more questions about governance in a moment—Fabian Hamilton first.

**Q14 Mr. Hamilton:** On the follow-up conference—you responded to the Chairman about dates and times—the Foreign and Commonwealth Office commented during the conference that there was clear consensus on the outcomes across the international community, and that delivery against those commitments would be assessed at the proposed Kabul conference. Can you tell me, Foreign Secretary, how far advanced the planning is for that conference and who is doing it?

*David Miliband:* It is being led by the Afghans. As I said to the Chairman, the date has not been fixed. I think the late spring or early summer would be a good time, as it would allow sufficient space to elapse from the London conference to allow a judgment on progress, without being so shortly after the London conference as to make it impossible to see any progress. It is being run by the Afghans. They are making arrangements not just in the Foreign Ministry but across Government to do it. They’re establishing teams and a focus. That’s what you would expect, and that’s a good thing.

**Q15 Mr. Hamilton:** Are we giving assistance from the Foreign Office?

*David Miliband:* We certainly are, but it’s an Afghan conference. It’s not a Foreign Office conference.

**Q16 Mr. Pope:** How would you assess the success so far of Operation Moshtarak? Would it be a fair assessment to say that it’s been uneven in parts? American forces, as was reported last week, met fairly stiff resistance in the south, and for British forces, it’s a quieter area, so it’s been patchy.

*David Miliband:* I think it’s been uneven in the degree of resistance that has been met. I don’t think it would be right to say that it has been uneven in its success; I think it has been relatively even in its success in its preliminary stage. It is very important that we emphasise that this operation is a couple of weeks old, and it’s far, far too early to start talking about “success”.

We have seen the first phases of an operation in parts of Helmand province that have been outwith the control of the Governor for quite a long time and represent what I would call the nerve centre not just of the insurgency in Helmand but of the drugs trade. Very significant vested interests are at stake there.

**Q17 Mr. Pope:** Will one of the benchmarks of the success of the operation be how good the Afghan forces are when they’re no longer side by side with us and the Americans? When we withdraw, one benchmark must be whether they will stand firm. There have been some question marks about the Afghan army and the Afghan police.

*David Miliband:* Yes, that’s a very important point. I don’t think it’s a binary situation where either we’re there or we’re not there; it’s a situation where gradually, we want to transition to greater and greater Afghan responsibility and, eventually, Afghan security leadership, district by district. But that doesn’t mean that the role of coalition forces will be switched off in the next couple of days or weeks. I think it’s a rather more phased approach than that.

**Q18 Mr. Pope:** One of the unusual aspects of the operation was the advance notice given to the civilian population so that they could withdraw away from the fighting. Has there been a huge problem with displaced persons? There have been some reports of thousands of people turning up in cities. Have you got an assessment of the scale of the problem of displaced persons, and have we and our allies got a plan in place about how we can assist them to return and how we can help them on a day-to-day basis before they can return?

*David Miliband:* It’s very, very important that we recognise the advance signalling that was done, but if I may say so, it was less to say to the civilian population “Either get out or mind your heads”; it was more to say to the insurgents that Afghan and coalition forces were coming. This was not intended to be a surprise dawn raid; it was intended as a very clearly choreographed, politically led operation in which Afghan forces, supported by the international community, would establish governance and order. When I was in Afghanistan in November and again in January, in advance of the London conference, I talked to Governor Mangal, the Governor of Helmand, about this. When I say “politically led”, it was politically led by him. He was saying to the people of Marjah and Nad Ali, “There are benefits for you and for your families in terms of security, services and employment that will come in the wake of the military operation being planned.” That was an important part of the drive to make sure that the local population, rather than resisting the operation and siding with the insurgency or the former drug lords, actually supported the operation. It was also intended to send a very clear signal of intent to the insurgency. The fact that the fighting has been relatively restricted speaks to that.

The same is true in relation to civilian casualties. I have in my head the figure of 3,000 people who were on the move. I have just been handed a note that 1,900 families have left Marjah, so it would be in the single-digit thousands.<sup>1</sup> I think that would be the direct answer to your question.

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<sup>1</sup> *Note by witness:* As at 4 March 2010 a total of 3,830 families had registered with the Department for Refugees and Returnees.

**Q19 Mr. Pope:** That is very helpful. The last point I wanted to raise was about the practical difficulties of fighting insurgents. They are not a uniformed army, they will not engage in frontal combat with our forces or with coalition forces and they can slip away into the population. There have been some reports that insurgents have been using local civilians as human shields. Has that been a major problem for coalition forces?

**David Miliband:** I haven't got confirmation of that; I have seen the reports, but I haven't got confirmation.

**Q20 Sir Menzies Campbell:** As you know, the Committee visited the United States in October of last year. In the course of our visit, it was represented to us—I use that form of words deliberately—that some middle-ranking and senior US military officers were unhappy with the contribution that had been made by United Kingdom forces in Helmand. Have any such sentiments been represented to you at ministerial level, or to colleagues at official level in the Foreign Office?

**David Miliband:** No—in fact, quite the opposite. I think that over the last nine months, as the American presence in the south in general and in Helmand in particular has built up, there has been a rising tide of admiration for the work that British forces have been doing, with Estonians and Danes, over the last three years. So I would emphatically say the opposite to the sort of whispering that you suggest.

**Q21 Sir Menzies Campbell:** As part of those representations, it was suggested to us that United Kingdom military input might be either excluded or perhaps marginalised. Have you seen any evidence of that?

**David Miliband:** Not at all. One of the points that the Government have been making for a long time is that this is a coalition effort. It is a coalition effort in terms of men and women, and in terms of equipment. That is an important part of the story. I think that it is right that we recognise that, for some time, the degree of integration across the RC South has been something that we have tried to explain to people. It is not that Britain owns part of Afghanistan; we are part of a coalition effort across the south, supporting the Afghan Government. We have also got troops in Kabul—a relatively small number.

I testified in front of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, your sister organisation in Washington. Senator Kerry, the Chairman of the Committee, and a number of other Senators went out of their way to say that on the basis of the visits that they had paid to Afghanistan, including to the south, they wanted to send a very clear message about the admiration and respect that Americans and American politicians felt not just for the British military effort—although particularly for that—but for the British diplomatic and aid work that was going on. It is important to emphasise that from everything I hear, Americans and other countries know that this is a very difficult mission. It requires immense skill, as well as bravery and intelligence,

and it is one where all the other countries are as proud to be working alongside us as we are to be working with them.

**Q22 Sir Menzies Campbell:** Do I take it that these general observations that you have made apply in particular to the conduct of Operation Moshtarak?

**David Miliband:** I don't think in particular—

**Q23 Sir Menzies Campbell:** Are they exemplified by that operation?

**David Miliband:** Yes, I think it's better to say that all the lessons of eight years in Afghanistan have been put into the planning and then the execution of Operation Moshtarak. Having made six visits to Afghanistan in the last three years, there is no question in my mind: General McChrystal has introduced not just a new tempo in the military operations there, which he has, but a new philosophy. The philosophy of protecting the population rather than securing ground—measuring your success not by the number of Taliban you kill but by the amount of the population you protect—is having far-reaching and quite radical effects on the way that operations are conducted. The example that Greg Pope gave, of the advance signalling of Operation Moshtarak, is a very counter-intuitive but none the less interesting example of that.

**Karen Pierce:** The Committee might be interested to know that Afghan national forces have done particularly well in Moshtarak, which is one of the first times that they have been deployed in significant numbers. I know that General McChrystal has been very pleased with the way that that has gone, as have Afghan commanders.

**Sir Menzies Campbell:** I should perhaps say that when these representations were made, the Committee was robust in its response.

**Mr. Pope:** I should point out that that was the only time that that was said on the trip. Everyone else was full of praise for the British contribution.

**Q24 Mr. Illsley:** Although I do not disagree with the last comments, issues were put to us. One of them was that, during the McChrystal review, questions were asked about our campaign in Helmand and the political wisdom of undertaking it. Was that ever reflected to the British Government?

**David Miliband:** The challenges of the south were a very important part of the McChrystal review. It was leaked to the newspapers in full, so you can see that the review places a lot of emphasis on the south and the east. In that sense, the challenges of Helmand were very strong. I always talk about the south rather than just Helmand province because the significance of Helmand relates to the strategic position of Kandahar, and I think it is important to see the two develop.

**Q25 Mr. Horam:** You just emphasised the importance of the south, Foreign Secretary, and the need for an early transition to the Afghan army. One

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24 February 2010 Rt. Hon. David Miliband MP and Miss Karen Pierce CMG

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of the practical problems is that less than 5% of the Afghan national army is Pashtun. Is that a real difficulty?

**David Miliband:** To be absolutely accurate, it's correct to say that a small percentage is Pashtuns from the south. Of course, there are Pashtuns in other parts of the country; Pashtuns make up 41.6% of the ANA.

**Q26 Mr. Horam:** True, but doesn't that make the point? You are fighting in the south, but you haven't got anyone from that part of the world.

**David Miliband:** Precision is important in this because the tribal structure of Afghanistan is one of those things that distinguish it from Iraq, which is often put into the same paragraph. There is a particular issue about Pashtuns from the south and they are representative in the ANA. That itself is an important issue, given the singular national structure of the Afghan forces. Recruitment across the communities of Afghanistan is an important feature of the challenge faced by General Wardak and General Caldwell, the training tsar in ISAF.

I hope that I didn't give the impression that the transition in the south will be one of the early ones. I don't think that anyone has suggested that, partly because of the problems that exist.

**Q27 Mr. Horam:** Doesn't it mean that it will be a long time? Never mind 5% or 10%; it is a low figure of Pashtun people in the army. Isn't it going to be a long time before you get to an acceptable level of local people involved in the ANA?

**David Miliband:** The ANA is not a locally based army. It is not built up in the way that the British Army is, for example, with the Welsh Guards and the Anglian Regiment; it is a national army. However, I think it is an important point that lead responsibility for the Afghan army will be enhanced in its effectiveness if local people are able to be part of it. That's why I say that General Wardak—

**Q28 Mr. Horam:** My point is that it will take a long time, building from where we are.

**David Miliband:** It depends on what you mean by a long time. President Karzai said in his inauguration speech that he wants to have Afghan security leadership in the majority of provinces within three years and across the whole country within five. It depends whether you think that five years is a long time. I know from my meeting with General Caldwell in January in Kabul that he is very aware of the need to ensure that the training recognises not just the recruitment issues in the south, but the retention issues, which also speak to this.

**Q29 Mr. Horam:** You said that President Karzai was thinking of three to five years for Afghan leadership, but he has also said that it would take 15 years before security in Afghanistan would be sustainable enough for foreign countries to leave—that is 15 years.

**David Miliband:** I don't recognise the 15-year time line.

**Mr. Horam:** That was what he said.

**David Miliband:** I remember sitting through his inauguration speech, and he talked about security and leadership within three years in the majority of the country and five years across the whole country. You are right to say that Afghan security leadership doesn't mean the end of a coalition military role. However, if you remember from the Iraq experience, there was a distinction between front-line combat and overwatch. I don't want to use exactly those terms, but I think that Afghan security leadership implies a very different role for coalition troops—certainly a much reduced combat role. It would speak to a different role for the coalition within the three to five-year period, although not to the end within that period.

**Q30 Mr. Horam:** It does show how difficult it is to have any sort of limit—as President Obama has found, for example, when talking about drawing down in 2011—when we're faced with all these imponderables.

**David Miliband:** To be fair, that is not quite right. What President Obama said is that July 2011 will be the start of a reduction in American troop levels. They will have 100,000 troops there by the end of this year and what he was pointing to was that, from July 2011, the balance of international troops and Afghan troops will change. General Jones—the President's national security adviser—has talked about a ramp, not a cliff edge, to the American presence there.

We want to reduce and eventually remove the international troop component, and we have always said that. The role of the training mission is absolutely key, the role of security transition is absolutely key, and the urgency that has been injected by the date that President Obama has given is an important factor. However, I don't think it is right to give the impression that that is a cliff edge or a date when American troops suddenly disappear, because they will not—they have 100,000 of them there.

**Q31 Mr. Horam:** My point was that this will take quite a long time, aside from where we are.

The other element that we went into in some depth when we were in Helmand was the state of the police, which is, of course, even worse than the army. There are real problems with corruption, illiteracy, drug taking and so on. We found that the general opinion was that the police were in a far worse state than the army, and the army weren't in such a pretty state, as we've just indicated. That means, again, that transition to anything sustainable is going to be a very long process.

**David Miliband:** When you, as the Foreign Affairs Committee, met with the Defence Committee and interviewed John Hutton and I, we talked about precisely that issue and the fact that the police are a far less strong institution than the army. I completely recognise the three problems you identified. Minister Atmar, the Interior Minister, has one of the toughest jobs in international politics in trying to reform and improve the Afghan police.

I would like to step back for a minute, because the time lines that you are talking about critically depend on what kind of political settlement is made. The presumption, or assumption, underpinning some of the questions posed in the last five minutes has been that you've got this fixed level of insurgency and a lot of international troops and some Afghan troops, and that we are going to build up Afghan troops and they will take over from the international troops in fighting the same kind of insurgency that we've got.

The essential development that the London conference represented is that military and civil effort are designed to sponsor a different kind of political settlement. The signal importance of the reintegration and reconciliation agenda is precisely to weaken the insurgency so that it is containable by an Afghan force, rather than by an international force of the current level. So, my answer to the "how long will it take" question in part relates to training and recruitment and other issues, but the critical independent variable is the commitment and strength of the insurgency. The political attempt to divide and denude it, and to integrate it into the Afghan political system, is absolutely key.

The Loya Jirga that President Karzai has said he wants to hold, and the need to make sure that the north is part of the political settlement—not just the Taliban insurgency in the south and the east—are absolutely key. I am duty bound to say that that is the variable that has the greatest potential to shape and reshape military operations in Afghanistan. What is interesting is that the military are the first to say this. If you talk to General McChrystal and think about the Moshtarak operation, the psychological element of the impending presence of force, then the presence of force, and then the deployment of force, is absolutely key to what happens.

We can't keep on saying that there is no military solution and pretend that we are looking for a military solution. If there is no military solution, which I believe there isn't, but the military are part of the solution, we have to define and develop what the political solution is. I believe that it is a political settlement in which all those who are willing to live within the Afghan constitution and separate from al-Qaeda are going to be part of the Afghan political system. It will be a tribal political system, and there will not be political parties in the way we have them, although there will be political movements and political blocs. That is the key, because it denudes and undermines the insurgency and integrates significant parts of the insurgency that are not ideologically committed to al-Qaeda. It will make it into an insurgency that is containable by Afghans.

**Q32 Mr. Hamilton:** Can I bring us back to the London conference for a moment, Foreign Secretary? At that conference, NATO allies pledged to do a lot more to support the coalition. My concern is whether the pledge is enough. Are you confident that the burden is being shared equally or will be shared equally, given the pledges that have been made?

**David Miliband:** The pledges were good from Bulgaria to Germany to Turkey.

**Q33 Mr. Hamilton:** Will they deliver?

**David Miliband:** I think they will. They will deliver the numbers that they've promised: 100 from Bulgaria, 240 from Colombia, 40 from the Czechs, 75 from Finland and 500 from Germany. Those are good numbers. But do they mean that Britain will no longer be the second largest troop contributor? No. Do they mean that Britain and America together will account for a large percentage of the total troops? That will remain the case. Do the Government remain strong in their pursuit of greater burden sharing? Yes.

**Q34 Mr. Hamilton:** Is there a realistic prospect that countries such as Russia, China, India and some of the central Asian republics will offer significant support to NATO and its allies in Afghanistan?

**David Miliband:** To take Russia as an example, it will offer significant support but, for obvious reasons, Russian troops will not deploy into Afghanistan.

**Q35 Mr. Hamilton:** What about Indian troops?

**David Miliband:** I think that is unlikely, and for various reasons it is not something that we are arguing for. The third plank of the London conference conclusions related to the regional equation, including the regional support or otherwise for independence, sovereignty and stability in Afghanistan. I do not think that regional powers or partners deploying troops into Afghanistan would be conducive to the sort of regional stability or confidence that is necessary.

**Q36 Mr. Hamilton:** So you think the burden for some time to come will fall disproportionately on the United States and Great Britain.

**David Miliband:** The burden will fall disproportionately on the west, although it is important to recognise the contribution of countries such as Australia, which is not a NATO member, but nevertheless has 1,500 troops in danger in Afghanistan. Certainly, America will, by many-fold, be the largest contributor. Remember that we are the second largest contributor with 10,000 troops and the Americans are talking about having 100,000 troops there, so you can see the order of magnitude.

**Karen Pierce:** Could I add two specific examples without changing the assessment the Foreign Secretary gave? India is a very large private sector investor in Afghanistan, as is the Aga Khan. That is an important part of development. The Russians have been very helpful in providing transit facilities. Rather recently, they have expanded that and have said in the NATO-Russian Permanent Joint Council that they would like to work with ISAF to do more on counter-narcotics. Those are important areas. They do not replace troop contributions, but they facilitate an enabling background that we need.

**David Miliband:** It's also worth saying, I have been helpfully reminded, that 36% of the ISAF troops are from EU countries—that is 31,000 troops—which is not negligible.

24 February 2010 Rt. Hon. David Miliband MP and Miss Karen Pierce CMG

**Q37 Mr. Keetch:** It was interesting that when Mr. Horam, Gisela Stuart and I went down to Helmand, we met an Estonian officer—the Estonians are doing a fantastic job in Helmand—who had been there with the Soviet forces all that time ago. That was an interesting link. John will remember meeting him. He was a remarkable man.

On the contributions of other countries, there have been criticisms by this and other Committees that it's not just a question of putting troops on the ground; it's making sure those troops actually contribute and don't have caveats and restrictions. The expression was given to us by some senior people down there that there are "plant pot nations". You just move forces around, because they won't actually do the job. If countries are going to contribute and say that they will put troops on the ground, they have to be there, available to do the role they are supposed to do. The caveats that have existed in some nations have been an impediment to activities by us, the Americans and others. If we are going to have other troops there, they have to be there and willing to do the job properly.

**David Miliband:** That's a good point. No country likes to put its young men and women into danger, so there are temptations, no doubt, in some countries, for them to deploy troops in areas where there is less danger, even where they are deployed. If every country did that, we would not be an effective NATO alliance. I think it is very important to recognise that some of the smaller countries of Europe are deploying disproportionately large numbers of their total armed forces, even though the absolute numbers are not that large. It's also important to recognise that a country like this does not put caveats on the role of its forces and had decided to send its forces to one of the most dangerous areas, alongside Danes and Estonians, who I think you are right to recognise. But the NATO alliance survives or falls on the collective capacity, collective commitment and collective responsibility of all its members. In a spirit that is not hectoring but none the less firm, it's important to emphasise that NATO needs to deliver on its aspirations, and that means Governments of each NATO country saying very firmly and clearly that they will live up to the commitments they have signed up to in the NATO charter.

**Q38 Chairman:** I agree very strongly, Foreign Secretary. Are you disappointed that the Dutch Government have fallen because of the failure to agree to the request to extend the period of Dutch troops in Afghanistan?

**David Miliband:** It's not for me to comment on internal Dutch politics. What is obviously disappointing is the prospect that the immense Dutch contribution in Afghanistan will no longer be available. It's important to recognise that there is a particular history to the Dutch commitment. They agreed to extend from 2007 to 2010 precisely because they were asked by NATO to make a time-limited commitment. That was itself an extension of a previous commitment. It is that commitment, made not just by the Dutch Government to NATO but by

the Dutch Government to their own people, that lies behind the difficulties and eventual conflict and demise of the Government. It is important to understand that, without in any way qualifying the point that it is much better to have the Dutch in Afghanistan doing an important role than not in Afghanistan.

Obviously it is for the Dutch Queen to decide on the interim Government and then for the Dutch people to decide on a future Government. But I think it's very important to put on record that the Dutch contribution to Afghanistan has been very significant indeed. It has been hugely valued. They have been and remain a big part of the operation.

**Q39 Sir John Stanley:** Foreign Secretary, every time I turn on the television and the radio and hear that more innocent men, women and children among the Afghanistan civilian community have lost their lives or been maimed as a result of a NATO operational air strike, I react in what I am sure is exactly the same way as you, which is I let out a large, very heartfelt groan of near despair. We have had the new emphasis from General McChrystal that civilian casualties should be avoided if at all possible. Is the British Government's judgment that it is possible to maintain the crucial capability of NATO offensive air power, which is one of the real military advantages we have over the Taliban, and at the same time avoid—virtually to the full, one would hope—civilian casualties?

**David Miliband:** It's essential that we do. What is striking about the last year is that it has shown that it is possible to minimise civilian casualties. The reduction in civilian casualties has been very large. That is a tribute to the way in which General McChrystal is implementing his doctrine.

**Q40 Sir John Stanley:** Not in the last few days, you would agree?

**David Miliband:** In the wake of Operation Moshtarak, there have been two major incidents and they are obviously to be deeply regretted for precisely the reasons you allude to. However, it is important to say that the vast majority of civilian casualties are caused by the insurgency. I think three quarters is the number caused by the insurgency. The fact that General McChrystal changed the rules of engagement and changed the way in which commanding officers are expected to behave is significant, but my groan is as loud as yours, I absolutely assure you.

**Q41 Sir John Stanley:** I think we all recognise that if there is to be a political settlement that is going to endure, we will have to go down the route that we followed in Northern Ireland and that others have had to follow elsewhere, which is to find out whether among those who are engaged in murderous activities there are any of significance and weight that are worth talking to. Can you give us your present judgment, with all the information available to you, on whether there are significant elements among the Taliban leadership who are prepared to lay down their weapons and end this murderous

strife, and at the same time fulfil the two essential requirements that the British Government have rightly said must be fulfilled, namely accepting the Afghan constitution and severing all links with al-Qaeda?

**David Miliband:** This is a very important part of our discussion. I should say at the outset, Chairman, that it is a very difficult part of the discussion to talk about, because the conversation that we are having is not just among ourselves. It is broadcast in such a way that even those in far-off places in Afghanistan or in Pakistan listen to what we say. That places rather severe limits on the sorts of answers that I would want to give to some of the completely reasonable and important questions that you are asking. It is very important that anything we say on this question does not give a wrong hint of weakness and does not give a hint that we are credulous in a way that we are not. Anything that we say on this should not suggest a naivety that does not exist. It is important to preface all of our discussion in this area with those points.

It is also very important to say that there is, in a lot of this discussion, a feeling—not in the mind of Sir John Stanley, I hasten to add—that somehow a strategy of reconciliation is an alternative to a military strategy. One of the things I wanted to emphasise at the beginning, when I talked about the London conference and said that the military effect and the civilian effect had been designed to create the conditions for a political settlement, was precisely to challenge the notion that a political strategy is an alternative to a military strategy. With all of those caveats—sorry to use that word in this context, but none the less I think it is relevant—I do think that this conflict will be brought to an end, in the end, through a political settlement. The question is whether we can minimise the bloodshed in the interim. There are good grounds for pursuing that reconciliation strategy, but we can only pursue it in a way that allows those on the ground to make the links and the commentary.

**Q42 Andrew Mackinlay:** I'd like to ask you about the Kajaki dam incident. For the record, you will remember that it was in autumn 2008. I do not know the precise numbers, but about 2,000 to 2,500 predominantly British troops—maybe more—were focused on delivering a turbine to the Kajaki dam. In terms of military precision, operation and courage, it was a first-class operation, although there was, tragically, loss of life relating to and around it. My question is this: what was the genesis of the decision to deliver this turbine, which has never been installed and, I understand, cannot be installed because of logistics co-operation and the roadway? Through parliamentary questions I ascertained that it was an American initiative. Can you explain to us the decision-making process? How is a desirable thing assessed against the cost and loss of service personnel and of taking service personnel from one area where you are containing to focus upon this operation? All the evidence suggests that a foot was taken off the accelerator in one or two areas where there had been containment and driving down the

Taliban. We need to understand this to find out what precisely happened and what is the political, civil, military decision-making mechanism for these large operations.

**David Miliband:** The best thing would be for me to write to you about that specific incident.

**Andrew Mackinlay:** Why is that?

**David Miliband:** For two reasons, really. First, I would want to make sure that you had the full picture, and secondly, I would want to make sure that I did not make any mistakes. It is a very detailed operation. It was obviously a military decision in terms of the deployment of forces that was made on the ground. It would be balanced against the series of other objectives and operations that could be used. When we are talking about a specific military deployment, it would be remiss not to make sure that all the facts were correctly set out.

**Q43 Andrew Mackinlay:** Yes, but may I come back? Clearly there was a military deployment, and what is not in dispute is the skill with which that deployment and the delivery of the turbine was concluded. I should be interested if you elaborated on that, but the issue is by whom and how was it evaluated that it would advance the objectives that you outlined here today to get that turbine to the Kajaki dam with some prospect of its being installed. That is not a military thing. That presumably was a civil decision by somebody either in North America or over here. Who can make such a strategic decision and how? That is not military.

**David Miliband:** My answer was about the military, which is what you asked about. In respect of the Kajaki dam project, from memory it is a USAID-financed project whose linkages are back to the US Embassy in Kabul. The studies on which Kajaki's role has been focused were related to the economic development of Helmand province, notably in respect of agriculture. On the precise timings, operational opportunity costs, other deployment issues and who took them, which, after all, was the question you asked me, I could either answer in a general way by saying that the people on the ground weigh all the different factors and then come to a sensible decision, which I am happy to say; or I can say that I will write to you with something more precise, which might be more useful.<sup>2</sup>

**Q44 Chairman:** That would be helpful, Foreign Secretary.

Can I take you to the question of counter-narcotics? As you are aware our Committee expressed some scepticism in our report last year about the so-called lead role that the United Kingdom had. We have been in correspondence with you since then and you wrote to us helpfully in January. Arising from the current situation and the more recent information, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, there has been a 22% fall in opium poppy cultivation in 2009, including a 33% reduction in Helmand. The number of poppy-free provinces has gone up to 20, but at the same time we understand

<sup>2</sup> See Ev 23

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24 February 2010 Rt. Hon. David Miliband MP and Miss Karen Pierce CMG

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from FCO information sent to us that the price of legal crops, including wheat, having risen for a period has now fallen back. Despite that it appears that farmers are not returning to poppy cultivation. Can you explain that? It would seem counter to their own economic interests, given that in the past we thought that if the price of legal products went up, it would be economically sensible for them to move to wheat. Why have they not moved back to poppy?

**David Miliband:** There are two reasons both behind the fall in poppy production and relevant to the position in 2010. You have completely accurately described the 2009 figures, and the 2008 figures were similar. There are two factors driving the decline in poppy production: one is the price of licit products, notably wheat; and, secondly, the security situation, because drug production is a function of insecurity. Those two factors explain the reduction in poppy production.

You then have the fact that the global wheat price has fallen. This is obviously relevant to the calculation of any farmer, but the other thing that is relevant to the calculation of any farmer is what chance there is that he is at security risk if he tries to produce poppy. That is where the security operations that are going on around the country become very relevant.

The other thing is that as well as prices of wheat, costs of seed are important. Governor Mangal has distributed wheat seed to some 35,000 Helmandis as part of his wheat seed distribution programme—the so-called food zone programme. I think I'm right in saying he hasn't given the seeds out free. He believes that every farmer should pay something for the wheat seed that they get, which is a good social market principle, but I think it is quite heavily subsidised. That is an important part of the explanation.

**Q45 Chairman:** What about the well-known fact that the Taliban had been financing their activities to some extent by taxing the people who were producing the poppies? What has been done to stop the proceeds of poppy production going to the Taliban?

**David Miliband:** One of the most important things there is to recognise that—you used the word “taxing”—some of that tax is extorted on routes between the major centres. I think that the Helmand-Kandahar link is an important part of that. The route that goes between it, for example, one of the major—I won't go into that, but there is an important issue there about the way in which the insurgency extorts from farmers on different routes. When I went to Afghanistan in 2008 with then Secretary Rice, we talked a lot about the importance of protecting the roads, and I know that a significant challenge for the international Afghan forces in the south relates to that.

One of the benefits of better protection of roadways would be to make it much more difficult for the insurgency to finance through that mode of taxation. Of course, some who are running poppy production

have much closer links to the Taliban, and the engagement of the security forces there becomes a rather more relevant point.

**Q46 Chairman:** Isn't it also true that there are still people linked to the poppy production who have close connections with senior figures in the Afghan political establishment?

**David Miliband:** There are allegations in that respect, yes.

**Q47 Chairman:** It's more than allegations, isn't it?

**David Miliband:** No, there are allegations.

**Q48 Chairman:** Perhaps we will see whether some senior figures subsequently get put on trial, and then there will be more than allegations.

**David Miliband:** If they are put on trial and found guilty, the allegations become something more.

**Q49 Mr. Horam:** You've mentioned at length, Foreign Secretary, the critical nature of the political settlement—the dual thing of military and political working together—and part of the political settlement is the integration of some of the Taliban into local and national Government structures. How will that happen?

**David Miliband:** It already is happening. It has happened in the west, in Herat, and there have been other examples in the south and the east. Essentially, there is an interesting and worthwhile distinction between so-called reintegration and reconciliation. Reintegration is meant to be for those who are not ideologically committed to the insurgency; reconciliation is for those who are perceived to have a cause. Reintegration relates to foot soldiers; reconciliation relates to higher-ups in the middle and higher levels.

**Q50 Mr. Horam:** How do you deal with reintegration?

**David Miliband:** I'm coming to that. Reintegration involves a decision by local people—local insurgents—that they are better off inside the political system than outside, and that is something that is led at local level by Afghan and international forces, and through local Afghan politics. Essentially, if you are talking about district or sub-district level, you are talking about very localised decisions that are made on a tribal or sub-tribal basis. That is not something that is going to be choreographed from Kabul, whether from the Afghan side or from the NATO side. It is going to be the product of military pressure and political choice at local level.

**Q51 Mr. Horam:** Does that mean, as we found out when we were in Helmand, that one of the criticisms was that the Taliban—the economic Taliban, if I can put it like that—were simply paying local people more than we were? Do we now pay them more than the Taliban do?

**David Miliband:** No, because almost by definition that is not a very durable basis on which to bring people over. If you want to bring people over, you

have got to make sure that their families will be safe, that they will be safe, they will have a genuine political voice in the local system and that they have something to do. So I think what we are talking about is a more sustainable political and economic settlement in which people decide they are better off inside rather than outside.

**Q52 Mr. Horam:** But there is clearly a straightforward economic calculation here isn't there—an economic element?

**David Miliband:** With respect, I do not think that it is a straightforward economic calculation.

**Mr. Horam:** Nothing is straightforward in Afghanistan.

**David Miliband:** Touché. Even notwithstanding that caveat, I use the statistic that some people are rented for \$10 a day and that is more than a policeman gets paid. That is relevant, but it is a big decision for someone to go and fight with the insurgency against their community. It relates to issues of security and political voice as well as economic well-being.

**Q53 Mr. Horam:** The other thing you stressed in your remarks just now was the importance of the Grand Shura, which President Karzai is hoping to set up sometime in spring or early summer—that was the time line you were talking about. If you were the Taliban and you were invited to this Grand Shura and there was no agreement, they can just sit there, can't they? They can just sit there and say, "Well, we'll wait. The Americans will eventually start to wind down their troops. European political opinion will get fed up with the terrible deaths and so forth. We'll just wait."

**David Miliband:** That is the case that is often put, but it suggests a static position rather than a dynamic one. You have a significant build-up of international forces with a coherent strategic plan, as evidenced in the last few weeks. You have the build-up of Afghan forces as well and the growing capacity of the Afghan national army. Although I take your point about the police, I think you would agree that the Afghan national army is a significant fighting force. The prospect of 200,000 Afghans in their national army and 100,000 marines concentrates the mind. It is all very well to say that you've got time, but you've got quite a big interim period where you have a fighting force of significant proportions on the march. So I think that it is not unreasonable—in fact, I think it is right—to say that there are now clear incentives for them to participate in the political system.

The other thing I would just say, though, is that the Taliban are not a homogenous group. I am sure you would accept that.

**Mr. Horam:** Sure.

**David Miliband:** This is a very much more disaggregated society. That is one reason that these Loya Jirgas are such large affairs. The whole point about a tribal society is that it has got many distinctions between and within tribes.

**Q54 Mr. Horam:** None the less, there has to be some sort of general agreement which enough people subscribe to on the Taliban side to make something work, even though it may be split down into groups and people and so forth. The temptation for them will be to say, "Well, we can just wait all this out, because although there may be military pressure on us for the next year or 18 months or so, after a time it will decline because their patience will run out."

**David Miliband:** That is a temptation, but it is also balanced by the threat. It is a calculation in that sense. I think we are tending into areas here where it is quite difficult to say much without—I don't want to say "prejudicing", but without getting in the way of the sort of—I mean, this is an exercise that is not going to be done in the full glare of publicity. It is going to be an exercise that will involve a lot of Afghan engagement and a lot of Afghan talking over a period. It would not be wise for me to say much more really, I'm afraid.

**Q55 Mr. Moss:** Returning to the issue of governance, would you agree that nothing is more important for public sentiment and support for the war here at home than the belief that the sacrifices of our armed forces are in support of a viable, sustainable political regime? In other words, lives are not being lost in vain. What do you say to those members of the public—now, I believe, in the majority—who do not believe that the current Afghan leadership is both willing and able to be the kind of strategic partner that we so desperately need in Afghanistan?

**David Miliband:** I think, first, that it is absolutely right to say that there must not be a feeling that lives are being lost in vain. That is the most corrosive thing. Equally, it is not the case that we are sending British troops there to support an Afghan Government. We are sending British troops there because of the threat that would exist to our national security if Afghanistan became once again a safe place for international terrorism to be co-ordinated and planned.

It is important that we have a strategic partner in the Afghan Government, and that is the reason why there is emphasis on issues like corruption and good governance. However, those are key issues for Afghans as well. When we discuss this corruption issue, it sometimes sounds like it is a western imposition on an unwilling Afghan people. Actually, the BBC poll that I cited earlier suggests quite the opposite. The people who feel most passionately about the abuse of power are Afghans. This is not something that we are doing against a recalcitrant people. The confidence that Afghans have in their own Government, never mind that we have in their Government, depends on the extent to which they are seen to be governing in the interests of the Afghan people. The dualism that is being suggested is not quite right.

**Q56 Mr. Moss:** The FCO described the August 2009 presidential elections as "credible—allowing the political will of the Afghan people to be clearly expressed". Given all the evidence of intimidation and fraud, do you still stand by those words?

24 February 2010 Rt. Hon. David Miliband MP and Miss Karen Pierce CMG

**David Miliband:** I think that it was a credible representation to say that President Karzai got more votes than anybody else—than Dr. Abdullah or the other candidates. It is also credible to say that he did not get an absolute majority in the first ballot. I think that the final figures were 49-31 or 49-32 and that was a credible representation of the views. The final result reflected the strictures of the Afghan constitution. Is that to say there aren't significant lessons that need to be learnt and reforms that need to be put in place? Of course, you are right about that, but I would stick by the basic point that the results reveal that President Karzai was the most popular candidate.

**Q57 Mr. Moss:** But do you not agree that some fraud and intimidation took place?

**David Miliband:** Significant fraud was attempted, and intimidation was done. That is true, but I think that a huge amount of the fraud was excised or removed from the electoral equation by the efforts of the Electoral Complaints Commission that we talked about earlier.

**Karen Pierce:** The UN also passed judgment on the elections and said that, in its assessment, they were free and fair. It pointed out that they were the first Afghan-run elections in 30 years, so a certain level of dysfunctionality was to be expected. Nevertheless, the UN also passed them as free and fair.

**David Miliband:** From my point of view, I would never describe them as free and fair. The results were a credible expression of the will of the Afghan people. I would never describe those elections last August as free and fair.

**Q58 Mr. Moss:** That is very candid of you, Secretary of State, I have to say. If they were not free and fair last time and, given the recent moves by President Karzai to take control of the Electoral Complaints Commission, what confidence do we now have that we are going to have free and fair parliamentary elections later this year?

**David Miliband:** We talk about free and fair elections in our country, notwithstanding the imbalance in the funding of the different parties. We describe them as free and fair.

**Q59 Mr. Horam:** Or the electoral system.

**David Miliband:** Or the electoral system, indeed. But we describe them as free and fair. To use the same phrase about Afghan elections as we use about western European elections is to suggest that the public are more credulous than they in fact are. It cannot be the case that we describe Afghan elections with the same phrase as we describe western democratic elections with 300 years of democratic history—or, in our case, rather shorter. But, anyway, you take my point. That is why we said in advance of the elections that we thought they needed to be a credible representation of the views, and that is why I say that they were credible. I don't think that you will ever find a quotation from me that says I

promise you the next elections in Afghanistan will be “free and fair”, because that suggests a bar that will not be met. What we have to work for is that the next parliamentary elections—which is what they obviously are—are again a credible representation. “Credible” is the right word. That requires security, but it also requires openness of debate—actually, something that the Afghans scored quite highly on in advance of the presidential elections. I think it's important not just to knock the process. In the run-up to the elections, Dr. Abdullah had mass rallies around the place, so did President Karzai. It was actually an Afghan-led debate of some depth and breadth.

Parliamentary elections pose a different set of challenges than presidential elections—they will reflect much more the fragmented geography of Afghanistan—but they do require reform of the sort that you described. That's something that we're going to be arguing for, and hopefully the Electoral Complaints Commission and the nominees who come forward will do so as well.

**Q60 Sir John Stanley:** Foreign Secretary, my question leads precisely on from that point. If I may say so, I thought you skated far too lightly in your answers to Sir Menzies' earlier questions on this as to the significance of the changes that will be brought about by President Karzai's decree. You said in answer to Sir Menzies, “Well, we'll just wait and see who President Karzai appoints.” I think it's almost immaterial who he appoints. The significance is that he is going to do the appointing. They will be his creatures. The commission will be his body.

That is a profound difference from the Electoral Complaints Commission, which you just referred to in replying to Malcolm Moss, which played such an important role in safeguarding the elections and exposing corruption last year. That Electoral Complaints Commission had a clear three to two majority of non-Afghan people on it—chaired by a Canadian, with two non-Afghans—among the five. That is the profound change.

What I do not understand—I am very disappointed so far—is why the British Government, and indeed our other NATO partners, are not taking an altogether tougher line with President Karzai against this key change. If the changes go through, we have almost a guarantee of widespread corruption which will not be identified. I fail to see how the support of the UK electorate and everybody else's electorates will be sustained behind a Government who engage in such degrees of corruption. Surely the British Government and other Governments should be saying to President Karzai, “You do not do this. You preserve the non-Afghan majority on the complaints commission, and if you do not, then there are going to be serious consequences for the degree of support we can continue to give you.”

**David Miliband:** First of all, quite a lot of the words that you use were exactly the words that I used in response to Sir Menzies, so we're not that far apart. I applauded exactly the work of the Canadian-led ECC in my earlier answer. Secondly, we agree too on

the importance of the parliamentary elections representing an improvement on the processes of the presidential elections, and the ECC, as well as the IEC, has an important role in that. Thirdly, the UK is not a unilateral actor in this drama. We work closely with the UN, which is, of course, the coordinating body for any international support, including financial, for the electoral process. It is with the UN that we are working very closely in Kabul. Fourthly, the test, I think, is who is appointed to the body, whether they be international or not. Maybe a better way of putting it is that the test is the actions of the ECC. We will have very high expectations for the sort of actions that the ECC should take. I think that the UN have a big responsibility in their engagement with President Karzai about this. I can absolutely assure you that we are working very closely with them to make sure that the importance we attach to the actions of the ECC is very widely understood.

**Q61 Sir John Stanley:** Can I ask one further question in relation to the parliamentary elections? It has been reported, as you will have seen in recent days, that in addition to President Karzai issuing this decree to make the complaints commission effectively his own creature, he is also positively seeking to reduce the number of women Afghan MPs. What is the British Government's position on that?

**David Miliband:** We would deplore that. I haven't actually seen that myself, but obviously, any suggestion that one sex of the Afghan population has less right to stand or sit in Parliament than another we would completely deplore.

**Q62 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Foreign Secretary, you mentioned corruption several times. It is indeed endemic and pervasive, as we saw on our last visit. A lot of the money we put in goes missing. The London conference has pledged a peace and reintegration trust fund, and £100 million has already been pledged. It is called a trust fund, so who will be the trustees of this fund?

**David Miliband:** Let's back up a bit. You said that a lot of our money goes missing. I would like to see evidence of that. Our money—British money—goes from the Department for International Development to specific purposes; it is audited by, I think, PricewaterhouseCoopers; and I have never seen a suggestion that “a lot of our money goes missing”. I don't know if in your papers there you have any evidence to support that, but that is a very serious allegation and I would like to see more evidence.

**Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Perhaps you would answer my question.

**David Miliband:** I think that is an important point to have on the record: I have never seen any suggestion that a lot of “our money” goes missing in Afghanistan. There are very tight processes put in place by the Department for International Development to prevent that. Maybe afterwards you can provide me with any evidence you have.

Secondly, in respect of the reintegration fund—I think \$140 million was pledged at the conference; that will be spent over a five-year period not a one-year period—it is obviously a trust fund with two routes into it. One is via the UN Development Programme, which reflects the importance of the Japanese role, and the other is a non-UNDP route. The organisation of the fund will bring a smile to your face, I hope. The professional advice on the structure of the trust fund—its trustees and other matters—is being provided by Adam Smith International. I'm glad you smiled at that. It is not the Adam Smith Institute that recommended the mass privatisation of everything that moved in Britain in the 1980s, but apparently a different Adam Smith organisation, but none the less one that takes great inspiration from the teachings of Adam Smith. It has provided quite extensive advice on the modalities of how the UN and the Afghans should structure the fund. I would be happy to write to the Committee with some of the details.<sup>3</sup>

**Q63 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** I think we ought to know rather more detail by now. Adam Smith was a very fine man but he has been dead for 200 years. I hope that his reputation would at least allow us to understand that other people's money tends to go missing in places such as Afghanistan—let's put it no higher than that. We are already pledged to contribute our money to a peace and reintegration trust fund. If that is anything more than a reassuring name, there must be trustees who we know and who are accountable to you or to someone here for the disbursement of this very large sum of money. By now, particularly as it has all been agreed, published and welcomed, we ought to know who these trustees are to be.

**David Miliband:** We are now 24 or 25 days after the announcement of the trust fund, so 24 days into a five-year programme. We shouldn't believe that we have somehow missed the bus on this. The trust fund has been set up, its purposes have been spelled out and the professional advice on setting it up has been delivered, and I am happy to write about that. The first set of meetings—I think I am right in saying—have happened, involving Afghans and the UN, with a series of engagements between the Afghan authorities and the international authorities. No country is going to put its money in unless it is sure that it will be properly used. That is where we are. I am happy to make sure that the Committee has full details.

**Q64 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Through you, Chairman, if I can, I ask the Foreign Secretary to supply us with more details, because I think it is important that trust funds are precisely that.

May I move on to another announcement on the subject of corruption, the establishment of an independent High Office of Oversight? Again, it all sounds very reassuring, but it is reported today that

<sup>3</sup> See Ev 24

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24 February 2010 Rt. Hon. David Miliband MP and Miss Karen Pierce CMG

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the decree to set up the office has been delayed by President Karzai. Do you have any information about that?

**David Miliband:** I don't. I'm not sure which report you're talking about. I understood that there were two decrees involved in the implementation of the initiatives against corruption and that they had both been drawn up. I beg your pardon, but did you say the report said they had been annulled?

**Q65 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** It is reported in *The Guardian* that President Karzai "has defied US pressure to pass a separate decree to help fight corruption." The report specifically refers to measures "to strengthen and give independence to" what it calls "the High Office of Oversight". It goes on to say that it is "unlikely that parliament will pass the legislation in time". The legislation was promised by the end of February, so we apparently have a delay on our hands. Is this not more backsliding by President Karzai, who, as we heard in earlier exchanges, is very reluctant to let anything go? He has taken control of the Electoral Commission. Is he not trying to undermine the promised independence of this new body in fighting corruption?

**David Miliband:** We have to make sure that that doesn't happen. This new body is important. I don't have evidence of the delay, but we can check that.<sup>4</sup> As I say, there are actually two decrees involved, not one. It is important that they are followed through, and that is something that we are very committed to. President Karzai has said he is going to do that, and he needs to do it.

**Q66 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** I think we have a disturbing situation here. On the one hand, we are saying that there's no military solution and that we've got to hand over powers to the Afghans, develop civic society and strengthen a kind of democracy. At the same time, we are getting reports all the time of delays, with Karzai apparently moving in the opposite direction and taking control of previously independent bodies. So the very idea of a robust Afghan governmental structure taking over these responsibilities is crumbling in our hands. At what point are we going to lose patience with this man and try a different approach? He is all we've got at the minute.

**David Miliband:** I'm not sure what different approach you're referring to. He is the elected President of Afghanistan, so there isn't a different approach, if by "different approach" you mean deciding we're going to work with somebody else. He has been elected by his own people to be the President of that country. We don't work with his Ministries that abuse our funds; we do work with the Ministries that are able to function properly. We seek to use our influence publicly and privately in respect of our key desiderata in terms of the Afghan Government's engagement with the international community. When there are setbacks, we don't pretend that they are not setbacks; we identify them very clearly. But I don't accept your phrase that the

agreement, or the goals, are "crumbling in our hands". That seems not to be justified by the evidence that is available.

**Q67 Mr. Heathcoat-Amory:** Lastly, do you have a view on whether more could be done to govern Afghanistan through the existing tribal structure? The way in which tribes govern themselves is not one that I would approve of—they are not terribly good at human rights, for instance—but the Pashtun tribe controls a lot of the population and clearly give no allegiance to the central Government. They are extremely disenchanted, cynical and disillusioned about corruption at central Government level. Is that not an element of the complex situation in this country that we should take more account of?

**David Miliband:** It is a very important element, as I've said several times. Remember, the Pashtun are about 35 to 40% of the population; 60 to 65% of people are not Pashtun. President Karzai is a Pashtun. But, of course, differences among the Pashtun are as great as the differences between Pashtuns and others. It is important not to talk about the Pashtuns as a tribe, because there are many different communities among them. That is point one. Point two is that we have to remember that we are not living in 1979. Thirty-one years of civil war and conflict have severely corroded the tribal structures, although they haven't eliminated them. That is the complication that you were perhaps referring to in your question in trying to meld together traditional structures with new ones. Thirdly, community-based structures with a strong tribal element will be a significant part of a durable settlement in Afghanistan, notwithstanding the corrosion of the tribal structures over the past 30 years. That is not only true in the south and east, but significant. The way in which I would operationalise your insight is to emphasise the importance of local structures. There is a legitimate criticism that, over the past eight or nine years, the international community has focused on central Government in a country that is, in fact, relatively decentralised. When it has talked about local structures, it has talked often about new structures rather than pre-existing ones. The way to think about Afghanistan is obviously as one country, but it is a country of 396 districts and 34 provinces. The 396 districts of Afghanistan give much greater sense of the granularity of the tribal structures. The political settlements that we are talking about will be built district by district, not just at the national level. While I agree strongly that they are not the sort of structures that we would anticipate in either of our constituencies, they will none the less be an absolutely critical part of self-governance in Afghanistan. I am sorry to have given a rather long answer to the question, but it is important and deserves a serious answer. Let me say also that the challenges and the values or rights that we would expect to be reflected in our constituencies are also there. The degree of letting go that is required, and recognising that there are some bottom lines—above all, the Afghan constitution—mean that there will have to be a lot of licence in the country.

<sup>4</sup> See Ev

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 24 February 2010 Rt. Hon. David Miliband MP and Miss Karen Pierce CMG
 

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**Q68 Chairman:** May I take you back to the London conference and the issue of development? During the conference, I met the British Overseas Development Agencies Group. I understand that 25 British NGOs are working in Afghanistan, some of which have a large number of staff. For example, 200 work for Save the Children. One point that was put to me very strongly was why the non-governmental organisations were not invited to take part in the London conference, and why the Canadian High Commission had to organise an alternative Afghan conference—I attended it—in London.

**David Miliband:** I do not accept the characterisation of the civil society event as an alternative. We were very heavily engaged in encouraging, sponsoring and stimulating the civil society conference. Far from it being something that was against our will or in rebellion—

**Q69 Chairman:** I am not saying that it was against your will. The London conference was not just a UK conference, was it?

**David Miliband:** We actually asked for the Outreach conference to be set up; there was nothing alternative about it.

**Q70 Chairman:** This is a related question. A large number of Afghan Members of Parliament were in London at the time, but they were also at the Canadian High Commission event. They were not at the London conference. Some of them said to me clearly that President Karzai and his Ministers had not consulted the Afghan Members of Parliament before they had come to London to take part in the conference.

**David Miliband:** First, it is important to say that the two Afghan representatives of the civil society conference spoke to the London conference. They were not politicians. They were civil society people. Secondly, I think that I am right in saying that the parliamentarians' visit was purely coincidental. It was an Inter-Parliamentary Union or an inter-Parliament exchange that happened to be taking place at the time of the London conference. Thirdly, the London conference was a conference of Governments. There is a limit to what can be done in six or seven hours. We were not trying to substitute for intra-Afghan discussion, but everyone to whom I spoke said that the conference was enhanced by the presence of the civil society delegations.

**Q71 Chairman:** I can assure you that the event at Canada House was very valuable. Will you respond to specific criticisms that have been made by non-governmental organisations working on the ground in Afghanistan? The first criticism is that, although the conflict is very serious, people are 25 times more likely to die from poverty and malnutrition than as a result of conflict and there is an over-emphasis on the military and their role, with particular concerns about the way in which the provincial reconstruction

teams operate, and the NGOs feel that local people are reluctant sometimes to engage with projects that are military-led, when in fact they would be more likely to engage with projects that are either civil society-led or Afghan Government-led and funded through the Afghan Government institutions.

**David Miliband:** Afghanistan is the fourth or fifth poorest country in the world. There would be a very strong development mission there even if there wasn't a military presence. The balance between international and Afghan civil effort is obviously a difficult one. There are all sorts of issues to do with the amount of money paid to international staff compared with local staff. That's tricky, because these people are doing good and important work. The best of all worlds is that this is led by the local Afghan authorities—district and provincial governors—and that everything comes in in support of them. That's not always possible.

I think the over-militarisation is a fair criticism, or a fair point, but I think I'm right in saying that Helmand province is the most heavily aided province in the world. There is a massive amount of aid going in there. The key is the balance. Part of Mark Sedwill's job as the new NATO civilian representative will be to knit together the local military and civilian effort. That speaks a bit to the reintegration question that John Horam was asking earlier. I think it's worth pointing to that.

**Karen Pierce:** May I give you some information that you may find helpful? The London conference set a target that donors should put around 50% of their aid directly through the Afghan Government system—that partly addresses some of the concerns that you had. DFID believes that its money is well protected from fraud—Mr. Heathcoat-Amory's question—because it pays the Government of Afghanistan typically on a reimbursement basis, so once the funds have been committed to a project, DFID then refunds the Afghan Government, which provides a fair degree of protection. It's also fair to say that the security situation, particularly in the south, is so precarious that, while NGOs will work there, it's very hard to get UN civilian staff to work there, so at the moment most of the civilian development is heavily reliant on Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and the civilians working within ISAF. Ideally, over the next few years that balance will shift and you will see more traditional development workers on the ground.

**Q72 Chairman:** May I ask two more questions about this and then some questions on human rights? Then we want to try to get something on Pakistan.

**David Miliband:** I was worried about Pakistan.

**Chairman:** We are getting there. Is there a danger that, because of this concentration on the conflict in the south, we're not putting enough resources into the safer areas of Afghanistan, which could actually build the credibility of Afghan institutions?

**David Miliband:** I think it's important that the safer areas don't become victim to flanking manoeuvres by the insurgency, but I think that the test is going to be in the areas where the insurgency is strong, and that's why the south's needs are so important.

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24 February 2010 Rt. Hon. David Miliband MP and Miss Karen Pierce CMG

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**Q73 Chairman:** You mentioned Mark Sedwill and his new role as the NATO Senior Civilian Co-ordinator. Is that the kind of Paddy Ashdown role lite?

**David Miliband:** No, it's not.

**Q74 Chairman:** Is someone going to do what was seen as the Paddy Ashdown role?

**David Miliband:** It is slightly unfortunate to characterise it. Paddy Ashdown was considered for the role as the UN Special Representative. The current term of office of the current UN SRSG comes to an end in March and his replacement will be Staffan di Mistura. It's a UN role rather than a Paddy Ashdown role, with all due respect to Paddy Ashdown.

**Q75 Chairman:** Are you confident that the new UN representative will have sufficient clout to play the co-ordinating role that was thought necessary two years ago?

**David Miliband:** Yes is the short answer. This all comes down to the personality, determination and commitment of your partners. Mark Sedwill has gone out of his way to say that he wants to work with the UN Special Representative, Mr. di Mistura, who has a distinguished record in Iraq. Some of you may have come into contact with him and his work there; he did outstanding work in the north of Iraq. He has his work cut out in Afghanistan in a big way, especially on the bureaucratic side because there are quite big holes in the UN operations there, not least because of the security issues that they have suffered from. Obviously, Afghanistan is an extremely challenging theatre. I have already spoken to him a couple of times and he is determined to do his job in a way that benefits people in Afghanistan and the credit of the UN.

**Q76 Sir John Stanley:** When we were in Afghanistan last year, we had the privilege—a real privilege—to meet a small group of Afghan women who were fighting for women's and girls' rights in Afghanistan. They were brave and tenacious. Their great and overwhelming concern, as they put it to us, was that as a price of a political settlement, it would be women's and girls' rights that could be eroded or scaled back. Can you give this Committee an unequivocal assurance that as far as this British Government are concerned, there will be absolutely no endorsement of or, more likely, turning a blind eye to—like Pontius Pilate's washing of hands—any settlement that will water down and reduce women's and girls' rights in Afghanistan compared with those set out in the constitution?

**David Miliband:** Certainly not. I wouldn't be party to any watering down; I can give you that commitment. A vital part of a durable political settlement is precisely to live up to the commitments of the Afghanistan constitution. The bravery of the people you met and of others is striking. Their willingness to speak up, their organisation and their ability to talk to each other need to be supported, as they are doing brave work in a difficult climate. It is

important that we emphasise our commitment to help the Afghans live up to the commitments of their own constitution.

**Q77 Chairman:** Thank you, Foreign Secretary. May we now move on to questions about Pakistan? The situation in Pakistan currently is clearly quite different from that of last April, when our Committee visited. We have seen, for example, the recent arrest of Mullah Baradar in Karachi and several months of offensive by the Pakistani armed forces in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and other parts of the country. Is there a fundamental change in the relationship between Pakistan's security apparatus and the US and the western world?

**David Miliband:** That is a very big question. There is a fundamental change in the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan at the presidential and governmental levels. You can just contrast the relationship between the Government of Pakistan under President Musharraf and the Government of Afghanistan under President Karzai and the situation today and you will see a big difference.

The Pakistan-America relationship is a relationship in transition, which I hope will become far more mutually supportive. Afghanistan is the test case for the ability of America and Pakistan to work together in a different way that respects each other's interests. I think that there is a commitment on the part of both countries to do that. It is something I talked a lot about, up to the vice-presidential level and with my opposite number, Mrs. Clinton, when I was in Washington in January, as well as when I was in Pakistan in the first week of January. There are few more important relationships for the security of the world than the US-Pakistan relationship, and it has a long way to go to become the sort of productive relationship it needs to be.

**Q78 Chairman:** What about the UK-Pakistan relationship, particularly with regard to cross-border security co-operation between our forces, the US forces and Pakistan?

**David Miliband:** Our forces are a long way away from the Pakistan border. If you think about the map of Helmand, the border is a very long distance from the furthest south we are in Afghanistan in Garmsir. It is 200 or 150 km, I think, down to the Pakistani border. In terms of border co-operation, it is about Afghan-Pakistani co-operation. To go to the Khyber Pass, as I have, and see in a single control room Afghans and Pakistanis next to each other is a remarkable change. That would not have happened before. There is a very important crossing point next to Kandahar. British troops are not involved there but that is a very important part of the co-operation.

**Q79 Chairman:** What about the wider issue that leaders of the insurgency in Afghanistan, including those who are behind the attacks on our forces, the IEDs and other activities, are known to be based in Pakistan?

**David Miliband:** That is a very important issue and a very important motive for the co-operation that we seek between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is also a very important part of our dialogue with the Pakistani authorities—not about cross-border security co-operation, but about the tactics of the Pakistani security forces in respect of the threats to their own country and the threats across the border.

**Q80 Sir John Stanley:** I recognise at the outset that comparisons between Northern Ireland and Afghanistan-Pakistan have to be treated very carefully, but from my time with ministerial responsibility in this area I am in no doubt whatsoever that the beginning of the end of terrorism was marked when, and only when, we established cross-border co-operation between the north and south.

In the same circumstances that we have here, can you tell us about that as far as the British Government are concerned? We had the announcement from the Prime Minister pretty well at the same time as the Committee was in Afghanistan. He made a statement in the House when he came back. He was in Afghanistan and Pakistan at the same time as us. He made an announcement about bilateral financial support for the Pakistan authorities for counter-terrorism purposes and the written statement is in *Hansard*. I would not expect you to go into any details, but can you tell us in broad terms how that is going and whether it is going to be expanded? I simply make the point that the sum of money that the Prime Minister announced, which as I recall was £15 million, that we are using there, needs to be set against the vast sums of money that we are having to deploy in Afghanistan to deal with terrorism coming out of Pakistan.

Although we cannot begin to shoulder that financial burden ourselves, there is a huge financial benefit of giving every possible help to the Pakistanis in establishing a no-safe-haven policy for the terrorists inside their own country, quite apart from the blood issue, which we had such a grim reminder of at Prime Minister's questions today, and the saving lives benefit.

**David Miliband:** I strongly agree with Sir John. His distinguished ministerial record gives him a very interesting perspective on the border issues. I think that you're right; one has to be extremely careful with importing into south Asia examples from Ireland, but I am struck that you, with your experience, feel confident enough to do so. That is very striking. From my perspective, without referring to the Irish experience, I would say that there will not be stability in Afghanistan unless there is stability on the Pakistan side of the border and *vice versa*. I strongly share the passion that you have for working with the Pakistanis, which is why I have been to Pakistan six times, as well as going to Afghanistan six times.

I can give you a strong commitment that our counter-terrorism spending is under £10 million—quite small. It has gone up from £3.7 million to £6.2 million to £8.3 million and is going up again next year to £9 million. We are expanding it, but it is

pretty small beer compared with the many billions of pounds spent on troops in Afghanistan. Our total aid spend in Pakistan is obviously much larger than low single-digit millions. DFID will spend £140 million in Pakistan for 2009-10. Of course, the dividing line between narrowly defined counter-terrorism projects and broader civil improvement, whether in education or health, is blurred. Both are testimony to our commitment to work closely with the Pakistani authorities. It is a country of 170 million people, so one has to have a sense of perspective.

One area of the civilian-military balance that is rarely talked about is the balance between the military investment in Afghanistan and the civilian investment in Pakistan. You rightly talked about that, John. The Kerry-Lugar debates showed the Americans beginning to talk about it. That is a good thing. Pakistan got strong support for its IMF loan and is now implementing it; it is on the fourth round of its IMF loan. I do not think that any Pakistani Government have ever done that—certainly no civilian Government have done that. Although it is easy to knock Governments around the world, the Pakistanis deserve huge credit for the way in which they have implemented their economic reform programme because it has been pretty tough on them. That is an additional reason why we will continue to support them.

**Q81 Mr. Moss:** On that very point, you will recollect, Foreign Secretary, that not so long ago, a Minister in the House of Lords said that because of FCO budget constraints, there would be a cut-back on funding for counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation. Are we to interpret from that that the cut-back was on your projected spend, as opposed to your actual spend?

**David Miliband:** There is no cut-back. Even at the time when Glenys Kinnock was speaking, the Pakistan counter-terrorism spend was due to rise and it will rise. Since then, I have given a written statement about the special arrangements that are being made for 2010-11 to bolster FCO finances. I am confident that we will be able to maintain the comprehensive network and address the priorities the Committee would want.

**Q82 Mr. Moss:** So you are saying that the statement made in the House of Lords, I believe in January of this year, was wrong.

**David Miliband:** Not exactly. I would want to see exactly what the statement said. I think confusion arose in the debate between a cut in spending and an increase that was not the size it might have been—

**Mr. Moss:** That's what I said: a cut-back in projected spending.

**David Miliband:** Sorry, please just let me finish the sentence. I was saying an increase that is lower than it might have been if we had more money. That is a different category even than projections. The budgets are rising. They are not rising as much as they would have done if we had not had the reduction in the value of sterling because we purchase 120 foreign currencies. However, to make

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24 February 2010 Rt. Hon. David Miliband MP and Miss Karen Pierce CMG

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up for the reduction in the value of sterling, we have extra money from the Treasury, extra freedom to sell off some buildings that we don't need and some extra money from the wider FCO family, including the BBC World Service, the British Council and the FCO trading services. I do say this to the Committee: come the next spending review, whatever Government are in power, there will be a real issue about how to account for changing the exchange rate for—

**Q83 Chairman:** Foreign Secretary, may I reassure you that the Committee is on its game and we are very much on to this issue?

**Andrew Mackinlay:** It requires you in the Cabinet to listen.

**Chairman:** Andrew, sorry. I assure you that the Committee will be commenting publicly on those issues in the next three weeks.

**David Miliband:** I hope the Committee has the full picture for 2010-11 because I don't want you to be under any illusions on that.

**Q84 Chairman:** Foreign Secretary, I am sure we have an absolutely full picture of everything.

You mentioned the BBC World Service. Do you think it would be helpful, as it clearly has been with regard to the Arab world and Iran, if we had an Urdu television channel coming out of the BBC World Service to try to increase the media coverage? I understand that BBC World Service radio is heard by up to 10% of the Pakistani population, which is quite a high figure. Clearly, the urban population relies much less on the radio and watches numerous satellite and cable television channels. I wonder if an Urdu television channel would be something to think about.

**David Miliband:** One of the things that I always have to say to our Iranian colleagues is that the Government do not control the BBC World Service. It is important that I don't look like I'm deciding what channels are broadcast. I think that all of us who have been to Pakistan know the remarkable vibrancy of the Urdu written media. It is an interesting idea, so let me take it away and, in an extremely diplomatic way, find out what the BBC independently might decide on this.<sup>5</sup>

**Q85 Mr. Horam:** One of the problems in getting Pakistan to deal with a substantial threat to itself and in getting more help with Afghanistan has been the historic perceived threat from India. Do you see any change in that situation?

**David Miliband:** I think that there has been a significant change in the last couple of years in the appreciation in Pakistan of its domestic terrorist threat. It is now possible to have a conversation with senior people in Pakistan and with members of the public about the fact that whatever they think of the perceived Indian threat there is also a domestic threat. A lot of Pakistanis still believe in the

perceived ancient threat, but there has been a change in that they would recognise that there is a domestic terrorist threat as well.

**Q86 Mr. Horam:** How will that manifest itself in actual disposition of military forces and security?

**David Miliband:** There is a 150,000-strong deployment of Pakistani security forces on the western border, and that is a pretty big change.

**Q87 Mr. Horam:** Right. How quickly has that happened?

**David Miliband:** It has happened in the last couple of years. We have the Buner operation, the Swat operation and now the South Waziristan operations. Historically, the Pakistani frontier corps have been having a pretty rough time on the border, and now we have significant reinforcement. However, it still remains the case that improved relations between India and Pakistan would be a massive boost to Pakistan's ability to concentrate on what I believe is its real threat. In that context, I think that it is important to say that at the moment nothing would do more to help build confidence on the India-Pakistan track than a successful conclusion of the prosecutions that have been started in Pakistan in respect of the Mumbai bombings. Many Indian politicians and people who are perfectly willing to support the India-Pakistan dialogue say, "We cannot have a dialogue until there is a real showcase that Pakistan's domestic problems and its ability to project them abroad are going to be properly addressed." A successful conclusion to the Mumbai prosecutions, which the Pakistanis are pursuing with dedication, will be a significant moment.

It is worth saying that both Governments deserve credit for the resumption of the India-Pakistan dialogue—admittedly it is at an official level at the moment. The Indian Foreign Minister and the Pakistani Foreign Minister came to the London conference on Afghanistan.

**Q88 Chairman:** A final question because I am conscious of time. Can I ask you who came to the London conference? We invited Iran. Can you tell us at what level Iran attended the London conference?

**David Miliband:** It didn't attend.

**Chairman:** It did not attend at all?

**David Miliband:** No.

**Q89 Chairman:** Obviously that is a great disappointment. Do you think that Iran has a role in assisting in the stabilisation and development in Pakistan?

**David Miliband:** One must be careful about describing it as a disappointment, because it suggests that there is fault on our side. It was a great mistake on the part of the Iranians not to come because it suggested that they were not interested in bringing stability to a country that has big implications for them. The Iranian Foreign Minister protested to me last year about how important Afghanistan was and how he wanted to work with us on it. Of course, the failure to turn up was a mistake on the Iranian part. It undermined their own claims of being a

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<sup>5</sup> See Ev 24

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24 February 2010 Rt. Hon. David Miliband MP and Miss Karen Pierce CMG

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responsible partner, but I am happy to repeat to this Committee that as far as I am concerned Iran should be part of the regional dialogue about the future of Afghanistan, how its sovereignty can be respected and how it can be supported.

**Chairman:** Okay. Andrew, we have two minutes.

**Q90 Andrew Mackinlay:** It is right at the end of this Parliament, so this is my last stab at you.

**David Miliband:** I have never felt you stabbing me, Andrew.

**Andrew Mackinlay:** In the nicest possible way.

At Cabinet level, what discussions are there about how we would cope as the United Kingdom if we had another crisis blow up elsewhere in the world? I am talking about not just the significant deployment of armed forces but the capacity of the machinery of Government, your Department and others to cope. It seems that we are in a very precarious situation in that if something unexpected blows up in the world, we would not be able rapidly to respond either in terms of military deployment or the resources in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Are there discussions at Cabinet level about our capacity to respond to the unexpected?

**David Miliband:** That is a good question. The emphasis on flexible skills, which is an emphasis not just in the military but in the diplomatic service, means that if there was something that suddenly became an overarching priority, there could be redeployment, new resources and new effort. The adaptability of the system is quite high. Obviously, that would affect what else you could do. The premium is on a comprehensive network that is able to respond in a serious way. I do not know whether the Committee has taken any evidence or opined at all about the defence review.

**Chairman:** It is coming.

**David Miliband:** The 1966 Defence White Paper said that defence is the servant of foreign policy, which of course is true. It is important to recognise that we need to think about the foreign policy context that we face and then make deployments and decisions—whether on the defence side with long lead times or on the diplomatic side—to service that.

**Q91 Andrew Mackinlay:** And in the last 10 seconds, you saw my reaction when you raised the issue of Foreign Office resources. I have sympathy for you and your Department, but it is down to you and old-fashioned Cabinet collective responsibility. It is you who has to raise it with 20 others. This is grossly unfair and also bonkers that the Department should be frustrated in carrying out our primary interests around the world because of problems with regard to exchange rates. In other words, other Departments have to make some sacrifice.

**David Miliband:** I hope that the record will record the smile on my face when I say that we do not want your sympathy.

**Andrew Mackinlay:** You would have my support. I am right behind you.

**David Miliband:** It is not your sympathy that we want. We want your respect, criticism, engagement and ideas, but not sympathy. We want to deliver on our shared objectives. The Committee, in the main, has been studiously internationalist in its outlook, which is what the Foreign Office is, and that is the sort of shared interest that we have and the basis on which I have always enjoyed working with the Committee. Thank you for the way in which you have worked with us.

**Chairman:** Foreign Secretary, before we conclude I want to place on the record the thanks of this Committee and our staff for the co-operation that we have had from your Department—people abroad and in this country—over the period of this Committee. We have not concluded our work yet. We have three significant reports that we will be publishing before we finish, one of which will address directly the issues that you and Mr. Mackinlay have just been talking about. I am confident that our successor Committee, whoever is on it in the next Parliament, will continue to pursue the scrutiny function of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, hopefully as effectively or more effectively than we have done. Thank you and Ms Pierce for coming today.

**David Miliband:** Okay. Thanks a lot.

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# Written evidence

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## Letter to the Chairman from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs

Thank you for your letter of 1 December 2009 regarding the Government's response to the Foreign Affairs Committee's Report, *Global Security: Afghanistan and Pakistan*. Our comments on each of the specific issues you raise are set out below. Quotes from your letter are written in italics, and our response is in plain text.

1. *The proposal in paragraphs 126 and 129 that the UK should relinquish the role of lead partner nation on counter-narcotics (If the Government rejects this recommendation, the Committee considers that it should give a statement of reasoning as to why the UK continues to feel that it should retain this role)*

The UK's "Partner Nation" status with Afghanistan on counter-narcotics is scheduled to come to an end in 2011. In view of this, Ministers, at NSID, have directed officials to work with the Government of Afghanistan to form a new partnership to lead the fight against drugs in Afghanistan. The UK is working with the US and other international partners to ensure that the Government of Afghanistan (supported by the UN Office for Drugs and Crime) has the capacity to take the lead on counter-narcotics in Afghanistan.

We should be clear, however, that the timescales to affect sustainable reductions in opium cultivation and trafficking are long. Experience in Pakistan and Thailand show that a 15-20 year effort is required. The UK, alongside the US, UN and other international partners, will continue to play an important role in supporting the Government of Afghanistan's counter-narcotics efforts.

2. *The conclusion in paragraph 225 that "there has been significant 'mission creep' in the British deployment in Afghanistan".*

We have always been clear that the reason we went into Afghanistan was to protect Britain's national security. This remains our mission today. As the Prime Minister has said, "Our aim in 2009 is the same as in 2001. We are in Afghanistan as a result of a hard-headed assessment of the terrorist threat facing Britain". The Prime Minister has made clear on numerous occasions that our strategy is for British forces to remain in Afghanistan until the Afghan Government is able to maintain a stable security situation and the rule of law. This has not changed since we entered Afghanistan.

3. *The conclusion in paragraph 236 that the British deployment to Helmand was undermined by unrealistic planning at senior levels, poor co-ordination between Whitehall departments and a failure to provide the military with clear direction*

The decision to deploy to Helmand was taken by Ministers on the basis of cross-departmental advice. As the UK presence in Helmand was established and our understanding of the operating environment improved, we developed our force structures and dispositions accordingly. But the nature of the problems we are trying to tackle in Helmand in particular, the international coalition of which we are a part, and the ability of the insurgency to adapt and adjust to our actions made, continue to make this a challenging task.

*David Miliband*

*4 January 2010*

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## Written evidence submitted by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office

### LONDON CONFERENCE UPDATE

1. Afghanistan: The London conference took place on 28 January 2010, and covered three key areas: security, governance and economic development, and regional co-operation and international architecture. The more than 70 countries and international organisations present agreed a final Communiqué document which included the following commitments:

- To develop a plan for phased transition to Afghan security lead province by province to begin, provided conditions are met, by late 2010/early 2011;
- Targets for significant increases in the Afghan Army and Police Force supported by the international community: 171,000 Afghan Army and 134,000 Afghan Police by the end of 2011;

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- Measures to tackle corruption, including the establishment of an independent Office of High Oversight and an ad hoc independent Monitoring and Evaluation Mission;
  - Better co-ordinated development assistance to be increasingly channelled through the Afghan Government, supported by reforms to structures and budgets;
  - A civilian surge to match the military surge, including new civilian leadership of the international community's programmes, with the appointment of Mark Sedwill, previously British Ambassador to Afghanistan, as NATO's Senior Civilian Representative, a new UN Special Representative of the Secretary General (Staffan di Mistura) to take over from Kai Eide in March;
  - Enhanced sub-national government to improve delivery of basic services to all Afghans;
  - Support for the Afghan Government's national Peace and Reintegration Programme, including financial support for a Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund, to offer economic alternatives to those who renounce violence, cut links to terrorism and agree to work within the democratic process;
  - Work to ensure the integrity of the 2010 Parliamentary elections and to prevent any irregularities and misconduct. The Afghan Government will also work closely with the UN to build on the lessons learned from the 2009 elections to deliver improvements to the electoral process in 2010 and beyond; and
  - Support for increased regional co-operation including looking forward to Afghanistan and its regional partners developing and further co-ordinating regional initiatives.

2. The aim of the conference was to align the military and civilian resources of every coalition partner behind a clear political strategy, to help President Karzai and his Government deliver the ambitious agenda that he set out in his inaugural speech last November. The themes of mutual responsibility, Afghan and international, and of unity behind a clear plan came through very strongly.

3. There was clear consensus on the outcomes across the international community, and key now is delivery. Work is ongoing in Kabul to transform these commitments into tangible results. The next step to assess delivery against these commitments will be at the proposed Kabul conference later in the spring.

#### SECURITY UPDATE (MINISTRY OF DEFENCE LEAD)

4. There is no doubt that the security situation remains difficult, particularly in southern Afghanistan. The UK, as part of ISAF, continues to work with the Afghan National Security Forces to improve security for the Afghan people. ISAF has prioritised southern Afghanistan, as has been made clear through Operation Moshtarak, undertaken in partnership between ISAF and Afghan forces, and NATO's largest military mission since 2001.

5. 2009 was a year of decision-making, both within Afghanistan and the wider international community, as we decided on the resources requested by the Commander of ISAF. Since December 2009, nearly 40,000 new troops have been pledged to ISAF. Of these, the US are providing 30,000 and the remainder come from 15 countries. The majority of the US troops will be deployed in southern Afghanistan. Of the non-US forces the UK and Romania are significantly increasing our presence in Regional Command (South) with 500 and 600 troops respectively and Georgia intend to deploy around 700 troops with the US in RC(S) in 2010. The full laydown of additional troops has not yet been finalised, but we expect contributing countries to deepen their presence around their existing deployments throughout Afghanistan.

6. The Government of Afghanistan has prioritised sending new troops to the areas in which the insurgency is most active, in particular Helmand province. They are currently in the process of deploying these additional troops as they complete their training, and we expect their deployment to be completed within the first half of 2010.

7. At the London conference the international community endorsed ISAF developing a plan for phased transition to Afghan security lead province by province to begin, provided conditions are met, by late 2010/early 2011. We are working in partnership with the Afghan National Security Forces to ensure that they have the capability to take the lead in providing security and meet these conditions.

8. With the growing capability of the Afghan National Security Forces we should see an increase in the leadership of the Afghans in security throughout the country. In Helmand, successful military operations by ISAF and Afghan Security Forces have allowed more of the Province to come under the control of the Afghan Government. Operation Panther's Claw brought security to 80,000 people and allowed reconstruction and development teams to begin work in the Babaji area. The area in which Operation Panther's Claw was conducted is already showing the signs of success. Check Points and Patrol Bases have been created helping the Afghan Government, through the Afghan National Security Forces with ISAF support, establish their permanent presence in the area and work against the return of insurgents. Shuras are now being held throughout the area, demonstrating the ability of local elders and leaders to hold and attend local governance meetings in public. Civil effect is taking place in the Babaji area including a school refurbishment project, the development of health centres and alternative livelihoods programme, for example wheat seeds to replace opium.

### *Operation Moshtarak*

9. Building from Operation Panther's Claw, one of the main focuses for ISAF has been the need to bring security to the full Central Helmand Valley. That is the aim of Operation Moshtarak. It is an international mission involving ANSF and ISAF (US, UK, Danish and Estonian) forces working in partnership. The Afghan Government and Armed Forces have been fully involved in planning this operation and the Afghan National Security Forces are playing a leading role in its conduct. Operation Moshtarak will extend the authority of the Afghan Government in central Helmand, removing the largest remaining safe havens in the area for the Taliban, insurgents and narco-criminals. It will improve freedom of movement along key transport arteries, critical to the local economy. Immediate stabilisation activities will follow on as soon as possible after the clear phase of the operations. This 'hot stabilisation' will roll directly into longer-term stabilisation and development activity.

### REINTEGRATION AND RECONCILIATION UPDATE

10. At the London conference, President Karzai pledged to establish a National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Reintegration. This received widespread support from the international community in attendance. He set out the next step in this process—the convening of a Peace Jirga by the Afghan Government. This will be a further opportunity for the Afghan Government to secure the support of key constituencies in the Afghan population, including tribal leaders from across the country.

11. The international community also announced its intention to support Afghan-led reintegration efforts by establishing a Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund at the conference. So far, over £100m has been pledged to the Fund, including substantial contributions from Japan, Germany, Australia, Spain, Greece, and £5m from the UK. Several other countries have also committed to provide funding, without specifying a sum. We hope that the Afghan-led reintegration programme can be launched at the Kabul conference later in the spring, and we are continuing to work with our partners to ensure the fund is fully resourced.

12. The reintegration programme will be led by the Afghan Government. The UK, alongside international partners, is working closely with the Afghan Government to help them define how the programme will operate. Ensuring co-ordination at the national level, effective delivery of the programme to districts and communities, developing monitoring and oversight mechanisms, and preventing corruption are all the subject of this work.

### GOVERNANCE UPDATE

#### *Elections*

13. Presidential and Provincial Council elections took place in Afghanistan on 20 August 2009. In contrast to the 2004–05 elections, the organisation of the elections was Afghan-led, primarily through the Independent Elections Commission (IEC). The election was held under difficult circumstances and was by no means perfect, but it was credible—allowing the political will of the Afghan people to be clearly expressed and a President to be chosen. After fraudulent votes were investigated and removed by the Afghan Independent Election Commission (IEC) and Election Complaints Commission, the final IEC figures showed that 65,489 people had voted in Helmand. For the whole of Afghanistan 4,597,727 votes were cast. Millions of Afghans across the country also voted in the Provincial Council elections, held the same day.

14. After fraudulent ballots had been removed the results showed President Karzai in first place with 2,283,907 votes (a 49.67% share), Dr Abdullah Abdullah in second with 1,406,242 votes (30.59%) and Ramazan Bashardost in third with 481,072 votes (10.46%). The Afghan Constitution states that if no candidate receives over 50% of the votes, a second round run-off election should be held, where the top two candidates go head to head. But before the second round could go ahead, Dr Abdullah pulled out of the race, leaving President Karzai as the only candidate. The IEC therefore declared President Karzai the winner.

15. In Helmand, Engineer Hadi, the Provincial IEC officer, was responsible for planning and implementation. All 107 polling centres in Helmand opened and remained open all day. ANSF, supported by ISAF, led the largely effective election security operation. Several indirect fire attacks during the morning likely had some impact on turnout, but the insurgency failed to significantly disrupt the election. The expansion of Afghan Government control to formerly Taliban-held areas west and south of Lashkar Gah (including Babaji, Nawa and Now Zad) in the months running up to the election enabled the location of polling centres across 11 of the 13 Districts in the Province. Many Helmandis defied intimidation to vote. However, the Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) identified some instances of electoral fraud and manipulation across Helmand.

16. The newly elected Helmand Provincial Council met for the first time in January. Four of the 15 members are female (including the Secretary of the Council). The Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) meets regularly with the Council, and will work with the four new Council sub-committees covering finance, development, security and education.

17. The Afghan Independent Electoral Commission postponed the Parliamentary elections under Article 55 of Afghan electoral law. They cited a lack of funding, as well as security concerns and logistical difficulties, as the reason for the delay. The extended timetable should allow the Afghan Government the time to consider and implement the necessary reforms to build on the lessons of the 2009 elections to meet our shared aim of a more robust electoral process going forward. At the London conference the Afghan Government committed to ensuring the integrity of the 2010 Parliamentary elections, rescheduled to be held in September, and to delivering improvements to the electoral process. We, along with other international partners and the UN, will look to provide support for credible, fair and robust elections in 2010.

#### *Building sub-national governance*

18. Increasing the visibility of Central and Provincial government in Districts has been critical to the international community's politically driven approach to counter-insurgency, helping to strengthen the population's belief that local, provincial and national government structures are more capable and responsive than any alternative offered by the insurgency. The Helmand PRT has helped support two key initiatives in this area: the Afghan-led Afghan Social Outreach Programme (ASOP), and the District Delivery Programme (DDP)

19. ASOP aims to better connect the Afghan Government to its people through the establishment of district level Community Councils. These Councils are elected from representative local caucuses of community elders by secret ballot. In Helmand the programme has been led by Provincial Governor Mangal, and managed by local Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) staff, with training, mentoring, and funding from the Provincial Reconstruction Team.

20. ASOP was inaugurated in Helmand in January 2009 when the first Community Council was established in Nad Ali in the wake of Operation Sond Chara. Councils were subsequently set up in Garmsir (March), Gereshk (May) and most recently in Nawa (October). The rollout of the programme has been conditions-based: a supportive and effective District Governor is a pre-requisite.

21. The Community Council acts as a bridge between the local community and the Afghan Provincial Government, representing community positions to the provincial government and conveying information from the government to local communities. Each Council has three sub-committees: Security, Justice and Economic, and Social Development, working to an overall Community Plan for their district. Other Community Council achievements to date include resolving local disputes over commercial property, land and irrigation issues; facilitating compensation claims for local people and supporting wheat seed distribution. Community Councils have proven to be effective precursors to a future nation-wide system of elected District Councils which is set out in the Constitution. The success of the Helmand pilot is reflected in the fact that nine other provinces including Kandahar are now planning to roll out ASOP Community Councils.

22. The District Delivery Programme is a new Afghan Government-directed initiative to enable the delivery of responsive and effective basic services in 80 critical Districts across Afghanistan. The Helmand PRT is supporting Afghan Government in launching the first ever DDP in Nad Ali District over the coming weeks, following up on the clear phase of Operation Moshtarak. DDP has a strong emphasis on community participation, supporting the District Government in producing a fully-budgeted District Plan in co-operation with Provincial and Central government. The DDP also aims to ensure line Ministry representation in Districts. If successful, this DDP should act as a model for rollout more widely in Helmand and Afghanistan.

23. London conference outcomes on governance focussed on improving sub-national governance through capacity building national civilian institutions, approval of the IDLG's policy on sub-national governance and preparation of implementing legislation in advance of the Kabul conference.

#### *The Justice system*

24. Working closely in support of Afghan Government partners, the PRT has helped deliver progress in the formal and informal justice sectors over the past six months. We estimate that over 90% of justice in Afghanistan is delivered through the informal system and it is vital for the international community to engage actively here, especially in developing linkages with the formal system. District Prosecutors are now present in four District Centres, bringing the formal justice sector to these communities. The PRT is also working with the Afghan authorities to ensure that insurgency-related cases are dealt with fairly and promptly through a strengthened Afghan legal system.

25. On the informal justice side, four Justice Sub-Committees (JSCs) have been established under the ASOP Community Councils. JSCs have established themselves as "go-to" fora for low-level justice in their respective communities, and are effectively linked in to the District and Provincial justice architecture. The PRT has supported basic human and land rights training of members of the JSCs. And the presence of women on the Gereshk JSC has enabled ordinary women to approach the committee with their disputes—mainly on divorce or forced marriage.

26. Prisoner Review Shuras have proven a valuable tool in reducing both arbitrary detention and unlawful release. They represent an intersection between the formal and informal justice sectors in that they use a traditional forum (the shura) while involving the statutory agencies (Afghan National Army, Afghan National Police, National Directorate of Security), as well as community representatives where elected.

27. The PRT has supported the International Legal Foundation—Afghanistan (ILF-A); an international organisation providing free legal defence to citizens with legal disputes. ILF-A employs the only two defence lawyers in Helmand province. Separately, the PRT, working through Action Aid in partnership with the United Nations Development Fund for Women, organised paralegal training for the Independent Commission for Women and Children's Rights, Helmand's only independent women's organisation. This aimed to create a primary, community-based, legal information and referral service to families in the Lashkar Gah area, with planned outreach to outlying districts including Nad Ali.

28. Maintaining progress on justice provision remains essential to effective counter-insurgency in Helmand. The PRT continues to support Provincial Government in building on and institutionalising organic Afghan structures, while strengthening the links to and capacity of the formal system.

#### *Counter-Narcotics*

29. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) confirmed a 22% fall in opium poppy cultivation in 2009 (down to 123,000ha)—including a 33% fall in Helmand—following the 19% decrease in 2008. The number of poppy free provinces rose to 20.

30. The UNODC's Winter Rapid Assessment suggests that levels of opium cultivation will be stable this year. Our own research corroborates this. Despite a dramatic fall in the price of licit crops (primarily wheat), early indications are that farmers are choosing not to return to opium poppy cultivation. The UNODC has assessed that farmers are responding to improvements in governance and security (with significantly less poppy cultivation in areas where the Government of Afghanistan is in control).

31. Helmand's PRT-supported Governor-led Food Zone Programme, the only Provincial counter-narcotics strategy in Afghanistan, helped deliver a 33% reduction in poppy cultivation in 2009—an achievement for which Governor Mangal received an award of \$10 million under the national Good Performers Initiative in November 2009. The Food Zone programme has allowed the Provincial Government to demonstrate its ability to deliver real benefits to the Helmandi population. In its second year, the programme has already delivered wheat seed and fertiliser to almost 40,000 farmers, and fruit saplings and grapevines to 1,200 farmers, across several districts. Around 27,000 farmers will also shortly receive summer vegetable seeds and forage crops. Governor Mangal has personally led Counter-Narcotics shuras, as part of a wider public information effort. Governor-led eradication of poppy grown in Food Zone areas began on 15 February.

*18 February 2010*

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#### **Letter to the Chairman from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs**

In your letter of 3 February to Bob Ainsworth, Secretary of State for Defence, you asked the Ministry of Defence for further information on the Kajaki dam project in southern Afghanistan. Mr Mackinlay also raised the issue during your Global Security: Afghanistan and Pakistan inquiry evidence session of 24 February, and I undertook to supply further details to the Committee on this point. I am now responding on behalf of all Departments with an interest in this project.

Our strategy in Afghanistan continues to be centred on the population of Afghanistan and on empowering its people to provide security for themselves. The Kajaki dam project in Helmand is financed by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and managed from their Office of Infrastructure, Engineering and Energy at the US Embassy in Kabul. The delivery of the extra turbine to the Kajaki dam was seen as a key element in the economic development of southern Afghanistan. It had always been the intention to repair the dam and install the third turbine as soon as practically possible. Close partnership between USAID and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) was required to deliver the third turbine, as well as other critical materials for the repair of existing structures at the dam. The additional electricity, which the extra turbine will produce, will be for residents, industries and commerce.

Ministers and senior officials in the Ministry of Defence were fully informed of the planning and progress of Operation Oqab Tsuka to deliver a third turbine to Kajaki dam in the summer of 2008. The decisions on detailed planning and timing of the Operation were, however, taken by ISAF Commanders on the ground, under the direction of the Commander of ISAF. This is standard practice for military operations. The UK Task Force led Operation Oqab Tsuka and contributed around 2,000 troops. A further 2,000 troops from the USA, Denmark, Canada and Australia took part in the operation alongside troops from the Afghan National Army. The mission involved delivering a hydro-electric turbine 180 kilometres by road from Kandahar Airfield to the Kajaki dam. The operation was conducted over 12 days, between 28 August and 8 September 2008. The convoy took six days to deliver the turbine and six days to return to Kandahar. Sadly, one Canadian soldier was killed and four UK personnel were injured during the operation.

USAID has now completed the rehabilitation of the two existing Kajaki dam hydroelectric turbines, restoring them to their full operational capacity. The Kajaki dam is today providing approximately 33 megawatts of electricity which is enough electricity for about 200,000 people, compared to just 16 megawatts in early 2008. USAID remains committed to installing the third turbine at Kajaki which would increase the generation capacity to 51 megawatts, and to constructing a new transmission line from Kajaki to Kandahar when the security situation allows.

I am copying this letter to the Secretary of State for Defence and the Secretary of State for International Development.

*David Miliband*

*4 March 2010*

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#### **Letter to the Chairman from the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs**

I greatly appreciated the opportunity to give evidence to the FAC on the Government's policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. I felt it was a valuable session which covered a lot of ground. There were several points I undertook to follow up for you.

##### **KAJAKI DAM**

I recently wrote to you on behalf of all Departments with an interest in the project to explain departmental involvement and decision-making in relation to Kajaki. This information was intended to address the issues raised by Mr Mackinlay during the evidence session.

##### **REINTEGRATION TRUST FUND**

Mr Heathcoat-Amory asked for more details on arrangements for the Reintegration Trust Fund announced at the London conference. At the conference, President Karzai set out his commitment to establish a National Council for Peace, Reconciliation and Reintegration. This Council will implement a programme to reach out to elements of the insurgency and reintegrate them into normal life, providing they are prepared to renounce violence, cut ties to Al Qaeda or other terrorist networks, and live within the Afghan constitutional framework. It was complemented by the announcement of a plan to set up the Peace and Reintegration Trust Fund, which was widely supported at the conference.

We are working with the Afghan Government to determine how the programme and Trust Fund will work, including mechanisms for effective monitoring and evaluation. The aim is for the programme to be ready for launch at the Kabul conference, supported by an accountable international fund. We have sought professional advice from Adam Smith International on how the fund should operate.

##### **HIGH OFFICE OF OVERSIGHT**

Mr Heathcoat-Amory also asked about progress in strengthening and giving independence to the High Office of Oversight (HOO), following commitments at the London conference. The Afghan Government has drafted two decrees designed to do just that, for example by creating new corruption-related offences and giving the HOO a role in investigation and prosecution. These are currently undergoing a process of consultation among the relevant Afghan Government agencies and we are pressing the Government to ensure the final products reflect the commitments entered into at London.

Another important element of the fight against corruption is the effort to develop an 'end-to-end' justice system—building Afghan capacity at the investigation, prosecution, trial and detention stages. The UK has made an important contribution to this effort, helping establish both the Criminal Justice and Major Crimes Task Forces, and providing support to Anti-Corruption prosecutors in the Attorney General's Office.

##### **BBC WORLD SERVICE**

You asked about BBC World Service Urdu services. The BBC World Service has a strong radio and online presence in Pakistan. It currently produces three hours of radio daily in Urdu and has a 24/7 multimedia news online service (the largest Urdu news site in the world). It has a global weekly radio audience of 10.6 million (of which 9.2 million are in Pakistan). The BBC World Service is currently considering the arguments in favour of an Urdu TV service, but any decision will, of course, be dependent on funding. We have regular discussions with the BBC World Service about all their current and future plans.

I trust that you will find this further information useful.

*David Miliband*

*13 March 2010*

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