Key events

- A suicide attacker detonated explosives on 12 April near major political offices in the Afghan capital of Kabul, killing at least five civilians and injuring 10 others. The attack took place near the Administrative Office of the President and the Ministries of Defense and Finance. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility.

- Nine policemen were killed and five injured when the vehicle they were travelling in was struck by an improvised explosive device in northern Balkh province. The blast took place near Alborz mountain in Chamtal district on 8 April when the police entered an area they had retaken from the Taleban.

- An American soldier was killed in combat in eastern Nangarhar province. The soldier was a member of US special operations forces helping Afghan troops combat IS militants in Achin district, where he stepped on a roadside bomb.

National overview

A new report released by the International Crisis Group this week concluded that the future of Afghanistan’s unity government is precarious. The Brussels based NGO states Afghanistan’s New Unity Government is beset with internal disagreements and discord, while facing a revived insurgency. The unity government was formed following a power-sharing agreement negotiated by the US that provides a government framework and, according to the ICG, the agreement has resulted in “widely diverging interpretations” of the government’s powers and authority. The report goes on to conclude that President Ghani and CEO Abdullah have been vying for power, with both sides attempting to fill civil and military posts with their supporters, mostly on ethnic grounds; Ghani favors Pashtuns and Abdullah favors Tajiks. The row has led to delays in promised electoral reforms and parliamentary elections. It also led to a lack of leadership in addressing major challenges facing the government. In wider developments Afghanistan’s ambassador to the US said this week that Afghanistan’s military should be able to carry on the fight against Taleban insurgents mostly without the help of US and other foreign troops by 2020, at which point Afghan forces will have the necessary skills and equipment to conduct their own operations. Even if Afghan forces are mostly self-sufficient they will likely require international financial support for many years. The United States provides the bulk of the foreign aid, including $67 billion since 2005 just to build up the Afghan security force. It currently has 350,000 members, including the police and army.
Significant Events 6 – 12 Apr 2017
Afghanistan Weekly Report

Nangarhar, 8 April 2017:
An American soldier was killed in combat in the eastern Nangarhar province. The soldier was a member of US special operations forces helping Afghan troops battle IS militants in the Achin district, where he stepped on a roadside bomb.

Kabul, 12 April 2017:
A suicide attacker detonated explosives on 12 April near major political offices in the Afghan capital of Kabul, killing at least five civilians and injuring 10 others. The attack took place near the Administrative Office of the President and the ministries of defense and finance. The Islamic State group claimed responsibility.

Helmand, 12 April 2017:
At least 10 Taleban militants were killed during an ongoing military operation in Helmand province. 14 others were injured during the offensive in the Aynak area of Nawa district. Among the killed militants was a local Taleban leader named Zia-ul-Haq.

Balkh, 8 April 2017:
Nine policemen were killed and five injured when the vehicle they were travelling in was struck by an improvised explosive device in northern Balkh province. The blast took place near Alborz mountain in Chamtal district on 8 April when the police entered an area they had retaken from the Taleban.
Central

- **Musahi District:** 12 Apr 17, The Haqani Network commander named Mullah Fazel Rahman plan to in the upcoming days to carry out rocket attacks over the HQ command of the mentioned district.

- **Kabul City:** 12 Apr 17, A suicide attacker named Qari Paghmani, is now in Chahar Rahi Qambar region with a vehicle full of explosives related located in Saraki Qargha areas. The other suicide attacker is now in PD -5 areas called Company region, plan to carry out explosion attacks in Kabul city.

East

- **Jalalabad City:** 12 Apr 17, Taleban commanders ready (03) suicide attackers along with a Saracha type vehicle with blue color packed with explosive materials placed in Char Dehi village plan to conduct VBIED and suicide attack inside the mentioned city.

- **Hesarak District:** 12 Apr 17, Taleban shadow governor named Malawi Abdullah known as Badlon ordered to other Taleban commanders named Ezat, Malawi Aminullah, Nik Mohammad led by Malawi Mohammad plan to conduct aggressive attack on HQ and security CPs of the mentioned District.

North

- **Pul-e Khumri City:** 12:25L, 12 Apr 17, Baghlan Provincial HQ reported: The Taleban team lead named Qari Sayed Jan, and Majid Akhunda Zada plan with some of the INS to carry you out mass attack at night on new base located in Bandi Dowom and Shahabudin areas of the mentioned district.

- **Kunduz City:** 12 Apr 17, A number of armed Taleban placed and settled around the city of Kunduz province plan to carry out attacks in a proper time over the HQ command.

West

- **Kohsan District:** 12 Apr 17, Taleban shadow governor named Mullah Nasim, Mullah Dawood Taleban intelligence responsible along with a huge number of armed men equipped with DShk, Rocket launcher, PKM, Ak-47 and some different kinds of vehicles gathered in Islam Qala area of the mentioned District, plan to conduct aggressive attack on ANSF in the highway of Herat- Islam Qala.

- **Karukh District:** 12 Apr 17, Taleban shadow governor named Mullah Karim along with (20) armed individuals including Badghis province Taleban equipped with Dshk, Rocket launcher, PKM, Ak-47 and some different kinds of vehicles and motorcycles entered to Armluq and Qala Shariat areas of the mentioned District, plan to conduct aggressive attack on ANSF around the district.

South

- **Shah Wali Kot District:** 12 Apr 17, Taleban commander named Hamidi resident of Pakistan claimed that recently about (15) Emirates justice Commission Taleban entered to the mentioned District, plan to arrange meeting and give new ideas to the other Taleban individual how to accelerate their activities against government.

- **Marjah District:** 12 Apr 17, A group of the Taleban under the command of Mullah Besmel placed and settled in the house of Ghafoor called E5 Block, the mentioned INS plan to attacks over the security CPs located in Dar Ab Charahi areas.
Kabul's security environment continues to be fragile in the aftermath of the attacks on a parliament convoy, police headquarters and a military hospital and the apparent unpreparedness of the relevant authorities. In addition, Afghan legislators in the Upper House of Parliament-Senate House this week voiced their concerns over the sharp rise of criminal cases in the capital. The senators added that armed gangs are becoming increasingly bolder in their robberies and residential break-ins. This week at least five people were killed when a suicide bomber on foot carried out an attack in the capital Kabul on 12 April. At least 10 others were wounded in the blast, for which the Islamic State group claimed responsibility. The assault took place near the country’s Defense Ministry compound, as well as a city police station. The bomber detonated his vest approximately 100m from the gate of the Presidential Palace and close to where the Afghan Finance Ministry is located. The incident, which took place in the second police district, occurred at the end of the working day when most government employees working inside the palace and the ministry were leaving. On the same day, a magnetic IED attached to an ANP vehicle detonated in the Joy Shir area of the second police district, wounding a soldier. Last month around 50 people were killed after militants stormed a military hospital in Kabul; that attack was also claimed by IS. The group’s emergence in Afghanistan and its ability to launch such attacks raised further concerns in a country already struggling to deal with an offensive by the Taliban. Elsewhere unidentified gunmen opened fire on personnel of the General Directorate of Serious Crimes in the fifth police district. The two policemen were ambushed killed on 11 April. In a separate incident in PD-5 unidentified assailants killed an officer in the Kariz Campany area on the same day.
One insurgent was killed and four others injured in Wardak province. The blast took place in the Pol Surkh area of the capital Maidan Shahr on 8 April while the militants were attempting to plant an IED in the area. Elsewhere in Wardak an Afghan Local Police vehicle struck an IED in Sayyidabad district on 10 April; three officers were injured. Meanwhile in the Jaghatu district, an IED blast targeted Afghan National Army personnel in the Karezak area on 12 April, killing one ANA soldier and wounding another. Several IED explosions were also reported in Parwan province. On 9 April, an IED detonated in Bagram as National Directorate of Security personnel were lowering an insurgent flag in the Qalah Nasroa area; one NDS operative was injured as a result. Similarly in the Charikar district an IED exploded in the Pashyan area on 11 April, wounding one civilian. East of Wardak, Logar province recorded a drop in violent activity with a single hostile incident recorded in the Muhammad Agha district, where insurgents opened fire on APPF personnel on 12 April, killing one officer.

In Bamyan province a gas balloon accidentally exploded at a restaurant in the provincial capital on 9 April, causing casualties and significant material damage. 22 civilians were injured as a result of the blast, and AFG400,000 worth of damage was incurred.
With the Taleban spring offensive expected to begin in earnest this month, the security situation in northern Afghanistan is more alarming than it was in the spring of 2016. Last week the Taleban published a map showing what they claim is territory where they exert influence, and while the group is known to exaggerate its claims, the map corresponds with assessments of contested areas or those with a Taleban presence. The Taleban is not the only militant group present in northern Afghanistan; the increased presence of IS militants has been a significant factor in the deterioration of security in the region.

Officials said this week a group of children were playing with an unexploded mortar round when it blew up, killing four of them. The blast took place on 11 April in the Chahardara district of Kunduz province. Six other children were wounded as a result. Afghanistan is littered with unexploded munitions left over from decades of war, which along with roadside bombs kill or wound an estimated 140 people every month. Separately a man threw a grenade at another man near a bus stand on the outskirts of Kunduz city, injuring 11 people. West of Kunduz a roadside bomb on 8 April killed nine security forces and wounded several others in the Chimtal district of Balkh province, where they were waging an ongoing operation against the Taleban. Five insurgents were killed and dozens wounded. In a separate incident Islamic State militants attacked the Darzab district headquarters in the neighboring Jawzjan province on the same day, and gun battles are still underway. Provincial security officials have asked for further reinforcements as well as air support. Islamic State fighters also launched an assault on security positions in the Mughal village of Darzab.
An American Special Forces soldier was killed in Nangarhar province during a joint operation with Afghan forces against affiliates of the Islamic State. The death was the first American casualty in Afghanistan from hostile fire since the beginning of the year. The operation on 8 April happened in the Achin district, which has remained the hotbed of an Islamic State affiliate even as operations by Afghan and American forces have struck heavy blows to the group in neighboring areas. A spokesman for the Afghan commando forces said the American soldier was accompanying Afghan special forces in an operation in Shadal Bazaar and he was mortally wounded by a roadside bomb. Tribal elders say in Shadal Bazaar said the area had been the front line of fighting, but the Islamic State-affiliated fighters had been pushed back about six miles during operations in the past two weeks. 49 IS militants are reported to have been killed in Achin on 12 April as the operation, entitled "Hamza," continues in the restive district. In other developments a suicide bomber was killed in a failed attack in Nangarhar’s Ghani Khel district on 10 April. The assailant, driving an explosives-laden vehicle, was reportedly attempting to target a poppy elimination police force. The explosives detonated before he reached his target in the fifth police district of Ghani Khel. Security officials said the blast only killed the attacker and caused material damage to nearby cars. North of Nangarhar, seven Taleban militants were killed and two others injured during an operation on the outskirts of Laghman’s provincial capital Mehtarlam on 12 April. Afghan security forces are conducting operations in the Sultan, Maidano, and Ganjor areas of Mehtarlam, while in Dawlatabad district one policeman was killed and three others wounded by an IED blast.
Herat city remains relatively stable while Badghis and Farah continued to witness targeted assaults against security personnel this week. Sporadic SAF and criminal activity is expected to persist in Herat’s provincial capital, with the majority of attacks on security personnel likely to remain confined to the province’s southern districts. During the reporting period two students were killed and two others injured when a bomb detonated inside a religious seminary in the Farsi area of Herat province on 7 April. Security officials have not determined who planted the bomb, though they suspect people with links to the Taliban had been hiding explosives in the seminary for later use. In Shindand to the south, insurgents opened fire on an ANA soldier on 9 April, killing him instantly. Taliban militants frequently target security officials, military personnel, and police officers throughout the country. A threat report was issued on 1 April regarding a possible Taliban attack on Herat Airport and the UNAMA office in Guzra district; these attacks have not materialised and no further reports have been issued this week to suggest an imminent threat.

The Bala Murghab district of Badghis province witnessed elevated levels of violence this week, with six hostile incidents recorded during the reporting period. Insurgents targeted security positions across the district throughout the week, injuring two policemen but causing no fatalities. Meanwhile in Farah province militants shot and killed a policeman in the Bala Boluk district on 9 April, while in the capital Farah city an Afghan National Police officer was gunned down in the Khatiwan area on the same day.
Members of the Helmand provincial council this week raised concerns over the number of district governors and other civil servants who have left their posts owing to insecurity. The council members claim these government officials are instead managing their districts from the provincial capital Lashkargah, noting that if this persists the security situation in Helmand will deteriorate as more civilians turn to the Taleban to resolve their problems. Helmand local officials meanwhile confirmed these claims by the provincial council and said following the collapse of some parts of the province to the Taleban, a number of district governors and other government officials refused to resume work at their official offices. In other developments on 12 April at least 10 Taleban militants were killed during an ongoing military operation in Helmand province. 14 others were injured during the offensive in the Aynak area of Nawa district. Among the killed militants was a local Taleban leader named Zia-ul-Haq. Meanwhile in Uruzgan a person was killed and four other civilians sustained injuries when a rocket struck a house in Tarin Kot district. Officials have not yet ascertained who fired the missile, though local residents reported that security forces were responsible for the misfire during an operation in the Aab-e Barda area. To the east, an army battalion chief and a soldier were killed during clashes with Taleban militants in the Arghandab district of Zabul province on 12 April. Security officials confirmed the incident and said clashes are ongoing between Taleban militants and government forces. Elsewhere in Zabul two policemen were wounded in a separate Taleban attack on security positions in the area.
News Summary
Afghanistan Weekly Report

Politics & Security

- **Army Battalion Chief Killed In Zabul** – Tolo News – An army battalion chief and one soldier were killed during clashes with Taleban in Arghandab district of Zabul province on Wednesday, local officials said. Barat Khan, the Arghandab district governor, confirmed the incident and said the clash is ongoing between the Taleban and government forces. Meanwhile, in a separate Taleban attack, two policemen were wounded in Shahr-e-Safa district of Zabul province, officials said. There were no details on the Taleban casualties in either incident and the Taleban has not commented. Full Article

- **NATO reaffirms support to ensure peace and stability in Afghanistan** – Khaama Press – The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has reaffirmed continued support until peace and stability is ensured in Afghanistan. The commitment was made by Deputy NATO Senior Civilian Representative to Afghanistan cornelius zimmermann during a meeting with Interior Minister Taj Mohammad Jahid. He said the alliance is prepared to provide support in the framework of train, advise, and assist mission to the Afghan forces until stability is achieved in the country. In his turn, the Minister of Interior Taj Mohammad Jahid emphasized on the vital role of NATO’s support to the Afghan forces and said the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission consisting of train, advise, and assist mission has proven help for the Afghan forces. Full Article

- **NUG’s Power Dispute Risking Afghanistan’s Future: Report** – Tolo News – A new report issued this week by The International Crisis Group has found that two and a half years after it was created the future of the National Unity Government (NUG) is shaky, as is broader political stability. The report warned over the continuing disputes between President Ashraf Ghani and CEO Abdullah Abdullah and said that to avoid the collapse of the U.S-brokered NUG, both Ghani and Abdullah must end political partisanship and work together. “The NUG is beset with internal disagreements and discord and facing a resurgent insurgency. Several options are being discussed in Afghan and international circles for how best to tackle the political and constitutional tensions that, if left unresolved, would increase the risk of internal conflict and insecurity in an already fragile state,” the report stated adding that the “only promising way forward is for the two protagonists, Ghani and his CEO, Abdullah, to acknowledge that the stability of their government and country requires them to work together.” It said Ghani and Abdullah’s discord stems from the vagueness of the U.S-devised power-sharing agreement that frames the government and the widely diverging interpretations of their powers and authority. Full Article

Islamic State claims suicide bomb attack that kills five in Kabul – Reuters

Islamic State militants claimed responsibility for a suicide bomb attack on Wednesday near the Afghan Defence Ministry that killed at least five people. A statement by the Afghan Interior Ministry reported several more people were wounded, while a Defence Ministry spokesman said at least one civilian and two members of the Afghan security forces were among the casualties, adding that the target appeared to be a police post near military headquarters. Islamic State claimed responsibility in an online post. A police officer at the scene told Reuters the attack appeared to have been carried out by a suicide bomber on foot. A Reuters witness reported seeing several damaged cars, with possible injuries to the occupants. Last month, Islamic State fighters killed nearly 50 people when then stormed the main military hospital in Kabul. Islamic State's offshoot in Afghanistan, known as the Sunni jihadist group's so-called Khorasan Province, is suspected of carrying out several attacks on minority Shi'ite Muslim targets. U.S. officials say intelligence suggests Islamic State is based overwhelmingly in Nangarhar and neighbouring Kunar province. Full Article
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Economics & Business

- NATO pledges $2.7mn for reconstruction of military hospital in Kabul – Wadsam – The NATO-led Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan had pledged USD 2.7mn for the reconstruction of the Kabul military hospital which recently witnessed a six-hour siege that left at least 50 people dead. According to the Resolute Mission spokesperson Capt Bill Salvin, USD 1.7mn of the budget is allocated for new medical equipment and USD 1mn for new furnishings. The repair work of Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan has been completed by 90% after the attack. Capt Salvin said the alliance is paying for restoration of 50 rooms, two X-ray machines, seven monitors with server, new imaging units and lab equipment. He further added that the budget also covers the costs for overhauling the generators and repairing elevators. The upgrading of the two operating units, improvement of ICU monitoring and provision of high-tech equipment will further improve the hospital’s services. Gunmen disguised as medical personnel a military hospital near the US Embassy in Kabul last month. The ISIS-affiliated news agency Amaq said the terror group claimed responsibility for the attack near Kabul’s heavily fortified diplomatic quarter. Full Article

- Survey presents business opportunities in Afghanistan’s energy sector – Wadsam – The Afghan Renewable Energy Union (AREU) and the German Federal Association of the Solar Industry (BSW) presented a market survey for solar energy. The study describes business opportunities for private companies in the photovoltaic sector. The Afghan-German Cooperation’s program Institutional Development for Energy in Afghanistan (IDEA) facilitated the cooperation between AREU and BSW. Moreover, the German program provided professional advice to AREU. Afghanistan’s great potential for solar energy has been confirmed by a number of scientific studies. However, a comprehensive analysis of business opportunities has not yet been conducted. This new market study provides suggestions for private investments. Such investments would not only have a positive impact on the availability of electricity in the country, but would also result in the exploitation of business opportunities – creating jobs and income for the people. “Afghanistan is facing the challenge of using its domestic renewable energy resources to supply country’s demanded energy. Afghanistan will be able to produce up to 500 MW of renewable energy until 2020. The German Energy Program is committed to supporting the Afghan energy sector in achieving its goals,” said Robert Dilger from Afghan-German cooperation program for “Institutional Development for Energy in Afghanistan” (IDEA). Amanullah Ghalib, Deputy Minister of Ministry of Energy and Water appreciated the results of PV market research which was financially supported by Afghan-German Cooperation with the technical support from German Solar Association (BSW). Full Article

U.S. soldier killed in Afghanistan amid operations against Islamic State - U.S – Reuters

A U.S. soldier was killed while conducting operations against Islamic State in Afghanistan late on Saturday, a U.S. military spokesman said in a message posted on Twitter. "The soldier was mortally wounded late Saturday during an operation in Nangarhar Province" in eastern Afghanistan, U.S. Navy Captain Bill Salvin said in a message on the official Twitter account of the NATO-led Resolute Support mission. The soldier was a Special Forces operator, Salvin told Reuters separately. The circumstances of the death were unclear and Salvin said more information could be released later. Islamic State's offshoot in Afghanistan, known as the Sunni jihadist group's so-called Khorasan Province, is suspected of carrying out several attacks on minority Shi'ite Muslim targets. U.S. officials say intelligence suggests Islamic State is based overwhelmingly in Nangarhar and neighboring Kunar province. Estimates of its strength in Afghanistan vary. U.S. officials have said they believe the movement has only 700 fighters but Afghan officials estimate it has about 1,500. Full Article
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