

## THE UPCOMING U.S.-AFGHAN STRATEGIC AGREEMENT

- America's core objectives in the region require a secure and stable Afghanistan. This Fact Sheet details the negotiations leading to the signing of the strategic partnership agreement.
- By finalizing the strategic partnership agreement before the Chicago Summit, the U.S. has sent a strong signal to its international partners to offer firm commitments to support Afghanistan beyond 2014. While the United Kingdom recently announced its own concrete commitment, the U.S. will be counting on other coalition allies to announce similar commitments later this month.<sup>1</sup>
- Afghan President Hamid Karzai announced on March 11, 2012 that he would sign a strategic partnership agreement with the United States before the next NATO summit in May. Karzai's support for the strategic agreement demonstrates his recognition that a longer-term U.S.-Afghanistan relationship is vital, as Kabul will continue to rely heavily on international assistance after 2014.
- The strategic partnership agreement does not commit the U.S. to providing a specific amount of monetary assistance for Afghanistan, and Afghan National Security Advisor Rangin Dadfar Spanta said that Kabul and Washington will have the ability to extend or cancel the long agreement.<sup>2</sup> The agreement will also have to be approved by the Afghan Parliament before it will be considered "applicable."<sup>3</sup>
- The agreement provides both countries a chance to strengthen their ties, as the relationship was strained following the accidental burning of the Koran by U.S. personnel and the killing of Afghan civilians by a U.S. soldier.<sup>4</sup> By designating Afghanistan as a "major non-NATO ally," the U.S. will be able to provide financial support to sustain the Afghan government as well as its security forces. This agreement will establish the framework for doing so.<sup>5</sup>
- The most contentious issues between the U.S. and Afghan governments were addressed earlier this year in two "memorandums of understanding." The first established a process for transferring control of U.S. detention facilities to the Afghans.<sup>6</sup> The second established Afghan sovereignty over special operations raids primarily by creating a warrant-based system for authorizing the raids.<sup>7</sup> The signing of these two memorandums cleared the way for the strategic partnership agreement to enter final negotiations, which have now concluded.
- Karzai has also said that two issues that will not be included in the strategic agreement are basing rights and the number of international forces in Afghanistan after 2014. Karzai said both would continue to be negotiated and could take up to a year to resolve to "give adequate time to allow both sides to evaluate their responsibilities."<sup>8</sup>
- The United States will hold a presidential election in 2012, and Afghanistan will do the same in 2014. Regardless of the political landscape in both countries, Kabul will continue to rely on financial, political and military assistance from the U.S. and other Coalition nations. The United States' recent reaffirmation of its commitment to Afghanistan through a strategic partnership agreement will enable Washington to help sustain a stable and secure Afghanistan after the planned drawdown in 2014.

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## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> “Nato Finalises Budget for Funding Afghan Forces Post-2014,” TOLO News, April 19, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Zaheer, Abasin, “US monetary aid not clarified in accord: Spanta,” Pajhwok, April 23, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> “Afghan-US Pact Will Not Apply Until Parliament Approves,” TOLO News, April 23, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Shah, Amir, Sebastian Abbot, “Karzai tells NATO pull back, Taliban-US talks off,” Associated Press, March 15, 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Khalilzad, Zalmay, “Some Good News from Afghanistan,” Foreign Policy, April 23, 2012.

<sup>6</sup> “U.S., Afghanistan Agree to Turnover of Parwan Detention Facility,” International Security Assistance Force – Afghanistan, March 2012.

<sup>7</sup> “Afghanistan and US sign ‘night raid’ deal,” Al-Jazeera English, April 08, 2012.

<sup>8</sup> Samimi, Mir Agha, Zarghona Salehi, “Strategic pact with US excludes military bases: Karzai,” Pajhwok, March 11, 2012.