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Violence breaks out in Kyrgyzstan

By: Tanah Sullivan

Ethnic violence broke out on Thursday, June 10, 2010, in Osh, the second largest city in Kyrgyzstan. Initially, reports stated that the violence was between street gangs, and escalated into gun battle. However, new reports are now asserting that the riots were premeditated, with a declaration from the UN calling the fighting “orchestrated, targeted and well-planned”. Since Thursday, there has been a mass exodus of over 100 000 ethnic Uzbeks, and the government has declared a state of emergency in the city, prompting fears of a civil war. The area is known as a stronghold of the country's deposed president, Kurmanbek Bakiyev, before he was ousted from power in a mass revolt two months ago.

The worst ethnic violence to hit Central Asia in the last two decades, the ongoing instability has weakened the government's grip on power and threatens the referendum that was set for later this month. On Saturday, June 12, 2010, Kyrgyzstan's embattled interim government went to extreme lengths to stop the bloodshed in its second largest city, with police being ordered to shoot anyone threatening civilians amid the rising ethnic violence. Thousands of Uzbeks are fleeing Osh for Uzbekistan, and since the violence erupted late last week at least 189 have been killed and hundreds wounded.

Ethnic tension has been near boiling point in Osh since the toppling of Kyrgyzstan's President in April, 2010. Security personnel have been deployed, but have so far failed to control the violence. Realising the government's lack of control over the city, on June 12, 2010, interim Kyrgyz President Roza Otunbayeva made a plea to Moscow for “outside military forces to solve the situation”. On Wednesday, June 16, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov offered Moscow's assistance in identifying who initiated the violence. Moscow's help will come through the Collective Security Treaty Organisation, a group made up of regional post-Soviet nations. The Russian

Government originally had been unwilling to send in military troops, but did offer humanitarian aid. This was met with much protest from Kyrgyz residents in Moscow.

Concerns over the ethnic violence extend far beyond the city of Osh, as Kyrgyzstan is home to Russian and US military bases, the latter used to move key supplies into Afghanistan. A referendum on a new constitution had recently been held, and was planned to take effect in late June in the hope that it would usher in a new sense of stability. Instead, one of Kyrgyzstan's major cities is the scene of mob rule, and it seems that the already dire situation is only set to worsen.

[Kyrgyzstan killings attempted genocide: Uzbeks](#), [Dozens held amid fears of more unrest in Kyrgyzstan](#), [Kyrgyzstan riots premeditated](#), [Kyrgyzstan tensions high as aid arrives](#), [Three Russian aircraft with humanitarian aid arrive in Kyrgyzstan](#)

Iran Struggles over Fourth Round of U.N. Sanctions

By: Kirsty Hong

Contention over Iran's nuclear programme continues to mount as Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad insisted as recently as June 15, 2010 that the fuel exchange deal tabled last month is still in effect. The original fuel deal involving Turkey and Brazil would allow Iran to exchange 1,200kg of low-enriched uranium with Turkey in return for higher-enriched reactor fuel. The deal was meant to help "build confidence" in Iran's claim that its nuclear enrichment programme serves peaceful purposes.

However, the U.S. along with its Western allies and Russia and China argued that the fuel exchange deal was "too little too late." According to U.S. Defence Secretary Robert Gates, Iran could develop its first nuclear weapons within the next one to three years. As a result, the fourth round of U.N. sanctions against Iran's nuclear programme was pushed through in a majority vote 12 to 2 on the 9th of June. Turkey, who is a long-standing U.S. ally and NATO member, voted against the fourth round of U.N. sanctions along with Brazil (Lebanon abstained).

The new U.N. sanctions impose harsher measures on Iran's efforts to purchase and import heavy military weapons into the country. This includes the recent announcement by Moscow to halt the delivery of its S-300 missile defence system to Iran, a deal struck back in 2007. Further restrictions include tightening financial services on Iranian banks and insurance companies, as well as restricting shipping lines for Iran's state shipping company.

Sources: [Ahmadinejad says Iran nuclear fuel deal 'still alive'](#), [Putin says freezing missile sale to Iran: France](#), [Gates disappointed by Turkey vote on Iran sanctions](#), [A step away from the bomb](#)

Minerals worth estimated \$1 trillion discovered in Afghanistan

By: Tanah Sullivan

US geologists have discovered mineral deposits in Afghanistan worth over \$US 1 trillion, which could have far-reaching effects on the war-torn country. The discovery of minerals on June 15, 2010, of has brought the promise of not only economic development in the country but also fiscal stability and independence. However, extracting and protecting the resources from exploitation is going to prove the biggest challenge.

The minerals could produce a 'gold rush' that would help stabilize Afghanistan, facilitating the withdrawal of NATO troops. Yet many reports are portraying a global concern for the consequences of the 'resource curse' on the already fragile nation. Afghanistan has long been one of the poorest countries in the world, with two-thirds of the population living at or below the poverty line. The discovery of lithium, used to build computers and cell phones, copper and iron in a mine reportedly over a thousand years old would offer Afghanistan the change to revamp a crumbling infrastructure and create tens of thousands of jobs that could also deter many from joining the Taliban insurgency.

[Afghanistan asks India to prospect, extract minerals](#), [Afghanistan's newfound mineral wealth could further fuel conflict](#), [Afghanistan seeks bid to tap huge mineral wealth](#), [Mineral bonanza is bad news for Afghanistan](#), [Afghanistan hits the jackpot](#), [Afghanistan found to have large mineral assets](#), [Does the \\$1 trillion key to winning the Afghan war lie under the sand?](#)

Interview with Brigadier-General Jon Vance

By: Tanah Sullivan

On June 14, 2010, Brigadier-General Jon Vance, Canada's top commander in Afghanistan, gave his first interview since taking over the job from Brigadier-General Daniel Menard. He said that two key prongs of his strategy during his tour of duty in Afghanistan are gaining the confidence of the Afghan people and fighting the insurgency. Vance stated that over the course of the summer "more and more investment will be made in more and more places outside the city", and likened it to a "rising degree of pressure against insurgent influence, and a rising degree of confidence building measures". Vance described it as a "series of investments" against the insurgency that it would continue even beyond the summer, and that Canada's approach would require some 'tweaking'.

Canadian soldiers are also doing their part in the planned summer offensive by going door-to-door in Kandahar in hopes of gaining local support for their mission. Kandahar province is believed to be a Taliban-stronghold, and Canadian Unit Commander Wilson Taylor stated that the purpose of the patrol was to "get out into the community" and to inform the local population that "they do have power to stop this" by reporting incidents of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

[Insurgency will dissolve rather than be broken: Vance, Brig-Gen. Jon Vance steps back into the battlefield](#)

Insurgents Attack Girls' Schools

By: Tanah Sullivan

On Saturday, June 12, 2010, over 40 girls from *Jahan-e-Malika* high school in Ghazni province were taken to hospital after becoming ill from a suspected gas poisoning attack. Dr. Ziagul Esfandi from the provincial health department said they were hospitalized, but are now in stable condition. There have been similar cases of illness at schools around Afghanistan, with suspected militants spraying schools with poison gas in opposition to education for girls.

On Sunday, June 13, 2010, 60 school girls from Afghanistan's Balkh province were also poisoned and required hospitalization. There have been three gas attacks on girls' schools this week, and is the most recent example of the victimization of children as conflict escalates between the Afghan Government and the Taliban. On Saturday, June 12, 2010, the media reported that a seven year old boy was hanged for allegedly being a spy for NATO forces.

Reports are speculating that the Taliban are sending a message through the targeting of children and women in local communities, essentially "killing the country's future". However, reports out of Afghanistan are saying that the overwhelming majority of Afghans believe in and support education for girls, a goal which Canadian troops have worked towards by assisting the Afghan National Army (ANA) with training and mentoring so as to ensure they can protect and defend universal access to primary education.

[Taliban hang 7 year old boy accused of being a spy](#), [Seven year old boy hanged by Taliban for 'spying'](#), [School poisoning affects 59 Afghan students](#), [20 Afghan girls ill after suspected poisoning](#), [Afghan girls sick in 'gas attack'](#), [Afghan girls hit again by suspected gas attack](#)

Afghanistan Top Foreign Policy Issue Says UK's David Cameron

By: Monika Wyrzykowska

On Thursday, June 10th, new British Prime Minister David Cameron held talks with Afghan President Hamid Karzai during his first official visit to Afghanistan. Cameron, whose coalition government took power last month, called 2010 "the vital year" for progress to be shown toward the defeat of the Taliban. While ruling out sending more British troops, he added:

"People back at home want this to work, and want to see progress this year ... Nobody wants British troops to be in Afghanistan a moment longer than is necessary."

Cameron did announce a £67-million boost to counter the threat of improvised explosive devices (IEDs) - one of the Taliban's main weapons against NATO forces and the biggest single killer of troops. This is on top of the £150 million pledged last year for a similar project by the former PM Gordon Brown. There has been pressure on the

British Army to produce more bomb-disposal experts, as last month the Army's top bomb disposal officer, Colonel Bob Seddon, resigned over fears that bomb disposal training could be compromised.

Prime Minister Cameron also said £200m in aid funding would be diverted from existing budgets to help Afghanistan build up its police and civil service capacity.

The unannounced visit comes amidst a spike in violence in recent weeks, including an explosion during a wedding party that killed 39 people – the worst attack this year. The NATO-led coalition is pushing into Kandahar, the Taliban's heartland and efforts to train enough Afghan troops are continuing in order to allow allies to begin withdrawing forces in July 2011. The commander of US operations in the Middle East has said that the UK is at the core of efforts to fight extremism in the region, and the NATO coalition in Afghanistan could not succeed without it,

The U.K. is the second-largest contributor to the NATO force in Afghanistan after the U.S., with 9,500 troops, mainly in Helmand province in the south of the country, as well as an estimated 500 special forces. 294 British personnel have died in the country since October 2001. Cameron chose Afghanistan for his first visit outside Europe to show that it will be the top foreign policy priority of his government.

[New British leader makes his first visit to Afghanistan, pledges more money for troops](#), [Cameron in Kabul Says 'Vital Year' for Afghanistan](#), [David Cameron pledges more funds for Afghan IED Threat](#), [British PM Rules Out More Troops for Afghanistan](#), [Petraeus warns Afghan mission will fail without UK](#)

NATO Convoy Attacked in Pakistan

By: Monika Wyrzykowska

A deadly attack, on a NATO supply convoy about 16 km outside of Islamabad, the Pakistani capital, took place on the evening of June 9th, killing at least seven people and destroying more than 20 out of 30 trucks carrying fuel and other supplies.

This was the first such attack near Islamabad although convoys are a regular target elsewhere in Pakistan close to the Afghan border. Pakistan is the main supply hub for the US-led war in Afghanistan with NATO shipping roughly 50% of its supplies, including nearly 70% of its non-essential supplies, through the country. The convoys carry mostly fuel, food, replacement military vehicles and other similar supplies. Guns and munitions are sent by more secure means, mostly by air. But the attacks have prompted NATO planners to find more secure supply routes. An increasing number of convoys are now traveling to Afghanistan through Russia and Central Asia. The so-called northern distribution route via central Asia accounts for 30% of supplies to Afghanistan.

A NATO spokesman in Kabul said Taliban attacks have destroyed "less than one percent" of the goods bound for Afghanistan. "They don't really disrupt our supply lines," he said. Nonetheless, an attack so close to the capital is worrisome. "I would have thought this area was otherwise protected", said a senior Pakistani interior ministry official.

The attack on the convoys follows a deadly beginning to the week. Monday, June 7th, was the bloodiest day this year for international forces in Afghanistan, when seven American troops, two Australians and a French legionnaire were killed in five separate insurgent attacks in the south and east of the country. Two civilian contractors training police, an American and a Nepalese, also died in a brazen suicide attack Monday in the southern city of Kandahar. Three more NATO troops were killed in Afghanistan on Tuesday.

US commanders have warned of more casualties as insurgents are stepping up their bombing campaigns and other attacks ahead of a major NATO operation in the Taliban stronghold of Kandahar.

[Bomb kills 2 US troops; NATO losses at 24 for June](#), [NATO's dangerous supply lines](#), [NATO trucks blown up near Islamabad](#), [Militants attack NATO convoy outside Pakistani capital](#)

Canadian Exit from Afghanistan in 2011 Leads to Speculation on Training Role

By: Monika Wyrzykowska

Canada's Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Walter Natynczyk discussed Canada's exit date in Afghanistan at a joint press conference with the new NORAD commander, U.S. Adm. James Winnefeld, on Monday, June 7th. Canadian soldiers are to end their combat role in July of next year, but there have been persistent calls from NATO for

Canadian Forces to remain in order to provide much-needed training to the Afghan forces. Gen. Natynczyk refused to speculate, however commenting that:

“From the Government of Canada through to the minister to me, it's clearly a focus on enabling the motion as it stands today and that is the withdrawal from Kandahar in 2011 and the end of the military mission.”

Institutions that will continue a non-military mission for Canada in Afghanistan include Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian International Development Agency, the RCMP and the correctional services, added Natynczyk.

Canada's Parliament adopted a resolution in 2008 by which Canada's military mission will withdraw and cease all combat operations by July 2011. However, an all-party House of Commons committee, after touring Afghanistan last week, signalled that it could explore keeping Canadian soldiers on the ground in Afghanistan to provide training for local troops and police officers. Liberal foreign affairs critic, Bob Rae, suggested that the official opposition would support a post-2011 training mission for Canadian Forces in Afghanistan.

Prime Minister Stephen Harper, while calling the committee's comments “interesting”, has said that the government would be moving ahead with the parliamentary resolution to end the military mission next year.

[Military will stick to 2011 exit date: Natynczyk](#), [Canada's Withdrawal Plans Clear – Chief of Defence Staff](#), [Military has 'clear instructions' on 2011 Afghan withdrawal](#), [Afghan withdrawal plans 'clear': Natynczyk](#)

Canada's New Role in Afghanistan

By: Tanah Sullivan

The influx of thousands of US Forces into Kandahar is prompting a major reorganisation of NATO's command in Afghanistan, and it will impact Canada's operations there. The Americans will be taking on more authority, and the biggest change will see Canada ceding authority for Kandahar City, and the three US infantry battalions under the Canadian General's command will now be reduced to one.

[New Role for Canada in Afghanistan](#), [Canada's role shrinking in Kandahar](#)

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