



GENERAL ACTIVITY UPDATE

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Renewed Commitment to Afghanistan: London Donors Conference

From January 31 to February 1, 2006, leaders from more than 60 nations, international organizations, and donor agencies including USAID, renewed their commitment to help rebuild Afghanistan at the London Donors' Conference.

USAID/Afghanistan Mission Director Alonzo Fulgham noted, "We are involved in the most ambitious reconstruction project since the Marshall Plan, in an environment with virtually none of the infrastructure or capacity in place. Along with the Afghan Government and people, we have made truly remarkable progress despite numerous limitations. That said, the easy part is behind us."

An outcome of the conference was the unveiling of the Afghanistan Compact, drafted by the Government of Afghanistan to outline the country's development strategy through 2010. The main priorities focus on security, governance, and economic and social development. Each objective intends to counter the growing opium trade to promote stability for the country.

The Afghan Government set ambitious goals to establish a 70,000-strong National Army and a 62,000-strong national police force by the end of 2010. The government committed to disband all illegal armed groups by the end of 2007. It also launched a new National Drugs Control Strategy as part of the interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

"As Americans, we understand struggle and commitment. No one should doubt our resolve, on the development front to work tirelessly with the government and people of Afghanistan to create a better country, a better region and a better world."

-- Alonzo Fulgham
USAID/Afghanistan
Mission Director

To assist Afghanistan in its development goals, USAID focuses on rapid economic growth to provide alternatives to the illicit drug trade. Strategic investment in infrastructure and private sector development promote trade and stability. USAID also invests in people through education, health programs and government reforms.

At the London Conference, the international community renewed its commitment to the country by pledging more than \$10 billion. Since 2001, the U.S. Government has provided over \$10.3 billion in funding for Afghanistan including over \$3.4 billion from USAID. The U.S. Government has also offered 100% debt forgiveness to Afghanistan totaling approximately \$108 million.



Photo: USAID/Afghanistan Mission Director Alonzo Fulgham who has led the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan since June 2005 recently represented USAID at the London Conference along with USAID's Acting Administrator Fred Schieck, Deputy Acting Administrator Mark Ward, Regional Development Officer Kay Freeman, and Special Programs Officer Robin Brinkley.



Afghanistan has long been known as one of the best places on earth for growing grapes. Many of the commercial grapes now grown in the U.S., such as the Thompson seedless grape, are descended from an Afghan grape. Here, an Afghan farmer proudly shows off the fruits of his labor.

A Sweet Grape Harvest in Shomali Valley

On January 1, 2006, a USAID-sponsored program received accolades on TV for a project that is rebuilding vineyards in the fertile Shomali Valley, north of Kabul.

Award winning news anchor for ABC, Cheryl Jennings, produced a half hour documentary about Afghanistan. The story featured on *Beyond the Headlines* was entitled, "Inside Afghanistan: A Journey of Hope".

The show spotlighted Afghan farmers who harvested more than 500 tons of fresh table grapes from former minefields and shipped the harvest to market in six countries- India, Pakistan, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and the United Arab Emirates.

USAID/Afghanistan Agriculture Officer Dan Miller stated in the interview that the idea to rebuild the vineyards again links perfectly with our overall agriculture assistance program in rebuilding the agriculture sector and linking farmers to markets." USAID/ Afghanistan Mission Director Alonzo Fulgham also commented about how growing grapes provides an alternative to poppy cultivation.

For more information about the program, visit www.abc7news.com.

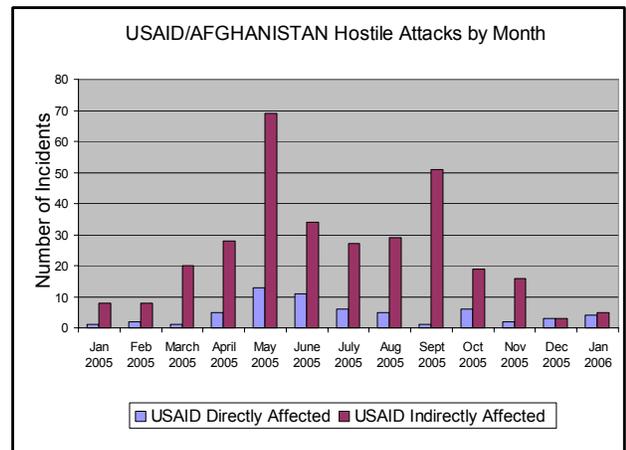
SECURITY INCIDENTS

Violence and riots escalated across Afghanistan recently. On January 26th in Farah Province, a convoy with USAID staff was traveling near the city limits when it was hit by an Improvised Explosive Device (IED). The windows of the vehicles shattered and passengers incurred minor injuries. It is unknown if the attack was directed at a specific target.

On February 5th, a construction crew was inspecting roadwork on the pass from Lashkar Gah to Kandahar when a vehicle opened fire upon the workers. A driver, superintendent, and laborer were transported to Kandahar Hospital to be treated for minor injuries.

On Tuesday, February 7th, four staff were killed by another IED in Farah Province. The deceased include two engineers, a security officer, and the driver. In addition, protestors have rioted in Kabul and southern and eastern regions. Police fired warning shots to disband demonstrators.

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The main purpose of the security incident graph is to provide a general update on security incidents as they relate to reconstruction in Afghanistan. The graph is simply a mechanism for tracking security incidents and does not analyze incidents or attempt to discern the motives or affiliation of the perpetrators. The focus of the graph is the frequency of incidents and their impact on USAID's work and also that of the development community writ large. The graph does not attempt to track all incidents regularly faced in Afghanistan.