

## **Chronology of Events in Afghanistan, March 2002\***

### **March 1**

#### **Afghan refugees in Pakistan leave for home under UN repatriation programmes. (Agence France-Presse / AFP)**

Around 500 Afghan refugees and displaced people started on their journey home under UN repatriation programmes. A UNHCR repatriation centre at Takhtabaig, near the Afghan border, was inaugurated by UNHCR officials and refugees. Based just outside the western city of Peshawar, the centre will be able to process up to 5,000 people daily, according to the UN refugee agency. Under this programme the UNHCR will repatriate around 400,000 Afghan refugees, UNHCR official Maryam Arzomund said. Returnees are provided with tents, blankets, food together with seeds and fertiliser. "We want to help the Afghan refugees and in this connection the UNHCR will provide 150 kilograms of wheat and other household items," Arzomund said. Over the border in Afghanistan, operations started to return thousands of internally displaced people to their homes. In the western city of Herat, 269 people left in a convoy for their homes in western Badghis province, the UN International Organisation for Migration (IOM) said. They were the first to return home from the Maslahk camp south of Herat which holds more than 100,000 displaced people. In Kabul, IOM will next week begin a major operation to return some 2,500 displaced families to their homes in the Shomali plain north of the capital. The plain was the front line in fighting between Taliban and Northern Alliance forces and the families had taken refuge in the former Soviet compound, which was abandoned when the Soviet invaders withdrew in 1989.

#### **Sholgara area falls to Uzbek commander. (Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency / AIP)**

General Dostum's forces attacked Sholgara District, which is 60 km south of the city of Mazar-e Sharif, capital of Balkh Province. They made the forces of Atta Mohammad [first deputy operational commander of the northern zone and commander of corps No 7] to leave the area. It was reported that Atta Muhammad wants to retake Sholgara through negotiation and to hold on to it. If the negotiations come to nothing, major fighting is possible. This area is a bridge between Samangan Province and Mazar-e Sharif.

#### **Al-Qaida widows, children hungry in the mountains of Paktia province. (Associated Press / AP)**

The widows and children of 25 al-Qaida fighters are running out of food in the mountains of Paktia province. A major Taliban commander, Saif Rahman, who once operated north of the capital Kabul, has been asking Afghans to donate the equivalent

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of \$17 each to buy food for the starving families, according to Paktia province's deputy intelligence chief, Ziarat Gul Mangal. Mangal said he is discussing the fate of these families with an intermediary. The families are in the Sarmad district of Paktia province, about 20 miles from Gardez. The widows are said to be from several Middle Eastern nations including Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Algeria and Egypt. There have been sporadic, unconfirmed reports of al-Qaida families hiding in villages in Logar, Laghman, Kunar and Paktia provinces of eastern Afghanistan. An international aid worker said his organization has given food to such families in Khawar district of Logar province. Some wives of suspected al-Qaida members have been arrested trying to cross into Pakistan at border posts in southwestern Baluchistan province and in the Northwest Frontier Province.

## **March 2**

### **Afghan elders killed after commission meeting. (Reuters)**

Seven Afghan tribal elders were shot and killed in eastern Afghanistan a week ago after talks with a U.N.-backed commission aiming to establish a new government for devastated Afghanistan. It was reported that the elders were gunned down in Kunar province as they travelled to a feast in Pashad village, some 30 km south of the provincial capital Asadabad. Before being killed, the ethnic Pashtun elders had met a team from the commission and two foreign U.N. advisers in the eastern city of Jalalabad. The 21-member commission began to tour Afghanistan in February 2002 to publicise its task to summon a traditional Loya Jirga, or Grand Assembly, in June.

## **March 3**

### **Pashtuns flee murder, sexual abuse in northern Afghanistan (AFP)**

Thousands of ethnic Pashtuns are fleeing persecution in northern Afghanistan, Human Rights Watch (HRW) said. According to HRW, "Armed political factions in northern Afghanistan are subjecting ethnic Pashtuns to murder, beatings, sexual violence, abductions, looting, and extortion. The ongoing campaign of violence and intimidation is forcing thousands of Pashtuns to leave their villages." HRW researchers documented more than 150 separate incidents of violence and looting in the past three months.

Villagers in northwest Faryab province reported that armed Uzbeks systematically looted their homes in what one villager described as "forty days of terror". In Balkh province, ethnic Hazara Hizb-i Wahdat forces were involved in several execution-style murders of Pashtun villagers, it said. HRW said it had also received testimony about widespread sexual violence and abduction of women in northern Afghanistan. "While many women were subject to violence due to the general insecurity in the north, Pashtun women seemed especially singled out for attacks," it said.

While commanders whose forces were associated with abuses in Faryab were removed by Deputy Defence Minister Abdul Rashid Dostum, "in other areas, abusive commanders and forces continued to act without restraint or reprimand".

**AFP report on the same news on March 5:** "In Samangan province Pashtuns, Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hazaras live together. This is just propaganda. We absolutely reject it," Governor Syed Mohammad Iqbal Munib stated. The governor said the Pashtuns who fled their villages were only those "affiliated with the Taliban or the al-Qaeda terrorist network". "When they go out of the country they orchestrate the

propaganda that there is racial discrimination against Pashtuns," Munib said. Munib named three Pashtun commanders -- Bashir Khan Baghlani, Juma Khan Hamdard and Khan Aqa Khan -- who serve in a leadership council for northern Afghanistan.

**Six Afghan refugees killed in feud in northwest Pakistan. (AIP)**

Six Afghans were killed in a feud in the town of Gotay in Miram Shah [in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Province]. It was reported that two Afghan tribes in Gotay in Miram Shah exchanged fire because of a dispute over money, as a result of which five people were killed, with casualties on both sides. The eyewitnesses said that another Afghan was also killed in the shooting. The dead Afghans belong to Khost Province's Tanay tribe and are living as refugees in Pakistan. According to local tribal law, other people belonging to the Tanay tribe cannot now go to Gotay in Miram Shah until the problem has been settled by the local jirga and administration.

**Alleged Al-Qa'idah fighters attack district south of Kabul. (Afghan news agency Bakhtar)**

A group of men allegedly belonging to Al-Qa'idah attacked the Charkh District, in Logar Province. It was alleged that local Taleban members who had previously been disarmed also took part along with them at the attack. After a clash with the local forces of the interim administration, [the attackers] have withdrawn to the mountains and are continuing guerrilla operations.

**Hezb-i Islami leader reportedly returns home from exile in Iran (Pakistani newspaper *The Frontier Post*)**

Former Prime Minister and Islamic Party leader Golboddin Hekmatyar and opponent of the interim Kabul government has returned to Afghanistan from Iran, after failing to get into Iraq and Pakistan, an independent Afghan source said. According to this report, Hekmatyar crossed the border with his friends and arrived in Herat Province to find out whether it was possible to stay. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Hamid Reza Asefi said he could not confirm the information, adding: "Our position is that Hekmatyar must leave Iran, and we don't mind where he goes."

**400,000 Afghan refugees to begin returning home in April 2002. (Iranian Islamic Republic News Agency / IRNA)**

Spokesman for UNHCR Mohammad Nuri stated that about 400,000 Afghan refugees, residing in Iran, are to return to their country voluntarily as of next year [the year beginning on 21 March 2002]. He said the refugees willing to return within the framework of the Iran-UNHCR-Afghan government joint programme fall into four categories: first, the Afghans willing to return home quickly; second, the Afghans not willing to for [as received] back for security, job, and welfare reasons or lack of peace and stability in Afghanistan, but intend to do so in case the time is ripe; third, the Afghans, who have been absorbed in Iranian society and consider themselves as part of the Iranian community, thus not willing at all to return to Afghanistan. This group consists of those married to an Iranian national and their children have been grown up here; and finally, the Afghans who have newly arrived in the country. To specify the fate of the last group a panel has been formed to study their case, said the source. Repatriation of refugees under present condition would not entail any risks for them, he added. He said the refugees will mostly leave the country through Dogharun border point. Nuri said since the beginning of the year 2002, 34,250 Afghans - mainly Hazaras, Pashtuns, Tajiks and Uzbeks - have returned home voluntarily.

## **March 6**

### **The resolution of conference on formation of Afghan national army. (Radio Afghanistan)**

Resolution of the nationwide session of commanders of major units and companies of Afghanistan on the formation of a national army held in the headquarters of the Ministry of National Defence. The following resolution was passed:

“1. All inhabitants of our united land, the beloved Afghanistan, are part and parcel of a united great Afghan nation, regardless of linguistic, religious, sex, racial, tribal, regional, local and ideological affiliations.

“2. The national army constitutes the fundamental pillars of our united and great nation, and must be formed and consolidated at this juncture as a symbol of national solidarity and on the basis of historical and national needs.

“3. The national character of the army of Afghanistan is defined within the framework of the great duty assigned to it.

“4. We, participants of the nationwide session of the commanders of large units and companies, unanimously resolve to endeavour fully not to allow the enemies of Afghanistan, who are foreign agents and intend to continue the war of fratricide in our country, to embark on such evil action.

“5. We, participants of the nationwide session, have firm resolve to defend resolutely and actively the borders and airspace of our country in the framework of our national army.

“6. We are determined to destroy terrorism.

“7. We are determined to actively prevent the cultivation, production and trade of narcotic substances, and to struggle for their complete elimination.

“8. We have decided that our national army be free from factions, parties and political groupings.

“9. We, participants of the session, will do our utmost, to reconstruct as soon as possible centres for military training in the country, and to work constructively for the training of officer cadres, in accordance with a central plan.

“10. We, all commanders of large units and companies, have resolutely decided to collect, in accordance with a central plan, all weapons, military equipment, military vehicles as well as ammunition, and to store them under the control of assigned officials.

“11. We, all commanders, undertake to supply the national army with personnel, including officers, men and NCOs, according to plans and instructions from the centre.

“12. We, all commanders, are prepared to discharge our duties anywhere in the country when needed, in accordance with the instruction of the Ministry of National Defence headquarters.

“13. We, participants of the session, are determined to defend and to enrich the national culture and the historical and national heritage of our country, in accordance with the instructions of the leadership of the interim administration and orders of the Ministry of National Defence.

“14. We are ready to take part, when needed, in the nationwide reconstruction of the country, in addition to the duties we have in the national army, and to take part in efforts to save our compatriots affected by natural disaster.

“15. We, participants of the session, pledge to work seriously for the central consolidation and mobilization of the national army and the consolidation and strengthening of legality in army ranks.

“16. We, participants of the session, pledge to endeavour unreservedly to enhance military culture and military discipline in accordance with military regulations.

“17. We, all commanders, pledge to obey fully and without reservation all instruction and order issued by authorities in the centre, by the chairman of the interim administration and the Ministry of National Defence, and not to spare any sacrifice in implementing orders.”

### **March 7**

#### **Afghan commander says tribal rivals mislead U.S. (Reuters)**

An Afghan commander said tribal rivals were misleading the United States and using the U.S.-led war as a way to further private agendas and feuds. "We could have stopped this fighting, but unfortunately there were some people misleading the Americans," said Afghan commander Ziauddin. "Even now if Americans stop their war we are able to establish contacts with them and resolve the issue peacefully." Ziauddin said Afghans who joined the fight alongside the Americans had either turned themselves into mercenaries or acted to meet a private agenda or tribal loyalties. The U.S. has recruited Afghan fighters from Khost and Paktia provinces and trained them for the fighting, paying them about \$200 a month.

Feuding among tribes in the Gardez area is common. In February 2002, 50 people were killed in fighting when government-appointed governor Padshah Khan Zadran's forces were forced out of the town by rival commander Haji Saifullah. Saifullah accused Zadran of calling for U.S. strikes on a convoy of the area's tribal elders who were on their way to Kabul to attend the inauguration of interim Afghan leader Hamid Karzai in December. More than 60 people were killed in the raid which Washington said was targeted at followers of the Taliban and the al Qaeda network of Osama bin Ladin.

Ziauddin said an Afghan Taliban commander in the mountains at Shahi Kot, scene of the fighting, was Maulvi Saif-ur-Rehman Mansoor. Before the latest U.S. onslaught began last weekend he had offered to lay down his arms and join the government, he said. Asked about Ziauddin's remarks, Gardez Governor Taj Mohammad Wardak confirmed there had been contact. "I confirm we have had contacts with Saif-ur-Rehman. He invited a delegation to inspect the area," Wardak said.

### **March 8**

#### **First women's council set up in Fariab Province. (Afghan Balkh radio)**

A women's council of Fariab Province was set up at broad meeting recently. The meeting which was held on this occasion in Maymana's municipal hotel was attended by the head of the military council and commander of the 200th division, Lt-General Mohammad Hashem Habibi; the governor of Fariab Province, Mohammad Saleh Zaray, security commander [Abdol Ahahd Dehzad]; the head of the department for information and culture [Mohammad Esaq Shamsi]; the mayor of Maymana [Professor Amanollah Nadim]; the head of the pedagogical institute of the province [Mohammad Asef Payman]; and members of the province's leadership, heads of official bodies and a number of women, girls and young students. The head of the

women's council of Jowzjan Province, [Mohrema Ayubi], conveyed in her address warm greetings from the deputy defence minister and the general operational commander of the northern zone, General Abdorrashid Dostum, and congratulated Fariab Province's women on the establishment of the provincial women's council. At this meeting the leadership and members of Fariab Province's women's council were elected unanimously.

**Ex-prisoner says Al-Qa'idah Arabs being held by Afghan tribes for ransom. (London-based Arabic newspaper *Al-Sharq al-Awsat*)**

A former trainee of Al-Qa'idah camps in Afghanistan said the organization is finished because of the attitude of local Afghan tribes. He said Arab fighters were captured by Afghan tribesmen and only released when a ransom was paid. The former fundamentalist, who said he had been in jail for his activities, said he was involved in repatriating Arabs who had escaped. He said that Arab women and children are still being held by the tribesmen as "war booty".

**Unknown assailants kill Shia ex-commander in Afghan province of Farah (AIP)**

A former commander was killed in Farah city by unknown armed assailants [at the night of 7-8 March]. Unknown armed assailants entered the home of commander Abdol Samad Lang in Farah city and killed him and his mother. The sources say that a number of members of his family were injured in the incident. Commander Abdol Samad Lang belongs to Shia Harakat-e Islami faction. He was one of the main commanders of Harakat-e Islami during the era of *jihad*. Shaykh Asef Mohseni, the leader of Harakat-e Islami, supports the current administration in Kabul.

It was also reported that a few days ago the head of Nada Ali District, Helmand Province, was also killed by unknown armed assailants.

## **March 9**

**Feuds between U.S. allies threatens to erupt into fresh fighting. (Associated Press)**

As the U.S.-led coalition battles al-Qaida in the mountains, feuds between America's Afghan allies in the fight threatened to explode into violence in the battle area itself. Local ethnic Pashtun commanders warned they will fight national army forces if necessary if the Afghan Defence Ministry, controlled by ethnic Tajik General Mohammed Fahim, does not withdraw troops it sent there to join the U.S.-led offensive. The presence of the Tajiks also threatens to drive a wedge between Pashtun commanders who were fighting each other a few weeks ago and are now part of the U.S.-led Operation Anaconda battling al-Qaida in the nearby mountains. The situation is particularly explosive in Paktia province, where several different warlords wield power and where there is a long tradition of factional rivalry. Many local Pashtuns watched with disdain as seven tanks and about 100 Tajik troops they consider outsiders rumbled into their town under the command of Gul Haider, a commander from the Panjshir Valley. "They are occupying Gardez," said Zadran. "We don't need them here," said Commander Ismail Khan, whose fighters are on the front lines in Shah-e-Kot. Another Paktia commander, Abdul Matin Hasankhiel, agreed. Saifullah, the elderly chief of the Gardez council, said the troops and tanks from Kabul are really not there to fight al-Qaida. He said they are part of a Defense Ministry plan to establish a permanent garrison in Gardez. On the other hand, Zadran claims the town council, which Saifullah heads, is rife with former Taliban and al-Qaida sympathizers.

At least one council member, Naeem Koochie, was a key Taliban commander who fought in central Bamiyan province. But Koochie has sworn loyalty to interim Prime Minister Hamid Karzai.

**Afghan Islamic Press report on the same news:** In the area of Sayd Karam, elders from 11 districts gathered and issued a statement saying that Northern Alliance forces should not be deployed. A group of commanders and elders informed the Americans about their statement at a centre near the town of Gardez and the Americans assured them that they would inform their top authorities.

**Afghan commission inspects saloons, burns un-Islamic postcards in Balkh Province. (Afghan Balkh radio)**

Representatives from Balkh Province security department, the council of scholars, and from national security, information and culture departments and the municipality have combined to form a commission and are carrying out inspections of video saloons and are collecting postcards which are “unislamic in character”. They searched and inspected the area of Darwazai Balkh [in Mazar-e Sharif] and the area around Kifayat market [in the town centre]. They found a large number of postcards which were “against religion”. They collected and burnt them. The video saloons were cleared. The work of the commission is continuing every day.

**March 10**

**Gunmen kill four persons outside Afghan governor's house in Khost. (Reuters)**

Gunmen attacked security guards outside the governor's house in the town of Khost. An Afghan security official said the attack by about 10 gunmen seemed motivated by an old feud and had no link to current fighting in neighbouring Paktia province between U.S.-led forces and al-Qaeda network. He said the gunmen drove up to the gate of the governor's house in a pick-up truck when scores of people stood in a queue to receive aid from a non-governmental organisation. The gunmen had an "old enmity" with one guard but killed four by their indiscriminate firing from automatic weapons, said Noor Wali Jan, head of law and order in Khost. Three assailants were arrested and "we are chasing others", he said.

**March 11**

**Karzai says no-one will support restoration of monarchy in Afghanistan. (Afghan news agency Bakhtar)**

In a news conference at Kabul airport, Hamed Karzai, chairman of Afghanistan's interim administration, said that Former King Zaher Shah will come to Afghanistan as an individual. He said: “No-one, including me is in favour of the restoration of monarchy. We support a republican system. It is the duty of the Loya Jerga to elect the future government of Afghanistan not to restore monarchy.”

**Hezb-e Islami supports the interim government, criticizes commission to set up grand assembly. (AIP and Pakistan Press International)**

The deputy head of the Hezb-e Islami party of Engineer Golboddin Hekmatyar criticized the commission charged with convening the Loya Jirga, describing it as imperfect. The deputy head of Hekmatyar's party Qutbodin Hillal, told a news conference in Peshawar that the commission appointed to convene the Loya Jirga is

imperfect because there are unknown people in the commission and most of the members are unknown to the people. He added that the head of the Afghan interim government [Hamed Karzai] had also admitted the same thing, saying that most of the members of the commission were unknown to him.

Qutbuddin Hilal said that they never supported the internal crisis of Afghanistan in any form and neither supported the Taliban nor their opponents of Northern Alliance. He said that the Karzai government came in to being as result of Bonn Conference was being supported by Hezb-e-Islami and when their delegation met with the Hamid Karzai after being came in to power he also responded friendly. Ex-Vice Prime Minister said that they did not believe on wars on different small issues and Hezb was a party of common people and was "working to implement Islam in its real sense."

### **March 12**

#### **Afghan general says battle over, Taliban retreat. (Reuters)**

On the 11th day of the battle 150 km south of Kabul, General Abdullah Joyenda said U.S. and Afghan forces now controlled the entire Shahi Kot area, about 32 km east of Gardez. "The battle of Shahi Kot is over. A coalition of both Afghan and U.S. forces has taken control of the entire Shahi Kot Valley," Joyenda, one of several generals in charge of the fighting. "The Taliban and al Qaeda are retreating towards the frontier with Pakistan," said the general. While the Shahi Kot area has been the focus of the latest fighting, a senior Afghan Defence Ministry official warned other rebel pockets were active in the eastern provinces of Wardak, Ghazni, Khost and in other parts of Paktia and would soon be attacked.

### **March 14**

#### **Afghan governor releases political prisoners. (Afghan newspaper *Etefaq-e Islam*)**

128 political prisoners were released in honour of the uprising against the communist government on 24 of Hout [14 March 1978] of Herat Province. Their release from Herat prison was ordered by the "head of the southwest zone" Ismail Khan, and the prisoners returned to their families.

### **March 16**

#### **Pashtun elders denounce reported limits on king, warn of 'strong reaction'. (AP)**

Tribal leaders from across Afghanistan's royalist south warned of an "extremely strong reaction" if the new central government tries to isolate the returning Afghan king. Three hundred turbaned elders in an emergency assembly adopted a declaration to be sent to U.N. and U.S. authorities, whom some blamed for reported restrictions on the king, Mohammad Zaher Shah. Supporters said they have heard, from people close to the king, that the interim government in Kabul told Zaher Shah he could not be involved in political activities - interpreted by royalists to mean he could not receive visitors. "If these reported restrictions are confirmed, the designated sources shall definitely face extremely strong reaction and opposition of our nation," it said. The tribal leaders, assembled on urgent notice from seven southwestern provinces, issued an invitation for the king to come to Kandahar city, the old royal capital, where Afghans "will have total and free access to meet the father of the nation."



The king is very popular among the Durrani tribes of the ethnic Pashtun south, but less so among other Pashtuns farther east, and among other ethnic groups in central and northern Afghanistan. Although the interim government is headed by a relative of the king, Hamid Karzai, the most powerful posts are held by ethnic Tajik northerners.

### **UNHCR to end Afghan aid programme in Pakistan. (Reuters)**

The U.N. refugee agency stated that it had decided to end its aid programme for Afghan refugees in Pakistan to encourage them to return home. "If we continue our aid programme, no Afghan refugee will take an interest in repatriation," Hasim Utkan said. Utkan said instead of providing them aid in Pakistan, the UNHCR would launch a new programme inside war-torn Afghanistan to provide assistance to Afghan refugees returning home. Utkan said the refugee agency had already launched a repatriation programme to help the return of Afghan refugees. "In the last 10 days, over 45,000 Afghan refugees went back to their country." According to the UNHCR, some 126,000 Afghans have already returned home from Pakistan since the start of 2002 even though they did not receive any assistance.

Around 20,000 Afghans fleeing banditry, ethnic harassment and a lack of food crossed over into Pakistan last month before the authorities stopped admitting them. Pakistan's Interior Minister Moinuddin Haider said Pakistan would not allow more Afghan refugees to enter as development work had started in Afghanistan.

## **March 19**

### **Factional fighting in Khost (AIP)**

Fighting between factions of the governor of Khost Province, Dr Mohammad Ibrahim, a member of former President Prof Borhannodin Rabbani's Hezb-e Jamiat Islami, and the security commander, Mustafa, formerly loyal to Padshah Khan Zadran, ex-governor of Khost, appointed by the interim administration but rejected by the Khost council, has taken place. The bazaar of Khost town is closed. And the townspeople held a protest demonstration. A man was wounded during the fighting. One of the main elders from Khost, Ghazi Nowaz Tenni, said, "We do not want this governor, nor Padshah Khan nor the commander, Zakim Khan, another commander fighting for control of Khost."

## **March 22**

### **258 Taliban prisoners freed. (Reuters)**

258 former Taliban fighters were freed in a goodwill gesture in Shibarghan, 130 km west from the regional capital of Mazar-i-Sharif, but thousands are still held in appalling conditions in one of Afghanistan's harshest prisons. Deputy Defence Minister Abdul Rashid Dostum said that Afghan interim leader Hamid Karzai had ordered their release in a sign of reconciliation marking the spring holiday of Nowroz. They were given yellow temporary identity card and one million Afghans provided by the Red Cross. Undernourishment and severe infectious diseases are rampant in the prison, and prison chief Dzhurabek Muradi said five or six prisoners had died since last December. Prisoners in one of the cell blocks said 25 inmates had died in the last four months. In another block, 20 had died and inmates in the third block, closely watched by guards, said four of their cellmates had died.

### **March 23**

#### **Former king says Afghans will decide on rule by monarchy. (Italian news agency ANSA)**

Former Afghan King Mohammad Zaher Shah said he would return home in April to preside over a tribal council to let the people decide whether they want to be ruled by a monarchy.

### **March 24**

#### **Gunmen kill one in ambush. (Reuters)**

Unidentified gunmen shot dead two people and wounded four in an attack on the security chief of the city of Khost. The gunmen ambushed the vehicle of Khost security chief Sour Gul's vehicle near the city's airport. Gul, a close aide of Khost provincial governor Mohammad Ibrahim, was unhurt in the attack.

**Afghan Islamic Press report on the same news on March 25:** Afghan authorities arrested two soldiers allied to U.S. forces over an attack on the security chief of the eastern city of Khost. Mohammad Ibrahim, governor of Khost province, said the attackers were Afghan soldiers trained by the U.S.-led International Security Forces and deployed at a check point between the city and the airport, where U.S. troops are based. Ibrahim said Khost security chief Sour Gul was attacked because of "personal enmity" as he had recently led a campaign to recover illegal arms from the people in Khost city.

### **March 27**

#### **Most of Afghan refugees on Tajik-Afghan border returned home. (AP)**

Most of the thousands of Afghan refugees who had sought refuge from the ousted Taliban forces on a group of islands in the Pyandzh River on the border between Tajikistan and Afghanistan have returned home. Maj. Gen. Sergei Zhilkin, a senior official with the Russian border guards stationed in Tajikistan to patrol the border with neighboring Afghanistan, said some 5,000 people had returned to their homes over the previous week.

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