

Chronology of Events in Afghanistan, February 2004*

February 1

Eight killed in attack in Uruzgan. (Reuters)

An Afghan official and seven family members were reportedly killed in a bomb attack by suspected Taliban guerrillas and their allies in central Afghanistan. Khalifa Sadaat, mayor of Deh Raud district in Uruzgan district, and his family were returning from shopping when their vehicle hit an explosive device planted near their house. Provincial governor Jan Mohammad Khan said three of Sadaat's children were among the dead.

February 2

Farah and Badghis governors replaced. (Afghanistan Television and Radio Free Europe / Radio Liberty RFE/RL *Afghanistan Report*)

At the initiative of the Interior Ministry and with the approval of Afghan Transitional Administration (ATA) Chairman Hamid Karzai, Mohammad Yusof has been appointed governor of the western province of Farah, and Azizullah Afzali as been named governor of Badghis Province.

February 3

Two killed in Khost Province for photographing women. (Pakistan-based Afghan Islamic Press news agency / AIP)

Two people were riddled with bullets for taking photographs of women in Khost Province. It was reported that two people photographed the women who were on their way to the graves of their relatives for prayers and as a result the relatives of the women were enraged by that and riddled them with bullets from Kalashnikov assault rifles in Babar village of Lakan District.

February 4

Pakistan hands over Pasha Khan Zadran to Afghans. (Associated Press / AP)

Pakistan has handed over to Afghanistan a renegade local commander who was arrested in December 2003 on accusations of "banditry" along the roads in a sensitive border region, officials said. Pasha Khan Zadran was handed over at a border crossing.

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February 5

Afghanistan appoints new chief of intelligence. (AP)

The Afghan government appointed a new intelligence chief. Amrullah Saleh, 32, already a senior official in the National Security Directorate, will move into the top job immediately, presidential spokesman Hamed Elmi said. His predecessor, Mohammad Arif Sarwary, will become a ministerial adviser. Both Saleh and Sarwary are ethnic Tajiks from the Northern Alliance.

Afghan leader pardons rebel commander. (Reuters)

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has pardoned a powerful Pashtun rebel commander accused of killing dozens of civilians, a cabinet minister said. The pardoning of Pasha Khan Zadran comes as Karzai tries to encourage remnants of the ousted Taliban to join his government, which has little control beyond the capital.

Killing of civilian in Badakhshan province provoked angry reactions and demonstration. (Afghanistan Television)

The killing of a 18-year-old boy in Fayzabad city of Badakhshan Province provoked the anger of citizens. According to eyewitnesses, a number of young people were flying kites near Brigade No 338 on February 2. These young people were warned by a gunman. This caused tension and consequently, the gunman opened fire killing an 18 year old boy. This action aroused public anger and people demonstrated. Demonstrators asked government officials to collect arms from unauthorized persons.

February 7

Factional fighting claims 20 lives in Badakhshan province. (Chinese Xinhua News Agency)

At least 20 people have been killed and 40 others wounded in a fierce infighting between two Afghan commanders in Badakhshan province of Afghanistan. The armed clash, which erupted on February 5 in the Argon district of Badakhshan province and was still going on, has forced many local residents to flee their homes for safer places. Without mentioning the reason of the conflict, the report said that troops loyal to the police chief and the district administrator in Argon were involved in the bloody fighting, adding that local people had appealed for immediate intervention from the central government to control the exhausting situation.

Agence France Presse report on the same news: At least 20 people have been killed and 40 injured in three days of factional fighting between militia commanders in northern Afghanistan. It was reported by official sources that some 100 police under the leadership of the provincial police chief had reached the site about an hour's drive north of state capital Feyzabad but have been unable to stop the conflict between the district chief Abdul Jabar Musadiq and commander Zia-ul-din. Musadiq said that only three people had been killed and three injured in the fighting, which he said was the result of the voter registration process going on in the area ahead of presidential elections. According to him, ex-security chief of Argo district Qarari Zia-ul-din, who is based in Feyzabad, attacked Argo district in an attempt to try to stop the voter registration process.

February 10

Two Afghans get death sentence for killing U.N. worker. (Japanese news agency Kyodo)

An Afghan court in Kabul sentenced two Afghans to death for killing a French U.N. worker in Ghazni in November 2003. The accused, Zia Ahmad and Abdul Nabi, denied killing Bettina Goislard. In their statement to the judge, the pair claimed the administration in Ghazni implicated them because of their enmity with the provincial governor. The report said the two were sentenced to death on the basis of "evidence and documentary proof."

UN launches programme for child soldiers. (British Broadcasting Corporation / BBC)

United Nations has launched a reintegration and rehabilitation programme for thousands of former child soldiers in Afghanistan. The UN Children's Fund, Unicef, will reportedly begin by targeting 2,000 children in the of Badakhshan. They will be offered education, vocational training and lessons in civic responsibilities. Similar programmes are planned in other areas. Unicef estimates that there are around 8,000 child soldiers in Afghanistan. It says many of them have left armed groups and need urgent assistance to fully reintegrate into civilian life.

February 11

Head of national security of Khost province killed. (AIP)

The head of the National Security Department of Khost, Col Mohammad Issa, was reportedly killed by an unidentified assailant in front of his office. Fearing capture, the assailant blew himself up with a bomb.

February 12

Rocket hits Kabul suburb, injuring teenage girl. (Associated Press / AP)

A rocket slammed into a densely populated suburb of Kabul, reportedly injuring a teenage girl, police said. The rocket landed shortly before noon on a hillside thick with houses in the Khair Khana district in northern Kabul.

Balkh Province official says one detained after arson attack on school. (Iranian radio Voice of the Islamic Republic)

Schools in Balkh Province have been robbed by unidentified armed people. Khalilollah, the commander of a 300-strong police unit sent to Mazar-e Sharif from Kabul, said that a school in Charbolak District of Balkh Province was attacked by missiles fired by unidentified people. He said that equipment in some male and female schools had been stolen by unidentified people.

February 13

Two killed in bomb explosion in Khost province. (AFP)

A soldier and shopkeeper were killed and six other people were injured when a bomb exploded in a building housing a military unit in All Shaire district of Khost province.

Tribal Council takes responsibility for security in Khost province. (Voice of the Islamic Republic)

Following the assassination of Col. Mohammad Issa, the deputy head of the National Security Department of Khost Province, in a suicide attack, the Tribal Council of the province announced that it would take direct responsibility for security in the area, and without government involvement. Zadran, Mangal, Tani, and Sabri tribes of Khost held an emergency meeting in the presence of the governor of Khost, Mohammad Hakim Taniwal, to discuss formation of a tribal army, and agreed on its formation. The tribal army is called *Arbaki* in the local dialect. The army will be responsible for countering threats to security in the area, and will independently ensure its security.

February 14

Four Afghan de-miners killed in suspected Taliban attack. (AFP)

Four Afghan de-miners working for a non-governmental de-mining agency were shot dead by suspected Taliban militants in western Afghanistan. The governor of Farah province, Haji Abdul Hai Namati, said three people were killed at the scene and a fourth died later from his wounds after talking to police. The victims, members of the Organisation for Mine Clearance and Awareness in Afghanistan (OMAR), were on their way from Farah to Herat province when suspected Taliban militants attacked their vehicles in Bala Buluk district, Namati said.

Protest in Nangarhar Province over plea to vacate camp. (AIP)

Hundreds of residents of the Kabul camp, near Jalalabad, have gathered outside the office of the governor of Nangarhar Province and said that they will not vacate their camp. They said they will not leave the camp unless the government provides them with land in another area. The governor of Nangarhar Province, Haji Din Mohammad, and other officials said that the camp had been established for refugees from Kabul a few years ago and now there was no need for a camp on the government's land. It was reported that houses had been built by the locals in the camp gradually and that a majority of those who staged the protest were from Khogiani District in Nangarhar Province. The protesters said that they were residents of Nangarhar Province and the government should provide them another location or should not force them into leaving the place.

Herat provincial authorities launch campaign against women's dressing. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

A campaign against tailoring and dress shops has been launched by seven teams from the Herat government departments. They include the National Security, the Municipality, the Jihad Coordination Unit, the Security Command, the Judiciary and the Endowment and Islamic Affairs Department. They prevent tailors from measuring ladies for dressmaking and threatened the shops which have ladies' changing rooms. In some cases they have closed these shops and broken the changing rooms' doors.

February 16

First women since fall of Taliban sign up as trainees for Afghan police force. (AP)

Seven Afghan widows became the first women to sign up as police trainees since the fall of the Taliban regime, which excluded women from all public life. Filing into the recruiting center on the outskirts of Kabul wearing burqas -- the full-body veils mandatory for women under the Taliban and still widely worn -- the trainees will join the few existing women officers in the male-dominated force. Police Gen. Meerza Mohammed Yarmand, commander of the U.S.-backed training program, said more women police were needed to work as detectives and in finding criminals. Just 92 female officers now serve in the thousands-strong force in Kabul, most in administrative jobs. None patrol the streets.

February 17

Herat authorities close women's driving school. (AIP)

Authorities in Herat have closed a women's driving school. The driving school for women started with the support of a foreign NGO in Herat two days ago. But after only one day, the authorities in Herat summoned officials of the school and asked them to close it. As a result the school was closed. There were reports about the detention of some driving instructors. It is worth mentioning that Afghan traffic laws do not prevent women from driving in the country, but the number of the women who have obtained a driving license from the Afghan traffic police is very small.

Gunmen scatter wedding party, beat guests in Herat. (Afghan news agency Herat News Centre)

A number of armed people made their way into a house located on Gazerga Road, where a wedding party of a Herat citizen was being held around 22:30. They reportedly beat up a number of guests, broke musical instruments and arrested a number of other people. Afterwards, they released the arrested men after a number of elderly residents mediated in the issue; however, they completely interrupted the wedding party. When the elders asked them about the reason, they said: "Since the sound of music was too loud and it was interrupting the officials working in *Takht-e Safar*, they ordered us to stop it."

February 18

Four Jamiat-e Islami commanders killed in Balkh Province. (UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan / UNAMA and RFE/RL *Afghanistan Report*)

Four commanders belonging to the Jamiat-e Islami faction were reportedly killed in Sholgara District of Balkh Province in brief fighting. A joint Afghan/UNAMA security commission visiting the area confirmed the incident and identified eight commanders loyal to Junbish-e Melli party as suspects in the slayings. Arrest warrants, carrying the support of Junbish leader General Abdul Rashid Dostum, have been issued for the suspects, UNAMA Spokesperson De Almeida e Silva said.

New commission established to combat child trafficking. (UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan / UNAMA and RFE/RL *Afghanistan Report*)

Afghan Labor and Social Affairs Ministry established a commission to prevent trafficking in children. The move was prompted by an order from ATA Chairman Hamid Karzai. The commission is tasked with identifying factors in and motives behind the recent increase in child-trafficking cases. Deputy Minister Mohammad Ghaws Bashiri reported that 198 Afghan children were repatriated from Saudi Arabia, adding that the Ministry is in the process of returning those children to their families. In October, some 40 Afghan children were returned from Saudi Arabia, and authorities in the northern Afghan province of Takhar rescued in September 2003 more than 50 boys who were abducted with the suspected intention of trafficking them to Iran or Pakistan for induction into religious schools or for sale as sex slaves.

February 19

Villagers spot hundreds of Taliban in Zabol province. (AP)

Hundreds of Taliban fighters reportedly regrouped in southern Afghanistan, threatening villagers, Afghan officials said. In recent months, officials in Zabul have appealed for help after experiencing a string of bomb blasts, attacks and kidnappings by the militants. Taliban insurgents have also been blamed for attacks against foreign aid workers, security forces and construction workers in the area in recent months.

First underage soldiers demobilized in Konduz. (UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan / UNAMA)

In the first week of a new programme to identify and demobilize former underage child soldiers in the northern provinces of Afghanistan, 159 children have now gone through the process of demobilization in the Konduz area of the country. Local demobilization committees, supported by UNICEF and its partner organizations, assessed a total of 536 young people in the Konduz province. As at February 16, 159 underage soldiers had been demobilized in four districts of the province by the Mobile Demobilization Documentation Team (MDDT) which comprises of AREA, a local non-governmental organization, and the International Medical Corps. Each of the demobilized children has been registered in the programme's database, received photo identity cards, undertaken medical and psychosocial assessment, and participated in briefing sessions on mine risk education, drug abuse prevention, reintegration options, HIV/AIDS prevention and basic health education. In addition each child has signed an order of oath, underlining their civic responsibilities and been issued a personal identification number.

February 22

Khost governor bans veiled women to appear in public alone. (Xinhua News Agency)

The local government of Khost banned women from wearing burqa, the traditional veil, for fear that Taliban and al-Qaeda remnants would launch attacks under the cover. The ban was issued after the arrest of five Taliban and al-Qaeda suspects in the province, where Taliban remnants gathered most of the support and showed sign of regrouping. Under the order, a woman wearing burqa in the province should be accompanied by her husband or one of her relatives, such as son, brother or father.

February 23

Zadran's son named as district chief in Paktia province. (AFP)

A regional local commander's son has been appointed district chief in southeastern Afghanistan, just weeks after the anti-Taliban renegade commander was handed over to authorities by Pakistani police. Abdul Wali Zadran, son of Pasha Khan Zadran who has led armed rebellions against the government, has been named chief of Wazi district in southeastern Paktia, provincial security commander Hay Gul Slimankhil said. Pasha Zadran was pardoned by President Hamid Karzai after the elders of his Zadran tribe, one of the biggest in the region, asked for him to be forgiven. However, the Zadran himself is still being held in an unknown government "guest house" in Kabul.

February 26

Five Afghan aid workers killed in ambush. (Reuters)

Five Afghan aid workers were killed and two wounded in an ambush on a road northeast of Kabul, Interior Minister Ali Ahmad Jalali said. Western aid workers in Kabul said the Afghans belonged to a local non-governmental organisation called the Serai Development Foundation. The NGO is involved in rebuilding roads and providing clean water in the area. Aid work has been suspended across much of the south and east of Afghanistan due to the violence, linked to remnants of the ousted Taliban militia which has declared a "jihad", or holy war, on foreign forces and aid workers.

February 27

Three killed by unidentified perpetrators in Khost. (AIP)

A man was killed by unidentified perpetrators in Khost's communications department. He was reportedly closely connected with officials in Khost. The killers managed to escape. It was also reported that a man killed two other men in Mardikhel village to the southeast of Khost bazaar.

February 28

Girls' school set on fire in Badakhshan Province. (Afghan news agency Hindokosh)

Unidentified people set on fire girls' school ablaze in the Jarsha Baba area of Keshem District in Badakhshan Province.

Video store attacked in Taloqan. (US newspaper The New York Times and RFE/RL Afghanistan Report)

One person was killed and another injured in an attack on a video store in the town of Taloqan. It was suspected that the attack on the video store was inspired by the former Taliban regime, which banned videos and music. This was the second attack on the store in two weeks.

February 29

**Members of jury in Spin Boldak District of Kandahar Province go on strike.
(Afghan news agency Hindokosh)**

Following an intervention by the deputy security commander of Spin Boldak District of Kandahar Province in a court trial of his relative and his threats to the jury to hear the verdict in favour of his relative, the members of the jury went on strike. According to a report, the matter was also taken to the security commander of Kandahar Province. However, because the dispute had not been resolved, the head of the Kandahar Province Appeal Court, Mr Abdol Basir Habibi, came to Kabul to discuss the issue with the head of judges and the head of the Transitional Administration. In the mean time, all courts in Kandahar city and districts are closed.

Four Afghan commanders handed over to provincial authority in Balkh Province. (Voice of the Islamic Republic)

The Jonbesh-e Melli Eslami Afghanistan [National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan in the North] party has handed over four commanders accused of killing four Jamiat-e Eslami [Islamic Unity] party members to the provincial security commission in northern Balkh Province. Faizollah Zaki, the spokesman for the leader of the Jonbesh-e Melli Afghanistan party, General Abdorrashid Dostum, said that these four persons have been accused of the killing of four Jamiat-e Eslami party commanders. Zaki added that the Jonbesh-e Melli Eslami party is committed to handing over a further four suspects, who are at present at large, to the Balkh Province's security commission.

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Revised September 2004*