

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: AFG23665
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This response was prepared by the Country Research Section of the Refugee Review Tribunal (RRT) after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the RRT within time constraints. This response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum.

Questions

- 1. Who is in control of the Samangan province in Afghanistan?**
- 2. Are warlords particularly active in Samangan province?**
- 3. Is there any evidence of forced recruitment by militia groups in Samangan province?**
- 4. Is there evidence of any ethnic tensions or rivalries between Tajiks and Uzbeks (or other ethnic groups) in Samangan province?**
- 5. Please provide any details about refugees returning to Samangan in recent times, including details regarding returnees from Western nations.**

RESPONSE

- 1. Who is in control of the Samangan province in Afghanistan?**
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According to an article dated 20 July 2004, Abdol Haq Shafaq had been appointed as governor and Sayd Ahmad Sami had been appointed as security commander of Samangan province at that time ('New Appointments in Afghan Interior Ministry' 2004, *BBC Monitoring Service*, source: Radio Afghanistan, Kabul, 20 July – Attachment 1). A further article dated 4 August 2004 refers to a report on Samangan television that Abdol Haq Shafaq had been installed as governor and Sayd Ahmad Khan Sahmi as security commander of Samangan province. The report indicates that both the new governor and the new security commander "each promised to carry out the plans and programmes of Afghan state and carry out their responsibilities according to the expectations of the Samangan people" ('New governor, security chief installed in Afghanistan's Samangan Province' 2004, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, source: Samangan television, Aybak, 4 August – Attachment 2). A later article dated 10 June 2005 notes that Colonel Mohammad Ayub is now the security commander of Samangan province ('Afghan government announces new security chiefs in provinces' 2005, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, source: Afghanistan television, Kabul, 10 June – Attachment 3).

A RRT research response dated 23 August 2005 (RRT Country Research 2005, *Research Response AFG17466*, 23 August – Attachment 4) refers to a UNHCR *Return Information Update* dated 15 June 2004, which mentions that Abdul Haq Shafaq was “a former commander of Hezb-i-Wahdat party.” The *Return Information Update* also notes that Abdul Haq Shafaq, who was the newly appointed governor of Sar-i-pul province at that time, had been prevented from entering his office by Army Division No 82 and had been forced to leave Sar-i-pul (UNHCR 2004, *Return Information Update*, Issue 59, 15 June – Attachment 5). An article dated 10 June 2005 indicates that in June 2004, supporters of Afghan warlord Abdul Rashid Dostum had “prevented the designated governor of Sar-e-Pol province from taking office and forced him to retreat to a neighboring northern province” (‘Afghanistan: Afghan warlord appointed chief-of-staff’ 2005, *International Security and Relations Network*, 10 June – Attachment 6). A report by the United Nations dated 12 August 2004, which covers the period from 19 March 2004 to 1 August 2004, also mentions that factional elements in Samangan and Sari-i-Pul provinces had continued “to prevent the governors designate from taking up their posts” (United Nations General Assembly Security Council 2004, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security – Report of the Secretary-General*, A/58/868-S/2004/634, 12 August, p 8 – Attachment 7).

In relation to the situation regarding warlords and ethnic tensions or rivalries in Samangan province, a DIMIA Country Information Service issues brief dated October 2004 indicates that at that time, the north was “dominated by warlords Abdul Rashid Dostum, leader of the Junbish-i-Milli party who feuds with Ustad Atta Mohammed of the Jamiat party, and Mohammed Mohaqqueq, commander of the northern branch of the Hazara Hizb-i-Wahdat party. Mohaqqueq is allied with Ustad Atta Mohammed against Dostum, although he occasionally fights Jamiat forces. Mohaqqueq’s forces also occasionally engage in conflict with the competing *Pasdar* (Aqbari) faction of Hizb-i-Wahdat, or with militia of the rival Hazara party, the Harakat.” The issues brief also indicates that the region in which Ustad Atta Mohammed, who is Tajik, operated included northern Samangan. Abdul Rashid Dostum, an Uzbek, was also present in Samangan, and according to the issues brief, “The line of contention with Jamiat-i-Islami (Ustad Atta Mohammed) forces is roughly at the southern part of Balkh and Sari Pul and northern Samangan Provinces, but hostilities sometimes extend to Faryab.” The Hazara Mohammed Mohaqqueq was also active in Samangan. The issues brief refers to a report “in April 2003 that Mohaqqueq’s militia clashed earlier in the year with Harakat-i-Islami forces in a south eastern district of Samangan Province (Dar-i-Suf)” (DIMIA Country Information Service 2004, *Political and military power of warlords and factional fighting in Afghanistan*, October, Sections 1.7 & 2.3, & Attachment B – Attachment 8).

An article in *IWPR’s Afghan Recovery Report* dated 7 October 2004 refers to allegations that Abdul Rashid Dostum had “profited from production and trafficking of opium in northern Afghanistan.” According to the article, “The region Dostum controls includes areas where opium is grown. “These four provinces - Balkh, Faryab, Jowzjan and Samangan - are on the list of major areas for poppy production,” said General Majid Azimi, head of the national intelligence service’s branch in Mazar-e-Sharif” (Gardish, Hafizullah 2004, ‘Abdul Rashid Dostum: Veteran General lacks broad support’, *IWPR’s Afghan Recovery Report*, No 139, Part III, 7 October – Attachment 9). A further article dated 23 September 2004 indicates that Mohammad Zaher Aghbar, the head of Afghanistan's counter-narcotics department, had “appealed to the leaders and people of Samangan Province to participate in the drive to eradicate drugs”, and had “said that the anti-drug campaign should be aimed at those who “have private military forces” and who “load vehicles full of poppies and guard them with gunmen”” (‘Afghan drugs tsar appeals to people of northern province not to grow poppy’ 2004,

BBC Monitoring South Asia, source: Samangan television, Aybak, 23 September – Attachment 10). A more recent article dated 13 August 2005 notes that Habibollah Qaderi, the Counter-Narcotics Minister, had said that Samangan and Balkh provinces had “made no progress in the eradication of poppy”, and that a “report published in February this year by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) shows a reduction in poppy cultivation throughout Afghanistan. However, on the contrary, poppy cultivation has increased markedly in the provinces of Balkh and Samangan” (‘Meeting discusses failure of poppy eradication in two northern Afghan provinces’ 2005, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, source: Cheragh, Kabul, 13 August – Attachment 11).

A Human Rights Watch report dated September 2004 on human rights abuses and political repression in the run-up to the presidential election in Afghanistan indicates that “For the most part, military, police, and intelligence forces in the north are allied with the leader of the Junbish faction, General Rashid Dostum, or to a lesser degree with the Jamiat-allied commander Atta Mohammad or the Hezb-e Wahdat commander Mohammad Mohaqqiq.” The report also notes that “Most rurally based commanders in the northern provinces of Samangan, Balkh, Jowzjan, Faryab, and Baghlan provinces are allied with Junbish.” The report also indicates that the three factions were “engaging in ongoing political repression” and there is reference to reports from four northern provinces including Samangan of “cases of voter card confiscation and of local leaders being instructed how to vote.” It is stated in the report that:

For the most part, military, police, and intelligence forces in the north are allied with the leader of the Junbish faction, General Rashid Dostum, or to a lesser degree with the Jamiat-allied commander Atta Mohammad or the Hezb-e Wahdat commander Mohammad Mohaqqiq...

All three of these forces have been implicated in widespread abuses against ethnic Pashtun villagers in the north in the wake of the Taliban’s defeat in 2001, as Human Rights Watch has documented in a previous report... All three—and especially the forces of General Dostum—continue to engage in abuses.

...The three factions are also engaging in ongoing political repression. According to numerous observers with the joint UNAMA-AIHRC political rights verification team, as well as NGO and U.N. officials, Junbish, Jamiat and Wahdat (Mohaqqiq) commanders have already threatened local leaders to ensure that local populations vote as they command... Representatives from several areas confirmed this... The UNAMA-AIHRC team has also confirmed several cases of commanders using false pretenses or outright force to compel registered voters to hand over their cards to the factions, presumably so they could be photocopied for use in nominating factional candidates...

JEMB, UNAMA, and AIHRC staff working in Sar-e Pol, Faryab, Jawzjan, and Samangan provinces confirmed cases of voter card confiscation and of local leaders being instructed how to vote... Observers familiar with Samangan said that the local commander there, Ahmed Khan, would deliver votes for Junbish, while in Sar-e Pol the votes would be controlled by a local warlord there, Commander Kamal (Human Rights Watch 2004, *The Rule of the Gun – Human Rights Abuses and Political Repression in the Run-up to Afghanistan’s Presidential Election*, September, pp 21-22 & 48 – Attachment 12).

A RRT research response dated 10 May 2004 includes reports from 2003 regarding factional fighting in Dara-i-Souf district in Samangan province. The response also refers to information received from UNHCR Kabul in response to questions sent to UNHCR by the RRT (RRT Country Research 2004, *Research Response AFG16631*, 10 May – Attachment 13). The UNHCR response was received on 10 May 2004 and includes information in relation to the

political/ethnic groups that were in control of Dara-i-Souf district at that time. The answers from UNHCR are in bold type below:

Questions on Dara-i-Souf district of Samangan province.

There is a group of villages called Qam Jangal in the west of Dara-i-Souf which may be the ones referred to. News and UNHCR reports indicate that the Junbish-i-Milli militia of General Dostum, and the Jaime forces of Mohammad Atta, have clashed regularly in Dara-i-Souf; and that other militias such as Hezb-I Wahdat also have a presence.

What is the ethnic composition of Dara-i-Souf as a whole? What is the ethnic composition of the western area where Qam Jangal is located, and the surrounding areas?

The ethnic composition in Samangan is roughly as follows: 35% Hazaras, 37% Tajik; 28% Uzbek. The western part, which is now a separate district called Dara-i-Souf district, is mainly Tajik. In the East of the province, the majority is Uzbek.

Which political/ethnic groups are in control of the area? Are the names of any key personnel known?

In the West, Jamiat is in control. In the East, it is Jumbesh. In the South it is Harakat and Wahdat.

Key personnel known are as follows:

- 1. Jumbesh: Alma Hajji Khadem Dumlokarin**
- 2. Jamiat: Rais Ibrahim, Mullah Subratullajh, Mullah Mukhtar, Mullah Hajji Akram, and Mullah Bobabik**
- 3. Wahdat: Tamasoki, Eftekhari; Sultan Abdul Wahab; Sayed Dawud, and the Deputy Governor of Samangan Hadem Husain**

Is anything known of powerful Tajiks in this area named Jemayat, Werah, Olat, Mohibullah or Semanol Iqbal Moib (names are approximations)? Or Uzbeks named Hajji Islam or Ansumerbek?

Yes, one person named Mohibullah was the focal point for Jamiat some years ago. Two years ago, he became the governor of lower Dara-i-Souf. He is no more in power and is in Mazar.

There is also a well-known man in Samangan Province by the name of Hajji Islam. He is of Tajik ethnicity, and is a local commander in Rui do Ab District, not in Dara-i-Souf District.

Have there been any reports of recent mistreatment of Hazaras in Samangan province because of ethnicity, religion or past political allegiances?

Two months ago, four people were killed in a village in Galwan Sai, in the east of Dara-i-Souf. Two of them were Hazaras. There is no information on the motives of the murder (UNHCR 2004, *Information received from UNHCR Kabul on 10 May 2004 - Dari Souf-Samangan - Dimia 33*, 10 May – Attachment 14).

An article dated 15 March 2004 refers to a report on Iranian radio that “a number of elders and leaders of Badakhshan, Takhar, Konduz, Samangan, Balkh, Jowzjan, Fariab and Badghis provinces” had gone to Kabul to complain to the central government authorities about the behaviour of commanders in their area. “The elders and leaders of the northern Afghan provinces added that the commanders use force against the people and pressurize the people into paying them [commanders] money.” According to the report, the northern commanders had “denied these claims of the elders and leaders of the northern Afghan provinces and said that it was a tactic by the central government to create the grounds to sack them [commanders] and to appoint the government's preferred people” (‘Northern Afghan elders come to capital to complain about commanders’ 2004, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, source: Voice of the Islamic Republic of Iran External Service, Tehran, 15 March – Attachment 15).

The National Surveillance System report on Samangan province of Fall 2003 makes the following comments regarding the administrative system and political affiliations in Samangan province at that time:

The civil war in Afghanistan can be described as a complex political situation. The ethnicised conflict is embedded in, and is characterized by loyalty to one particular ethnic group military leader and strong antipathy towards other ethnic group leader. Administrative, political and military power holders often play a fundamental role in determining access to resources. The overriding issue of the conflict in Northern Afghanistan is the power struggle between Jamiat military party and the Jumbesh military political group. After the fall of Taliban most of Samangan province has been a loyal to Jumbesh military power and the Samangan governor who is Samangan Jumbesh party representative. However, there is a presence of Jamiat military group control in some area of the province. Sometime, the area are characterized by a high attention of fighting, violence for the presence of both armed forces (Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation & Development, Ministry of Agriculture & Animal Husbandry & Ministry of Health 2003, ‘National Surveillance System (NSS) – Afghanistan Samangan Province’, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation & Development website, Fall <http://mrrd.gov.af/vau/NSS%20Pilot%20Reports/Samangan%20Aybak%20-%20Daraz-E-Zandan%20Ruond%201%20Fall%202003.pdf> – Accessed 14 September 2005 – Attachment 16).

There are recent reports of military units being demobilised in Samangan under the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration process. These include an article in *IWPR's Afghan Recovery Report* dated 9 July 2005, which notes that “Ahmad Khan, an ex-commander in Samangan province, from the Junbesh-e-Islami faction formerly led by General Abdul Rashid Dostum, handed over his arms to the government in early June” (Ibrahimi, Sayed Yaqub 2005, ‘Another attempt to disarm gunmen’, *IWPR's Afghan Recovery Report*, No. 177, 9 July – Attachment 17). Another article dated 4 June 2005 refers to a report on Afghan Jowzjan Aina television that “Alhaj Ahmad Khan, commander of the demobilized Military Division No 19 in Samangan Province, and a number of commanders in the province have surrendered their remaining weapons and ammunition to the government in the second phase of the DDR [Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration] programme.” The report indicates that the governor of Samangan province, Abdol Haq Shafaq, had thanked Ahmad Khan and the other commanders (‘Afghan commanders surrender their weapons in northern province’ 2005, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, source: Jowzjan Aina television, Sheberghan, 4 June – Attachment 18). The previously mentioned Human Rights Watch report dated September 2004 refers to comments by observers who were “familiar with Samangan” that Ahmed Khan was

“the local commander there” who “would deliver votes for Junbish” (Human Rights Watch 2004, *The Rule of the Gun – Human Rights Abuses and Political Repression in the Run-up to Afghanistan’s Presidential Election*, September, p 22 – Attachment 12).

A UNHCR report dated June 2005 notes that Abdul Rashid Dostum had “agreed to disband the forces affiliated with the Jonbesh-i-Melli Islami, to lay the ground for the registration of the party” (UNHCR 2005, *Update on the Situation in Afghanistan and International Protection Considerations*, June, p 27 - Attachment 19). A previously mentioned article dated 10 June 2005 also indicates that news agencies had reported that Abdul Rashid Dostum had “been appointed as the country’s chief-of-staff to the commander of the armed forces” (‘Afghanistan: Afghan warlord appointed chief-of-staff’ 2005, *International Security and Relations Network*, 10 June – Attachment 6).

Another article dated 15 December 2004 refers to the disarmament of two military corps in the north of Afghanistan. According to the article, “Gen Abdol Manan, the National Defence Ministry official in charge of disarmament or DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) in northern provinces, told a news conference yesterday that all the military units of Military Corp No 7 and 8 from Fariab to Samangan provinces and from Morghab (District of Badghis Province) to Dara-e Suf (District of Samangan Province) have undergone the DDR process. He said this included more than 28,400 officers and privates” (‘Almost 30,000 military disarmed in Afghan north’ 2004, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, source: Radio Afghanistan, Kabul, 15 December – Attachment 20).

The governor of Samangan province, Abdolhaq Shafaq, also indicated in an interview referred to in an article dated 9 February 2005 that “No tribal, ethnic or factional clashes” had taken place since he had taken office in Samangan province. According to the article, the governor, who was asked about the security situation and whether there were armed commanders in the province, said that:

We had one military unit in Samangan Province, Division No 19. It was recently demilitarized and it joined the DDR (Demobilization, Disarmament, Reintegration) programme. We only gave eight guns to four senior members of the division for their security and submitted the rest to the Ministry of Defence.

There are no irresponsible armed men in the regions controlled by the national police forces, except in the mountainous and inaccessible areas that could not be controlled. No tribal, ethnic or factional clashes have taken place since I took office in Samangan Province (‘Northern Afghan governor says farmers need help in order to give up poppy’ 2005, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, source: Cheragh, Kabul, 9 February – Attachment 21).

An earlier article dated 1 July 2004 refers to a report on Samangan television that the deputy governor of Samangan province had said that Samangan province “was completely secured.” The deputy governor also said that “Samangan Province is rated third on the national level, but in fact it is the most secure place in Afghanistan. We are proud of the Samangan police. There has been no incident during the election registration process - a clear evidence that the authorities and the police have done their utmost to establish peace and security in the province” (‘Deputy governor says Samangan “most secure” Afghan province’ 2004, *BBC Monitoring Service*, source: Samangan television, 1 July – Attachment 22).

Other articles refer to the ongoing presence of warlords in Samangan province. An article dated 12 September 2005 on the Human Rights Watch website refers to comments by the men in a

Pashtun village in southern Samangan province regarding “how sick they were of local militia commanders and how upset they were that some of these commanders were allowed to run for parliament” (Zarifi, Sam 2005, ‘Afghan Election Diary – Samangan, September 12, 2005’, Human Rights Watch website, 12 September http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/09/12/afghan11728_txt.htm - Accessed 14 September 2005 – Attachment 23).

An article dated 16 March 2005 notes that protestors had blocked a highway in Tashqorghan district of Samangan province in protest against commanders selling some land plots in the Tashqorghan desert. According to the article, “Sources close to AIP in Mazar-e Sharif say the protesters chanted slogans against Balkh Province Governor Atta Mohammad and one of his former commanders in Tashqorghan, Taher Ehsan, and accused them of selling some land plots in Tashqorghan (also called Kholm) desert. The protesters believe the land in the desert belong to the people of Kholm who are the only ones entitled to such rights” (‘Afghan protesters block highway over alleged land sale by commanders’ 2005, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, source: Afghan Islamic Press news agency, Peshawar, 16 March – Attachment 24).

3. Is there any evidence of forced recruitment by militia groups in Samangan province?

The previously mentioned DIMIA Country Information Service issues brief dated October 2004 indicates that “According to the Belgian Office of Commissioner-General for Refugees,” forced recruitment into militias or for poppy cultivation “continues to occur in 2004 particularly in the Northern provinces (Badghis, Faryab, Jawzjan, Sari Pul, Balkh and Samangan), and the areas of most contention amongst Hizb-i-Wahdat factions (Dai Kundai, Shahrstan, in Uruzgan and Kohband in Kapisa)” (DIMIA Country Information Service 2004, *Political and military power of warlords and factional fighting in Afghanistan*, October, Section 3.2 – Attachment 8).

An Amnesty International report dated 12 January 2004 indicates that forced recruitment in Samangan was continuing. According to the report, “The forced recruitment of returnees, displaced and local population into local factions continues, especially in Samangan and Balkh provinces, despite a Decree on Military Service issued in 2002 in which it was stated that no returnee would be recruited unless this was on a voluntary basis” (Amnesty International 2004, *Afghanistan – Internal Briefing of AI Concerns*, 12 January – Attachment 25).

A Danish Immigration Service report dated March 2003 on a fact-finding mission to Afghanistan between 22 September and 5 October 2002 includes information on forced recruitment in northern Afghanistan, including Samangan province, at that time. According to the report:

The senior human rights advisor and the political advisor of UNAMA said that forced recruitment is currently taking place in the northern areas of Afghanistan.

An international source advised that the extent of forced recruitment is on the increase and should be seen in the context of the tension between the various factions in the northern region. The source has received reports indicating that the forced recruitment during the months of August of September 2002 took place particularly in the provinces of Sar-e-Pul, Jowzjan, Balkh and Samangan.

According to the source, forced recruitment is carried out in different ways. Firstly, it was reported, in late August young men were picked up from the street in Sar-e-Pul. Many of these were working for national NGOs. According to the source, forced recruitment is carried out by

both sides - by the Junbesh as well as by the Jamiat forces. It is said that Atta has ordered 1000 new recruits to be found for the forces in the Balkh province, while Junbesh are recruiting especially in Samangan and Jowzjan. Other forms of forced recruitment consist of the commandant going to the villages where he negotiates a sum of money in exchange for men. Amounts as high as 10-20 million. Afghani per person have been reported, (approximately between USD 220 and 445 per person). In some instances higher amounts have been mentioned. If the families are unable to pay, the young men are picked up. There are also reports of physical violence in the form of beatings of families.

According to the source, the local community often helps the family to pay. There are also examples of some families in an IDP-camp in the Samangan province having recently been asked to supply 20 recruits, but they only supplied three and sent the rest of the young men in the camp away from the area to another IDP-camp in the Kandahar region (Spin Boldak). There are rumours that forced recruitment involves people as young as 12-13 years, but according to reports, verified by the source, it was actually young men aged between 18 and 20 years.

The source also said that in May 2002, a decree was issued by the president about military service, which according to this decree, must take place voluntarily... However, according to the source it seems unclear whether this decree has come into force, and how it is to be implemented in practice.

Finally, the source expressed concern, that the Pashtuns currently returning from western countries might become a primary target for forced recruitment in the northern regions. The source emphasized that there have not as yet been any examples of this happening, but that it is an issue, which gives cause for general concern (Danish Immigration Service 2003, *The Political, Security and Human Rights Situation in Afghanistan – Report on fact-finding mission to Kabul and Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan and Islamabad, Pakistan 22 September – 5 October 2002*, March – Attachment 26).

5. Please provide any details about refugees returning to Samangan in recent times, including details regarding returnees from Western nations.

A search of the sources consulted found limited reference to details about refugees returning to Samangan in recent times, including details regarding returnees from Western nations.

The previously mentioned UNHCR report dated June 2005 includes a map that provides details of UNHCR assisted repatriation to Afghanistan between March 2002 and December 2004. The map indicates that 13148 persons received UNHCR assisted repatriation to Samangan during that period (UNHCR 2005, *Update on the Situation in Afghanistan and International Protection Considerations*, June, p 126 - Attachment 19).

A United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) press briefing of 20 June 2005 includes reference to a briefing by Afghanistan's Deputy Minister of Refugees and Repatriation in which he mentioned the launch of a project to distribute land to landless returnees in nine provinces, including Samangan (United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) 2005, *Press briefing by Ariane Quentier, Senior Public Information Officer and UN agencies in Afghanistan 20 Jun 2005*, 20 June – Attachment 27). An earlier UNAMA press briefing of 24 April 2005 notes that UNHCR and the Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation had "identified more than 3,500 vulnerable returnee and internally displaced families in need of urgent accommodation." The families, including 300 in Samangan, were to "be provided with materials with which to undertake construction themselves" (United Nations Assistance

Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) 2005, *Press briefing by Ariane Quentier, Senior Public Information Officer and UN agencies in Afghanistan 24 April 2005*, 24 April – Attachment 28).

An article dated 28 April 2005 indicates that UNHCR had “stepped up its efforts to assist voluntary returns under its ‘Facilitated Group Returns’ (FGR) programme to Afghanistan, aimed at removing some of the basic hurdles preventing repatriation.” The article notes that “Of the estimated 3 million Afghans in Pakistan today, according to UNHCR, over 400,000 refugees come from the northern parts of Afghanistan, with some 90,000 of them from the five provinces of Balkh, Jawzjan, Faryab, Samangan and Sar-i-Pul.” The article refers to comments by Jack Redden, a UNHCR spokesman, that “Nearly 180,000 Afghans have repatriated to these five provinces so far, since UNHCR’s voluntary assistance programme started in 2002” (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (IRIN) 2005, *Afghanistan-Pakistan: Efforts to assist Afghan repatriation continue*, 28 April – Attachment 29).

A further article dated 19 April 2005 notes that a nine-member team from the Afghan Return Commission Working Group (RCWG), which included representation from Samangan province, had visited Afghan refugees of Turkman origin in Pakistan “to hear their concerns about repatriation.” The RCWG is “a government body” that “was formed three years ago to help remove obstacles in the way of repatriation of the millions of Afghans living in neighbouring countries.” According to the article, Afghan elders had said that the Turkman community in the Pakistani city of Attock was “reluctant to relocate its established businesses to Afghanistan where immense problems of reconstruction, development and security remain.” It is stated in the article that:

“There is a huge pile of problems waiting for us if we go back,” said Ustad Karimullah, an Afghan elder in Attock. “There is poor availability of land, shelter, drinking water, food, construction material and employment opportunities. Also there are immense problems of law and order; warlords still have a strong hold in several northern areas.”

“At least five children of those few families who repatriated from here last year were killed during the intense winter this year. There is shortage of resources and [a lack] of social services - no one can imagine life without that, particularly for children and women,” another community elder, Allah Murad, pointed out (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2005, ‘Pakistan: Afghan delegation encouraging repatriation’, Irinnews.org website, 19 April <http://www.irinnews.org/report.asp?ReportID=46703&SelectRegion=Asia&SelectCountry=PAKISTAN> – Accessed 16 September 2005 – Attachment 30).

Another article in *AOP: Yesterday’s Afghan News* dated 16 April 2005 also mentions that a delegation from northern Afghanistan had “begun a UNHCR-sponsored tour of all provinces of Pakistan to tell refugees about improving conditions in the areas they fled up to 25 years ago and to hear their continuing concerns about returning.” It is stated in the article that:

The team, the Returns Commission Working Group was formed nearly three years ago to help remove obstacles in five provinces of Afghanistan where factional rivalries were hindering repatriation.

Since then, they have been trying to resolve problems in the provinces – Balkh, Sar-i-Pul, Jawzjan, Samangan and Faryab – and conveying the results to former residents living in camps for internally displaced people inside Afghanistan or refugees in Iran and Pakistan.

The article also notes that many Afghans had “established new lives in Pakistan and are reluctant to start over back in Afghanistan. Others, such as the thousands of residents of the slum area on the edge of Islamabad where the delegation went on Thursday, are poor Afghans who want promises of land or shelter before returning.” According to the article, the delegation was “carrying a firm message: it is time for most Afghans to come back and join in the reconstruction; they will have problems but conditions in the country have improved markedly since the civil war ended with the overthrow of the Taliban in late 2001” (Redden, Jack 2005, ‘Afghan delegation tours Pakistan to promote repatriation’, *AOP: Yesterday’s Afghan News*, source: UNHCR, 16 April – Attachment 31).

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Copernic search engine

Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation & Development website <http://mrrd.gov.af/vau>

Irinnews.org website www.irinnews.org

Human Rights Watch website www.hrw.org

Amnesty International website www.amnesty.org

<u>Databases:</u>		
Public	<i>FACTIVA</i>	Reuters Business Briefing
DIMIA	<i>BACIS</i>	Country Information
	<i>REFINFO</i>	IRBDC Research Responses (Canada)
RRT	<i>ISYS</i>	RRT Country Research database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, U.S. Department of State <i>Country Reports on Human Rights Practices</i> .
UNHCR	<i>REFWORLD</i>	UNHCR Refugee Information Online
Public	<i>JANE’S</i>	Jane’s Intelligence Review
RRT Library	<i>FIRST</i>	RRT Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. ‘New Appointments in Afghan Interior Ministry’ 2004, *BBC Monitoring Service*, source: Radio Afghanistan, Kabul, 20 July. (CISNET Afghanistan CX98261)
2. ‘New governor, security chief installed in Afghanistan’s Samangan Province’ 2004, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, source: Samangan television, Aybak, 4 August. (FACTIVA)
3. ‘Afghan government announces new security chiefs in provinces’ 2005, *BBC Monitoring South Asia*, source: Afghanistan television, Kabul, 10 June. (FACTIVA)
4. RRT Country Research 2005, *Research Response AFG17466*, 23 August.
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6. ‘Afghanistan: Afghan warlord appointed chief-of-staff’ 2005, *International Security and Relations Network*, 10 June. (CISNET Afghanistan CX123350)

7. United Nations General Assembly Security Council 2004, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security – Report of the Secretary-General*, A/58/868-S/2004/634, 12 August.
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