

Afghanistan Review

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Comprehensive Information on Complex Crises



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This document provides a weekly overview of developments in Afghanistan from 20 – 26 March 2012, with hyper-links to source material highlighted in blue and underlined in the text. For more information on the topics below or other issues pertaining to events in Afghanistan, contact the members of the Afghanistan Team, or visit our website at www.cmicweb.org.

Economic Development

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In an interview with *Pajhwok Afghan News*, Isabel Guerrero, the World Bank's vice-president for South Asia, said that Afghanistan's [growth will likely decline substantially](#) as aid leaves the country and that the government needs to take steps to maximise growth. She noted that, with estimated growth of 5.5% per year through 2018 and approximately 3% after that point, the country will barely keep up with its 2.8% annual population growth. To alleviate poverty and propel growth, Guerrero recommended that the Afghan government prioritise national programmes and eliminate those programmes which are not crucial. Guerrero also expressed concern that the Afghan security services are not financially sustainable and that the Afghan could be impelled to cut spending on economically beneficial activities to pay for its security forces. The World Bank official also targeted her comments towards foreign donor institutions, which she said need to start providing resources to Afghanistan via the country's budgetary process rather than "off-budget".

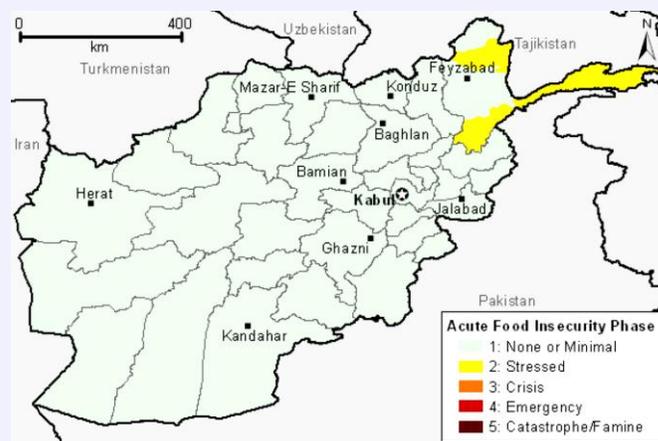
The presidents of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran and Tajikistan signed an agreement on 25 March to collaborate more closely in [promoting regional trade](#) and economic integration, according to *The News International*. This pledge was issued as the four countries' leaders participated in the Fifth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan (RECCA V) in Dushanbe, the Tajik capital. *Tolo News* says the conference is being attended by [more than 100 Afghan businesspeople](#), who are using the event to present their businesses and products to investors from foreign companies. More than 80 countries are represented at RECCA V, which ends on 29 March. Rohullah Ahmadzai, a senior official at the Afghanistan Investment Support Agency (AISA), indicated that the Afghan government is taking advantage of RECCA V to seek financing for large-scale infrastructure projects such as railways and energy pipelines.

After having won the rights to Afghanistan's massive Hajigak iron ore deposit last year, India is working with Pakistan to ensure that it is able to [transport the ore](#) – and perhaps some processed metals – across Pakistani soil en route to India, says *Reuters*. Relations between India and Pakistan have been tense in recent decades, and Islamabad reportedly is concerned about Indian engagement in Afghanistan. However, with India's economy growing and Pakistan's facing hardship, Pakistan's private sector and others are pushing for greater economic cooperation between the two South Asian neighbours. India hopes that the recently improved relations between India and Pakistan (*discussed further below*) will lead Pakistani officials to allow India to take iron ore from Hajigak to India either via road or a trans-Pakistan slurry pipeline. India's investment in Hajigak is estimated to be worth up to USD 11 billion, more than twice as large as China's USD 4.4 billion investment in an Afghan copper mine at Aynak. According to *The Times of India*, the Indian government is not only negotiating land routes with Pakistan but is also planning to [increase its aid to Afghanistan](#) in order to begin improving the country's transport infrastructure, particularly roads, in order to facilitate export of natural resources.

In related news, the *South Asia News Agency* says the petroleum secretaries from India and Pakistan met on 23 March to [deepen economic cooperation](#) between the two countries. The main item on the agenda is the fuel trade. Pakistan technically allows Pakistani companies to import

Humanitarian Update

The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) released its March 2012 “[Afghanistan Food Security Outlook Update](#)”. The report says that nationwide wheat harvests are expected to be up this year. In addition, it finds that, despite drought-related crop failures in northern Afghanistan last year, the region benefited from a strong melon harvest. In addition, the report notes that north-eastern Afghanistan will benefit strongly this year from increases in the value of daily wage labour in the agricultural sector. Agricultural workers during 2012 are expected to receive up to AFN 600 (USD 12.44) per day in that part of the country, twice what they would have been paid last year. Given that northern Afghanistan is largely dependent on rain-fed land, better harvests results in a greater demand for agricultural labour and hence rising wages. In comparison, agricultural wage labourers in southern provinces receive an average of AFN 250-300 (USD 5.18-6.22) per day. The USAID document also says that strong wheat yields in Pakistan this coming year are also expected to drive down the market price of wheat. However, this situation could reportedly change if Iran offers Pakistan oil in exchange for wheat. As a result of international sanctions against Iran, that country has limited options for obtaining basic foodstuffs and staving off a significant spike in the cost of food.



Estimated food insecurity, April-June 2012

Source: [USAID](#)

Indian diesel, though in practice Indian fuel almost never enters the Pakistani marketplace. However, with Pakistan's rising energy needs and India's increasing position as an energy exporter, the two countries are discussing the construction of a pipeline which would take diesel and petrol from Indian refiners and send it to Pakistan. Experts indicate that improved relations and economic cooperation between India and Pakistan may benefit Afghan businesses, which are exporting an increasing share of their products to India or elsewhere via Pakistani ports.

Afghan fuel importers tell *The Times of Central Asia* that ethnic favouritism within Central Asia has [blocked free competition](#) in the fuel trade. A small group of ethnically Uzbek and Turkmen Afghans reportedly have deals on highly beneficial terms with fuel suppliers in Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan which provide them with a near-monopoly over fuel imports via the Hairatan border crossing in northern Afghanistan. Approximately 70% of the country's oil and gas is imported via Hairatan. Non-Turkmen or non-Uzbek fuel traders who attempt to import fuel from Central Asia note that they are shut out or are offered significantly above-market prices that severely undermine their profits. Imports via Hairatan are particularly important for the Afghan economy given that, according to *Platts*, Pakistan has yet to follow through on its more than [two-month old pledge](#) to resume shipping fuel to Afghanistan. Pakistani officials had banned oil exports to its western neighbour due to domestic energy shortfalls back in October 2011.

While Afghanistan currently produces 40% of the fish consumed by Afghans each year, the country's Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) is pushing for complete [self-sufficiency in fish production](#) over the course of the next decade, according to *Pajhwok*. To do so, MAIL is establishing fish farms in the following provinces: [Balkh](#), [Bamian](#), [Helmand](#), [Kunduz](#), [Nangarhar](#) and [Nuristan](#). Afghan fishmongers said that they prefer Afghan fish over those from Pakistan or Iran but that there simply was not enough locally-raised fish. Hence, the scarce but high-quality Afghan fish often sell for AFN 350 (USD 7.26) per kg as opposed to approximately AFN 180 (USD 3.73) for Pakistani fish. It is hoped that increased production will also make Afghan fish more affordable on local markets.

Lastly, the US government will be establishing an [International Center for Afghan Women's Economic Development](#) at the American University of Afghanistan, according to the *Kuwait News Agency*. The plans to set up the centre were announced by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton at an event marking the 10th anniversary of the US-Afghan Women's Council.

Governance & Rule of Law

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US Defense Secretary Leon Panetta has [rejected the transfer of five Taliban prisoners](#) from Guantanamo Bay to Qatar, senior American officials tell *The Wall Street Journal*. This decision was announced after Qatar expressed resistance to some US demands regarding the handling and monitoring of the prisoners, according to the officials. The US Department of Defense (DoD) has now taken the lead from the US State Department in negotiations with Qatar, and DoD personnel expressed optimism that sticking points could be resolved. The Taliban says the prisoner transfer is necessary for peace talks to proceed and last week said it had withdrawn from negotiations because the US government had not yet moved forward with relocating the Taliban members from Guantanamo. Syed Mohammed Akbar Agha, a senior Taliban commander and cousin of the Taliban's main negotiator, tells *The Wall Street Journal* that he is in contact with Taliban negotiators and that any that suspension of peace talks would be temporary. A senior US Defense Department official said Qatar and the United States agree on the need to monitor Taliban prisoners once they are moved to Qatar, but the two countries reportedly disagree about how to do so.

Peace talks were the subject of a number of other articles. US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton said that the United States is “[prepared to continue discussions](#)” with the Taliban and that “our goal is to open the door so that Afghans can be negotiating among and between themselves”, according to *Pajhwok Afghan News*. She also noted that insurgent elements uninterested in peace would “continue to face military pressure”. Disagreements within the Taliban over peace talks are [damaging negotiations](#), says Mohammad Ismail Qasimyar, Foreign Relations Advisor at the Afghan High Peace Council (HPC), in an interview with *Tolo News*. Meanwhile [Balkh](#) province’s governor, Atta Mohammad Noor, tells *Pajhwok* that peace negotiations with Taliban [should not undermine](#) the achievements Afghanistan has made over the past decade, including human rights and freedom of expression.

The International Crisis Group (ICG) has cautioned that current talks with the Taliban are [unlikely to bear results](#) for a “sustainable peace in Afghanistan”, according to *Pajhwok*. [ICG’s latest report](#), which expresses concern about the potential for a future civil war in Afghanistan, recommends that the United Nations establish a team to mediate between the Afghan government and the insurgency. The report also recommended that the Afghan government include stakeholders from every ethnic group, civil society, human rights bodies and the Afghan National Security Council in negotiations.

HPC member Gulali Noor Safi says that female members of the HPC [have been largely excluded](#) from main discussions on reconciliation with the Taliban and are attempting to forge a united voice within the council, according to *Reuters*. Though women attend peace workshops and meetings, Safi says they are not a part of the core decision-making process. She said the women on the HPC had set up a committee to ensure issues related to women were addressed during negotiations with the Taliban. Safi, who is also a member of parliament from Balkh, says women were not opposed to holding negotiations with the Taliban so long as rights enshrined in the Afghan constitution are protected. *Reuters* says that some Afghan women have concerns that the current Afghan administration may give up some of the gains they have achieved in recent years. According to Safi, the nine female members of the HPC are travelling around the country to gather women’s views on a potential peace deal with the Taliban. In related news, US Secretary of State Clinton stated that any peace deal in Afghanistan that excludes women or tries to roll back their rights is [doomed to fail](#), according to *Bloomberg*. Speaking at an event marking the 10th anniversary of the US-Afghan Women’s Council, Clinton said the United States will continue to defend the advances Afghan women have made since the fall of the Taliban. On 24 March, President Hamid Karzai called on tribal and religious leaders to encourage the [education of girls](#), *Agence France-Presse* reported. President Karzai also urged insurgent groups to refrain from attacking teachers and school children, saying that the country could only develop through the spread of education.

According to a press release, the UN Security Council has unanimously agreed to [extend the authorisation](#) of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) for one year, until 23 March 2013. The Security Council’s resolution emphasises that the renewed mandate takes full account of the transition process and commits UNAMA to continue coordinating international civilian efforts in the country in accordance with the results of international conferences such as the one held this past December in Bonn or in 2010 in Kabul and London.

A [new political alliance](#) within Afghanistan’s lower house of parliament, the [Wolesi Jirga](#), was announced on 25 March, *Pajhwok* states. The Coalition of Democratic and Progressive Parties includes the following political parties as members: *Paiwandi Millie*, *Nahzat-i-Faragir*, *Taraqi and Democracy*, *Tafahom and Democracy* and, lastly, *Nahzat-i-Ayenda*. The deputy head of *Paiwandi Millie*, Zahoor Barez, said a genuinely democratic system of government was needed to guarantee Afghanistan’s sovereignty; he also called for immediate justice sector reforms.

Meanwhile, some *Wolesi Jirga* members have asked the government to remove the attorney general, the Supreme Court’s chief justice and five Supreme Court judges from their [respective posts](#), an official told *Pajhwok*.¹ In 2011, the lawmakers had given the attorney general and the Supreme Court members votes of no-confidence. However, the legal implications of these votes are disputed.

According to *Khaama Press*, Afghan government officials announced they would start issuing [electronic identification cards](#) to Afghan civilians within the next six months. The officials said Afghans would be able to participate in the voting process with the new electronic identity card. The identity card, which will incorporate biometric data such as fingerprints and iris scans, will allow government officials to access information regarding vehicle registration and driving licenses.

[Nuristan](#)’s provincial governor, Tamim Nuristani, said AFN 4 million (USD 82,850) of the AFN 10 million (USD 202,020) in missing Afghan Local Police (ALP) [salaries have been recovered](#). Nuristani tells *Pajhwok* he had appointed a delegation to probe the issue and arrest those involved in diverting the ALP salaries. Provincial police chief General Ghulamullah says he suspects that personnel involved in paying salaries were responsible for the missing funds.

Humanitarian Update

Pakistan’s provincial government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa has [cancelled the registration](#) of more than 2,000 Afghan refugees holding fake identity cards and issued orders to deport them to Afghanistan, *Dawn* reports. The provincial government there has also sought recommendations from different institutions on whether refugees’ assets should be sealed or confiscated. Pakistan’s Federal Investigation Agency also arrested four Pakistani officials who were allegedly involved in issuing fake identity cards and passports to the illegal residents.

¹ This article was produced by *Pajhwok Afghan News* and re-printed in *Outlook Afghanistan*.

Afghanistan's intelligence service, the National Directorate of Security, [denies recent reports](#) of torture at some of its prisons, the *AP* indicates. This denial follows the release of a report from the Open Society Institute and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission which alleges on-going abuse at several NDS-run prisons.

Security & Force Protection

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The *New York Times* highlights key points from ISAF Commander General John R. Allen's [testimony before the US Congress](#) this past week. In that testimony, General Allen said that he would not recommend further American troop reductions until late this year, after the planned withdrawal of the surge forces and the end of the summer "fighting season". General Allen said that it is too early to begin shifting forces from southern to eastern Afghanistan despite progress in the South. The testimony also touched upon the controversial practice of night raids, which were also the subject of additional reports this past week. Afghan Foreign Ministry spokesman Janan Mosazai has told *Voice of America News* that the Afghan and US governments are in "final discussions" on an agreement to [end night raids](#) conducted by American forces in Afghanistan. President Hamid Karzai has continually called for an end to such operations, which he says result in civilian casualties and violate Afghan culture's emphasis on privacy. US officials insist night raids are crucial in targeting the Taliban and other insurgent groups.

NATO member countries and other international partners are reportedly negotiating [future financial support](#) for the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), *The Telegraph* reports. President Karzai, in a speech to graduates of a Kabul military academy on 22 March, said that Afghanistan's international partners may cut security spending from USD 11.2 billion in 2012 to approximately USD 4.1 billion per year after 2014. Such a cut is expected to necessitate a reduction in the size of the ANSF from a peak of 352,000 this year to about 230,000 based on current spending levels.² General Sher Mohammad Karimi, the Afghan army's chief of staff, says he opposes any such cuts until "we have 100 per cent success and we are sure of peace and stability", further stating "we should not sacrifice all the efforts we have done" by cutting the size of the ANSF prematurely.

The US Army's First Infantry Division, often referred to as "the Big Red One", will make its [first deployment to Afghanistan](#) in April to take command in the eastern provinces, the *Associated Press* reports. The First Infantry Division has deployed to Iraq several times, but this, its first command tour in Afghanistan, has made the division revise its training programme to suit the new environment. "We had to wrap our heads around a different country, a different people," said Lieutenant Colonel Patrick Proctor, the division's chief of plans. Major General William Mayville, the division commander, previously served three times in Afghanistan, most recently as operations chief for then-Commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) General Stanley McChrystal. The division is relieving the First Cavalry Division in Regional Command-East.

Three ISAF troops were reportedly killed on 26 March by attackers who are believed to be members of the Afghan security services. In the first incident, a man wearing an Afghan National Army uniform shot and [killed two British troops](#) inside a base in [Helmand](#) province, according to *The Independent*. The shooter was himself shot and killed as ISAF forces returned fire. The [third ISAF service member](#), an American, was killed later on the same day by a man who was believed to be a member of the Afghan Local Police (ALP) in [Paktika](#) province in eastern Afghanistan. According to *The Independent*, these appear to be the latest in a series of "green on blue" attacks in which individual members of the ANSF have turned on international troops. *The Independent* says "green on blue" attacks have increased since the accidental burning of *Qurans* at an international military base in February.

Mohammed Wazir, who lives in the Panjwayi district of [Kandahar](#) province, [lost 11 family members](#) in the shooting allegedly perpetrated by US Army Staff Sergeant Robert Bales earlier this month, reports *The Washington Post*. Although the US military has decided to charge Bales with the killing of 17 Afghans, Wazir said that he wants "him to be tried in Afghanistan, in our presence". Wazir's only surviving child, his four-year-old son, was with Wazir in Spin Boldak at the time of the shooting.

Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty tells the story of Shah Mahmood, a young Afghan from Helmand province who was killed while [saving a school](#) from attack. Mahmood was guarding two schools in Lashkar Gah when two men appeared with explosives. Mahmood reportedly resisted the two attackers but was beaten unconscious and left for dead. As the two men began planting explosives in the school, Mahmood regained consciousness and opened fire, killing one of the attackers and wounding the other. Mahmood and the wounded attacker were taken to a Lashkar Gah hospital, but Mahmood died there as a result of his injuries.

A [rocket fired into a bazaar](#) in eastern [Ghazni](#) province on 21 March killed as many as three people and injured 13 others, *Tolo News* reports. Insurgents fired three rockets around mid-morning, the provincial police chief, Zorawar Zahid says. All the victims were civilians, and police are investigating. No group has yet claimed responsibility for the attack.

[Two children were killed](#) and eight people were injured in a suicide attack in southern Kandahar province on 22 March, according to *Pajhwok Afghan News*. Officials say the attack involved two suicide bombers, one of whom was shot by police as he headed toward a police station. The governor's spokesman, Zalmai Ayubi, said the second bomber subsequently detonated his explosives.

² The article notes that the final end-strength would depend on how the force is structured and equipped.

Jamaat-e-Islami and *Jamaatud Dawa*, two Pakistani religious parties, protested the potential [reopening of NATO supply routes](#) through Pakistan, *The Express Tribune* reports. Protesters in Karachi from *Jamaatud Dawa* held placards proclaiming that “Pakistan will be defended by jihad” and “[w]e hate Nato forces”. Meanwhile, a spokesman for the Pakistani Taliban said the group will [attack lawmakers](#) if they decide to re-open NATO supply routes through Pakistan, *Reuters* reports.

Social & Strategic Infrastructure

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During the [Fifth Regional Economic Cooperation Conference on Afghanistan \(RECCA V\)](#) held in Dushanbe, Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari announced that his country is committed to move forward with both the Iran-Pakistan (IP) and the Turkmenistan-Afghanistan-Pakistan-India (TAPI) natural gas pipeline projects, reports *The Express Tribune*.³ US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton warned that Pakistan could face US sanctions if it imports fuel from Iran, which is the subject of international sanctions. In related news, [Pakistan rejected Afghanistan’s demand](#) to receive transit fees under the TAPI pipeline in the form of natural gas rather than in cash, reports *The Express Tribune*. Pakistan believes that Afghanistan should receive cash payments rather than in-kind gas payments for allowing the TAPI pipeline to cross Afghanistan en route to Pakistan and India. Another article from *The Express Tribune* says that at least two [US oil companies](#), whose names have not yet been disclosed, have shown an interest in investing in the TAPI natural gas pipeline project.

The Independent Commission for Aid Impact (ICAI) has released a report, entitled “[The Department for International Development: Programme Controls and Assurance in Afghanistan](#)”, which examines the British government’s aid spending in Afghanistan. ICAI, which focused its assessment on 10 major projects funded by the Department for International Development (DfID), found that the overall portfolio was “not performing well” and needs “significant improvement”. Graham Ward, ICAI’s chief commissioner tells *The Guardian* that “we acknowledge that DfID has to manage this programme in an [extremely complex and challenging environment](#)”. He adds, however, that “DfID does not give sufficient importance to identifying and managing risks in the design and delivery of programmes in Afghanistan”.

The Centre for International Media Assistance has released a report entitled “[An Explosion of News: The State of Media in Afghanistan](#)”. The report comprehensively reviews and analyses the growth of media during the last decade in Afghanistan. It notes that, under the Taliban regime, only one government-controlled radio station was allowed to operate. Today, however, there are more than 175 FM stations, 75 television channels, four news agencies, hundreds of periodicals and internet cafes across all major cities.

In addition, a number of individual social and infrastructure developments were reported by the media during the course of the past week:

- a. The United Arab Emirates (UAE) and the United Kingdom will [join forces](#) to tackle poverty and promote growth in Afghanistan and elsewhere, according to a DfID press release. The collaboration between the two countries will support infrastructure development in order to boost travel and trade. In addition, the UK and UAE have pledged to establish innovative partnerships to help children get to school. In addition, the two countries’ development agencies will temporarily exchange some staff members in order to learn from one another’s approaches.
- b. The [Egyptian Fund for Technical Cooperation](#) will support Afghanistan by providing training to transportation specialists in Afghanistan, promoting literacy and restoring monuments in [Ghazni](#) province, according to a press release from the Egyptian government. The Egyptian Fund is already providing training to 90 trainees at the Afghan Police Academy.
- c. The World Food Programme’s “Food-for-Assets” initiative, which is funded by United States Agency for International Development (USAID), is building terrace and check dams as well as planting pistachio trees to [prevent soil erosion](#) in Khulm and Deh Dahdi districts of [Balkh](#) province, according to a USAID press release. The watershed management initiative is involving 5,800 skilled and unskilled workers and will benefit 50,000 people across 25 villages.
- d. The implementation of [three irrigation projects](#) in Panjwayi district in [Kandahar](#) province has brought together local tribes to build 24 km of irrigation canals, 2 km of drainage canals, 53 culverts and infrastructure design to manage floods, says a USAID press release. The project has employed 3,300 labourers and will benefit 20,000 residents.

Humanitarian Update

[Badakhshan](#) province has suffered [another avalanche](#), which resulted in the death of 22 people, all of them members of one extended family, reports *BBC News*. The avalanche occurred in a very isolated area in the Wakhan Corridor near the border with China, which is two days walking from Faizabad, the provincial capital. Two previous avalanches killed nearly 100 people in Badakhshan.

³ For further information on pipelines, see the February 2012 CFC report “[The TAPI Natural Gas Pipeline: Status & Source of Potential Delays](#)”.

Recent Readings & Resources

- [“Losing the Ability to Dream: Afghan Perceptions of UK Aid”](#), British & Irish Agencies Afghanistan Group, March 2012 by Edwina Thompson.
- [“The Department for International Development: Programme Controls and Assurance in Afghanistan”](#), Independent Commission for Aid Impact, March 2012.
- [“An Explosion of News: The State of Media in Afghanistan”](#), Center for International Media Assistance, March 2012 by Peter Cary.
- [“Talking about Talks: Toward a Political Settlement in Afghanistan”](#), International Crisis Group, March 2012.

The readings and resources above were brought to the attention of the CFC’s Afghanistan Team during the course of the past several weeks. The CFC does not endorse any of these documents or their content. If you would like to recommend a report or website for this section of the “Afghanistan Review”, please send the file or reference to Afghanistan@cimicweb.org. The CFC welcomes all recommendations but is not obliged to print them.

Afghanistan Events Calendar

- **Agricultural Development for Afghanistan Pre-Deployment Training.** The United States Department of Agriculture (www.usda.gov) and a consortium of American universities deliver this training. The curriculum will meet the needs of all deploying United States Government personnel in support of the USG Agriculture Strategy in Afghanistan. The training is for United States Government personnel and will take place in Fresno, California on the following dates: 26-31 March, 02-07 April and 18-23 June. Participants will be enrolled on a first come first serve basis. Contact Ryan Brewster, US Department of Agriculture, at ryan.brewster@fas.usda.gov for further information.
- **Field Security Management Course.** The Centre for Safety and Development (CSD) will be holding its “Field Security Management” course in Afghanistan from 13-15 May 2012. The course reportedly addresses topics such as the following: security management, context analysis, risk assessment, security strategies and procedures, contingency planning, incident reporting and the development of action plans. Further information is [available here](#).

If you are a CFC account-holder and would like your notice to appear here, please send all relevant details to Afghanistan@cimicweb.org. The CFC is not obliged to print any notice that it receives, and the CFC retains the right to revise notices for clarity and appropriateness. Any notices submitted for publication in the “Afghanistan Review” newsletter should be relevant to Afghanistan and to the CFC’s mission as a knowledge management and information sharing institution.

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