



THE WHITE HOUSE

PRESIDENT GEORGE W. BUSH

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Fact Sheet: Helping Afghanistan Achieve Sustainable Progress

PRTs Providing Security, Democratic Governance, Economic And Reconstruction Assistance To Local And Provincial Governments Across Afghanistan

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Today, President Bush received an update by video teleconference from American civilian and military leaders serving with Afghanistan Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) and at a Brigade Combat Team (BCT) in Afghanistan. Teams located around the country provide critical support to the Government of Afghanistan's efforts to improve security and democratic governance, to provide essential services, and to expand economic opportunity. The President, along with Vice President Cheney, Defense Secretary Robert Gates, Deputy Secretary of State John Negroponte, and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs General James Cartwright, spoke with U.S. civilian and military officers at U.S.-led PRTs in Ghazni, Paktika, and Farah provinces, and at PRTs led by partners in NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Bamian (New Zealand) and Helmand (United Kingdom). The President discussed the important progress these teams are making in local communities around Afghanistan.

PRTs Are A Key Element Of The International Effort In Afghanistan

The United States, in partnership with the Government of Afghanistan, the Afghan National Security Forces, members of the NATO Alliance and other international partners, is helping the Afghan people defend their freedom against the Taliban and al Qaeda. Thanks to the courage of both military forces and civilian experts, a nation that was once a safe haven for al Qaeda is a growing democracy.

Twenty-six PRTs are now operating in Afghanistan and working in partnership with communities around the country. Twelve of these PRTs are led by the United States and 14 are led by our NATO Allies and Coalition partners. PRTs help ensure that improvements in security are sustainable.

PRTs Participating In Today's Video Teleconference Illustrate The Variety Of Operating Environments, Challenges And Successes That The U.S. Interagency And International Community Face In Afghanistan

1. Ghazni Provincial Reconstruction Team

PRT Ghazni and U.S. Task Force Fury, located in eastern Afghanistan, consist of service

members and civilians from the Departments of State and Agriculture and USAID. With PRT support, security in the region has improved over the past year.

- **The PRT is contributing to infrastructure development and healthcare in several significant ways.**
 - The PRT is providing modern medical equipment to the local hospital, building a new emergency services building, and providing 19 ambulances to improve care for citizens in rural areas. Today about 90 percent of Ghazni's population has access to basic health services – up from approximately nine percent before the fall of the Taliban.
 - The PRT is providing micro-grants to small businesses, enabling them to reopen by restocking inventory, restoring business equipment, repairing damaged shops, and hiring employees.
 - The PRT is improving roads to better link population centers to markets and services.
 - The PRT is building the capacity of Ghazni's public administration and supporting provincial rural development priorities.

2. Lashkar Gah Provincial Reconstruction Team (Helmand Province)

The Lashkar Gah PRT and Task Force Helmand, which are led by the United Kingdom, are composed of both civilian and military representatives from the UK and civilian representatives from the United States (Department of State and USAID), Estonia and Denmark. The UK views this structure, with close civilian-military links, as ensuring a "comprehensive approach" that will make progress sustainable.

- **Despite security challenges in Helmand province, PRT team members have concentrated on governance, development, and fighting the drug trade.**
 - PRT leaders in Helmand Province helped establish a Civil Service Training Center to increase the skills of local government leaders.
 - PRT leaders have helped rehabilitate a high school that reopened last month to 600 students.
 - The majority of the province has no access to electricity, but PRT team members are working to upgrade equipment to the Kajaki Dam Project that will help expand access to electricity across southern Afghanistan.
 - Hundreds of Helmand farmers now grow legal crops under contract farming as part of the USAID Alternative Development Program, with thousands more farmers set to join in 2008 and 2009.

3. Farah Provincial Reconstruction Team

PRT Farah – located in western Afghanistan – is composed of soldiers, sailors, airmen, and civilians from the United States Departments of State and Agriculture and USAID. The PRT works closely with Regional Command-West (commanded by Italy) and also cooperates with U.S. Army teams who mentor the Afghan Police and Army.

- **The PRT's efforts have improved conditions in the province in several key ways by working with local government and local tribal councils.**
 - PRT and security forces dug wells, built a school, distributed wheat seed, and re-built a market after the Taliban were forced out of the town of Shewan.
 - The PRT has invested in critical infrastructure, such as bridges and roads, and trained

local engineers to compete for construction contracts. This has increased employment and local investment in new facilities.

4. Paktika Provincial Reconstruction Team (Sharana)

The Paktika PRT, located in eastern Afghanistan with U.S. Task Force Fury, has members from the Navy, Army, Arizona National Guard, State Department, USAID, and the United States Army Corps of Engineers.

- **The PRT has helped to link local and national governments in this province which borders Pakistan.**
 - The PRT facilitated the first meeting of all five major tribes in the province, which pledged their support to the government.
 - This team built two centers of educational excellence – enabling students to receive a quality education in the province instead of in Pakistan or other provinces. In 2004 the literacy rate was about two percent; now it is about 30 percent. School enrollment was about nine percent; now it is 50-60 percent.
 - The PRT began construction of the first paved road in the province, which will connect to major population and economic centers.

Participants In Today's Meeting

Participants joining from Afghanistan via video teleconference included:

- Ambassador William Wood, Embassy Kabul
- Colonel Martin Schweitzer, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne, Task Force Fury, Regional Command (RC)-East
- Command Sergeant Major Richard Flowers, 4th Brigade Combat Team, 82nd Airborne, Task Force Fury, RC-East
- Dennis Hearne, Department of State Political Advisor to Task Force Fury, RC-East
- Susan DeCamp, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Advisor to Task Force Fury, RC-East
- Commander (Captain Select) Scott Cooledge, U.S. Navy, Ghazni PRT Team Leader
- Zach Harkenrider, Department of State Foreign Service Officer, Ghazni PRT
- Rachel Grant, USAID Development Officer, Ghazni PRT
- Commander Frank Hughlett, U.S. Navy, PRT Farah Team Leader
- Karen Chandler, Department of State Foreign Service Officer, Farah PRT
- Gary Domian, Department of Agriculture Officer, Farah PRT
- Rory Donohoe, USAID Development Officer, Helmand PRT

- **In addition, PRT leaders from Paktika and Bamian joined the discussion with President Bush at the White House.** These leaders included:
 - Paul Ware, USAID Development Officer, Paktika Provincial Reconstruction Team
 - Craig Bryant, Department of State Foreign Service Officer, Bamian Provincial Reconstruction Team

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