

## KARZAI APPOINTS FOUR PROVINCIAL GOVERNORS

In April 2012, Afghan President Hamid Karzai approved new governor appointments for Sar-e Pul, Logar, Uruzgan, and Farah provinces. According to the Afghan Constitution, President Hamid Karzai appoints each of Afghanistan's 34 provincial governors. The Independent Directorate of Local Governance (IDLG) nominates a list of potential candidates from which Karzai makes a final choice. Karzai uses his network of patronage to influence and shape Afghan politics by appointing provincial officials and co-opting opposition figures. Karzai has strived to keep the central government actively involved in decisions at the provincial level, and has often selected governors to secure the backing of local powerbrokers and influence their constituencies. He has also used these appointments to reward officials who have supported him.<sup>1</sup>

Governors do not serve for specific term lengths and the president can replace or relocate them whenever it is politically advantageous. Although governors typically serve for at least one year, some have remained at their positions for as long as seven years. Of the four recent governor appointees, one has been closely affiliated with the Karzai network in southern Afghanistan and the others have previously held provincial-level positions in Karzai's administration.

### SAR-E PUL PROVINCE

Former governor Syed Anwar Rahmati, an ethnic Hazara, was previously criticized by constituents for favoring family and associates for positions within his provincial administration. In late 2011 there were two cases of alleged sexual violence by Rahmati's advisors and relatives against local women. Rahmati's failure to take action on the cases sparked protests in Sar-e Pul city. Members of Parliament (MPs) and members of the provincial council also sent letters of protest to Rahmati's office, the Wolesi Jirga, the Presidential Palace, and the UN. The provincial council threatened to halt the *Inteqal* process in the province unless Rahmati was removed. *Inteqal*—the Pashto and Dari word for "transition"—is the process by which security responsibility is transitioned in phases from ISAF to Afghan leadership. In late-November most districts in Sare-Pul province were selected to begin the process in the coming year. *Inteqal* chief Ashraf Ghani came to Sar-e Pul and tried to quell the protests by inviting a delegation to present their grievances to Karzai's staff. Rahmati was previously chief of staff for 2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President Abdul Karim Khalili, and Khalili reportedly kept the delegation from meeting directly with Karzai.

Although protests continued after the delegation returned to Sar-e Pul, another parliamentary delegation began lobbying Karzai for the removal of Governor Rahmati.<sup>2</sup>



ABDUL JABBAR HAQBIN

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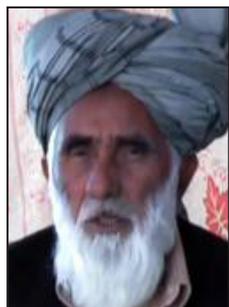
SYED ANWAR RAHMATI

New Sar-e Pul governor Abdul Jabbar Haqbin is an ethnic Tajik had served as chief of revenue in the Kabul municipality since 2010. He is a technocrat with an economics background and was governor of Baghlan Province from 2008 to 2009. He also previously led finance departments in the Baghlan and Kunduz provincial governments and has been vocally supportive of Karzai. By selecting a Tajik, Karzai is likely trying to defuse friction between opposing Hazara factions and the Uzbek population. Karzai also likely considered Haqbin a reliable technocrat who favors the president's policies and has previously demonstrated his ability to manage administrations at the provincial level.

### LOGAR PROVINCE

Attiqullah Lodin is a Pashtun who had been governor of Logar province since October 2008. He presided over several

large-scale construction projects in the province, including a Czech-financed irrigation project and an access road to the Aynak copper mine.<sup>3</sup> In early 2009 there were large protests after four Afghans were detained by coalition forces. Lodin intervened and helped secure their release.<sup>4</sup> Later that year, Lodin was alleged to have held regular meetings with insurgents to discuss the possibility of reconciliation.<sup>5</sup> Lodin is also alleged to have favored friends and associates by awarding them land plots around the Aynak copper mine, and in December 2011 a Wolesi Jirga delegation visited Logar to investigate allegations of corruption and embezzlement in Lodin's administration.<sup>6</sup> However, Lodin blocked the delegation from meeting with department heads and administrators, leading MPs to call Lodin "irresponsible" and claim that his provincial government had been weakened by corruption.<sup>7</sup>



TAHIR KHAN SABARI

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ATIQULLAH LODIN

There is a degree of uncertainty regarding Lodin's past affiliations. Some reports indicate that Lodin was associated with Barhanuddin Rabbani's *Jamiat-e Islami* party during the Soviet war.<sup>8</sup> However, in December 2010 Lodin said that he was long-standing member of *Mahaz-e-Milli*, a political group led by Pir Sayed Ahmed Gilani, who comes from a family of moderate Sufi leaders with business and political experience.<sup>9</sup> *Mahaz-e Milli* historically drew its support from eastern provinces, and current Minister of Defense Abdul Rahim Wardak was its liaison to Pakistani intelligence during the Soviet war.<sup>10</sup> Lodin said he was Gilani's "commander in two fronts: Kabul and Logar." He also said he left Afghanistan for Pakistan at the outbreak of the civil war in the 1990s and returned in 2001 following the collapse of the Taliban.<sup>11</sup>

New governor Tahir Khan Sabari is a Pashtun originally from neighboring Khost Province and became its deputy governor in 2008. In early 2009 Khost governor Hamidullah Qalandarzai was removed and Sabari took over the role in an acting capacity until he was slightly wounded by an insurgent bomb explosion outside his window during a meeting in his compound in January 2010.<sup>12</sup> Coalition forces are likely to welcome Karzai's appointment of Sabari as Logar governor,

as previous international partners described Sabari as an effective and trustworthy leader during his tenure in Khost.<sup>13</sup>

## URUZGAN PROVINCE

Mohammad Omar Sherzad is a Pashtun who served in the Upper House of Parliament from 2005 until 2010, after which he was appointed governor of Uruzgan. In late 2011, Sherzad reportedly feared for his safety and asked Karzai to relocate him away from the province.<sup>14</sup> Sherzad also criticized the central government for failing to assist his provincial government in its reconstruction efforts, claiming that poor education, limited telecommunication service, and insufficient healthcare were all hampering forward progress in Uruzgan.<sup>15</sup>

Amir Mohammad Akhonzada, the new governor of Uruzgan, is a Pashtun and the brother of Sher Mohammad Akhonzada, a controversial but influential ex-governor and tribal leader from Helmand province. Karzai removed Sher Akhonzada as governor of Helmand province in December 2005 after the British military refused to work with him due to his alleged involvement in the opium trade.<sup>16</sup> Sher Akhonzada was adept at managing multiple tribal interests in the province by carefully distributing provincial government positions to competing tribes and ethnic groups.<sup>17</sup> Although Karzai replaced Sher Akhonzada with Mohammad Daud, a Kabul-based diplomat, he also appointed Sher Akhonzada's brother Amir as deputy governor. Only a year later, Daud and Amir Akhonzada were both removed from Helmand's provincial government and Akhonzada became the Deputy Minister of Tribal and Border Affairs in Kabul.<sup>18</sup>



AMIR MOHAMMAD AKHONZADA

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MOHAMMAD OMAR SHERZAD

According to an April 2012 report by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, opium cultivation has increased in Uruzgan Province over the past two years and is expected to further increase in 2012. Amir Akhonzada is unlikely to tackle drug cultivation given his association with the

opium trade, and this inaction could undermine Afghan and international efforts to stabilize Uruzgan province and neighboring Helmand province. This comes as the Australian government announced that Uruzgan—where the majority of Australia’s troops are located—is expected to be included in the next tranche of provinces to be transitioned to Afghan control. The transition process would be completed within twelve to eighteen months, and the majority of Australia’s troops would be withdrawn by the end of 2013.<sup>19</sup>

## FARAH PROVINCE

Rohullah Amin is a Pashtun who served as Farah governor in southeastern Afghanistan since mid-2008. He had previously held several administrative positions with non-governmental organizations. Although he was not an official member of the Afghan *Mellat* Party, Amin said in December 2010 that since IDLG Director and Mellat Party member Jelani Popal appointed him, he was often thought to be a member of the party.<sup>20</sup> Mohammad Akram Khpalwak is a Pashtun who was appointed governor of Paktika province in 2006 as part of an effort by the Karzai administration to improve security and reduce corruption. He served in the role until early 2010, when he was chosen to be deputy chief of the National Directorate of Security.



**MOHAMMAD  
AKRAM KHPALWAK**

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**ROHULLAH AMIN**

Amin and Khpalwak both served for three years in their past governorships and demonstrated their abilities to manage their provincial administrations and promote the policies of the central government. Karzai likely intends to maintain security and the quality of governance in Farah province with the appointment of another trusted, pro-government technocrat with proven administrative experience.<sup>21</sup>

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## NOTES

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<sup>2</sup> Ruttig, Thomas, “Protests and Factional Conflict in Sar-e Pul,” *Afghan Analysts Network*, February 9, 2012.

<sup>3</sup> Arab, Shahpur. “Construction of waterhead gets under way in Logar.” *Pajhwok*, January 18, 2009.

<sup>4</sup> “Afghans’ demonstration helps secure the release of 4 suspects.” *Xinhua*, February 21, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Golovnina, Maria. “Reach out to moderate Taliban, say regional Afghan leaders,” *Reuters*, October 6, 2009.

<sup>6</sup> Azizi, Abdul Maqsd, “MPs say Logar Governor is irresponsible,” *Pajhwok*, December 21, 2011.

<sup>7</sup> Azizi, Abdul Maqsd, “MPs say Logar Governor is irresponsible,” *Pajhwok*, December 21, 2011.

<sup>8</sup> Arab, Shah Pur, “Logar new governor assumes charge,” *Pajhwok*, October 23, 2008.

<sup>9</sup> “Logar new governor assumes charge,” *Pajhwok*, 2008.; Azad, Malyar, “Governor Recruitment in Afghanistan,” *The Killid Group*, December 2010.

<sup>10</sup> Rubin, Barnett, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 2002.

<sup>11</sup> “Logar new governor assumes charge,” *Pajhwok*, October 23, 2008.; Azad, Malyar, “Governor Recruitment in Afghanistan,” *The Killid Group*, December 2010.

<sup>12</sup> Filkins, Dexter, Abdul Waheed Wafa, “Attack Leaves 10 Dead in Southeast Afghanistan,” *The New York Times*, January 7, 2010.

<sup>13</sup> Shane, Scott, Mark Mazzetti, and Dexter Filkins. “Cables Depict Afghan Graft, Starting at Top,” *The New York Times*, December 2, 2010.

<sup>14</sup> Epstein, Rafael, Dan Oakes, Dylan Welch, Bridie Jabour, “Afghan ally wants out of Uruzgan,” *The Sydney Morning Herald*, November 10, 2011.

<sup>15</sup> “Central Government failed to reconstruct Uruzgan province: Governor,” *Ariana News*, January 17, 2012.

<sup>16</sup> Rashid, Ahmed, “Chief ousted as British troops head for Afghan drug region,” *The Daily Telegraph*, December 23, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> “Putting it Together in Southern Afghanistan,” *Tribal Analysis Center*, May 2009.

<sup>18</sup> Lamb, Christina, Michael Smith, “Sacked Afghan leader blames opium mafia,” *The Sunday Times*, December 10, 2006; Samimi, Mir Agha, “Karzai appoints 4 new governors,” *Pajhwok Afghan News*, April 3, 2012.

<sup>19</sup> “Afghanistan Opium Survey 2012: Opium Risk Assessment for all Regions,” United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, April 2012; “Australian troops to exit Afghanistan a year early,” *The Guardian*, April 17, 2012.

<sup>20</sup> Azad, Malyar, “Governor Recruitment in Afghanistan,” *The Killid Group*, December 2010.

<sup>21</sup> “Paktika Province,” *Program for Culture & Conflict Studies*, U.S. Naval Postgraduate School, 2011.