



Private Security Companies Give Way to the Afghan Public Protection Force

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*This report outlines the Afghan government's plan to supplant the private security companies (PSCs) with the new Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF). The APPF, unlike PSCs, is a governmental force accountable to the Afghan state. As observed with other new programmes that are developing, there appears to be some contradictory information concerning the APPF. This presents the best information available. Related information is available at www.cimicweb.org. *Hyperlinks to source material are highlighted in blue and underlined in the text.**

Afghan President Hamid Karzai announced in March 2011 that the number of private security companies (PSCs) working Afghanistan would be drastically reduced. The Center on International Cooperation ([CIC](#)) at New York University reported that President Karzai considers PSCs to [lack accountability](#) and adequate supervisory controls. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) also announced its intent to establish [a government entity](#), the Afghan Public Protection Force ([APPF](#)), which will take over the duties and functions now performed by the PSCs. The process of handing over private security responsibilities to the APPF is the subject of this report.

“As we move towards the transition process, all foreign parallel functions and institutions including private security firms, the PRTs, existence of the militias, detention of Afghan citizens by foreign forces and arbitrary house searches must stop immediately.”

President Karzai's speech on 23 March 2011, announcing the first phase of the Inteqal process.

The *Inteqal* (meaning “transition” in Dari and Pashtun) process is the [planned transfer of power](#) from the International Security Assistance Force ([ISAF](#)) and American troops to the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), says the [Atlantic Council of Canada](#). This process began in July 2011. The ANSF are taking responsibility for some of the more peaceful areas of the country and are expected to take full control over the country's security operations by 2014. The objective of the APPF is congruent with the *Inteqal* process – the handover of security responsibility from foreign and non-GIROA entities to Afghan state institutions.

WHAT IS AFGHANISTAN IN TRANSITION?

Afghanistan is in the midst of what is commonly referred to as a transition or *inteqal*. The Afghan government has established a Transition Commission, and the international community is preparing to handover security responsibility throughout the country to Afghan forces by 2014.



Given the importance of this process, which will come to define and guide international efforts and Afghan government preparations for the next few years, the CFC is featuring reports on topics related to the civilian and security elements of the transition in Afghanistan. Readers are invited to suggest topics for this series.

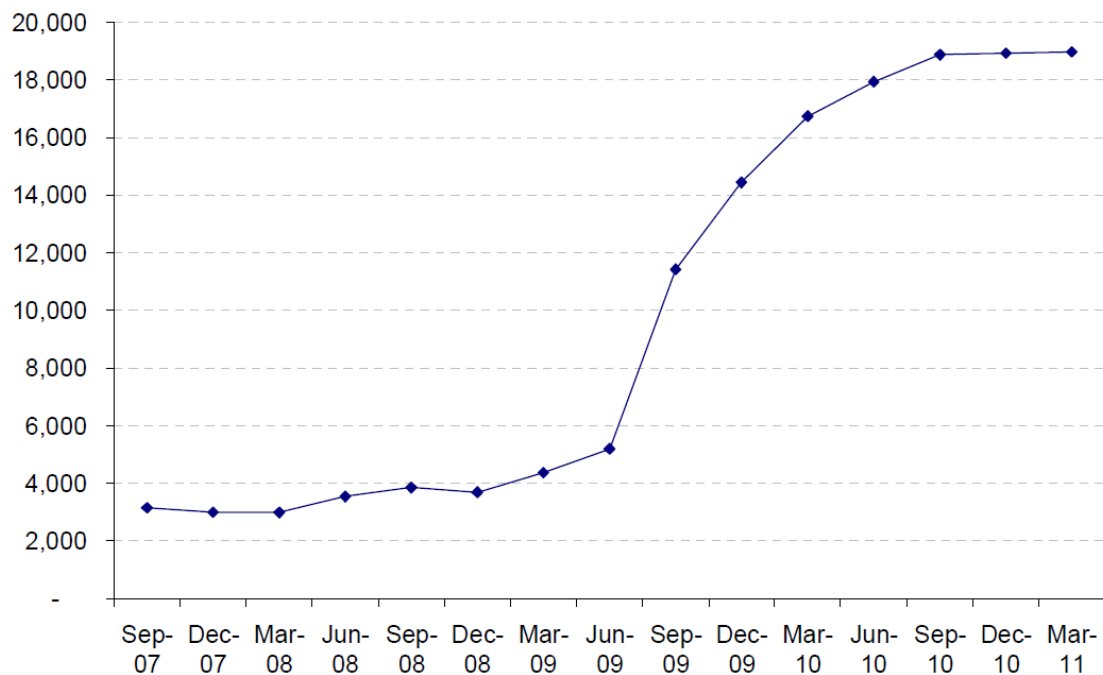


Current Status of the PSCs

PSCs are often used in lieu of conventional military forces, according to the Congressional Research Service (CRS), because they have [greater flexibility](#) than most militaries in hiring and deploying personnel. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) notes that a PSC [can provide services that free-up](#) their employers (e.g., the military, private firms and international organisations) to carry out their intended activities, such as reconstruction, convoys of fuel and materials, diplomacy or military operations. The SIGAR audit highlights that PSCs provide four basic services: (i) static (or site) security; (ii) convoy protection; (iii) protection of individuals traveling in unsafe areas; and (iv) 24-hour security for key figures. PSCs may also provide unarmed security services, such as operational coordination, intelligence analysis, hostage negotiations and security training.

The CRS reports that US government [use of contractors in Afghanistan greatly increased](#) from September 2007 to March 2011; the number of PSC personnel more than tripled from June 2009 to March 2011 alone. Figure 1 uses data provided by CRS to illustrate this steep increase in PSCs starting in June 2009.

Figure I. Number of PSC Personnel Used by the US Department of Defense in Afghanistan, 2007-2011



Source: [Congressional Research Service](#), *The Department of Defense's Use of Private Security Contractors in Afghanistan and Iraq: Background, Analysis, and Options for Congress*. Washington DC.

The US government is [just one of the entities](#) using PSCs in Afghanistan. Other employers of private security contractors include other foreign governments, international organisations and private industry. The increased reliance on security contractors has spurred the growth of PSCs in Afghanistan. The Atlantic Council of Canada says that the rapid growth of PSCs has led President Karzai and others to worry that PSCs are [uncontrolled and unaccountable](#).

According to the CRS, PSC employees can be grouped into [three categories](#): (i) US and coalition nationals, (ii) third-country nationals and (iii) Afghan citizens. According to the US Department of Defense (DoD), since



September 2007, Afghan nationals have made up 90% or more of all security contractors in Afghanistan; and as of March 2011, they comprised 95%.

Figure 2. Number of PSC personnel by Origin in Afghanistan, March 2011

	Number of Americans	Number of Afghans	Number of Third-Country Nationals	Total
PSCs in Afghanistan	250	17,989	732	18,971
Percent of Total	1%	95%	4%	100%

Source: CENTCOM FY2011 [2nd Quarter Contractor Census Report](#)

According to the CRS report, US and coalition nationals are generally [the easiest to vet](#); they often have military or law enforcement experience which can be examined through a background check. Third-country nationals can be less costly than the US or coalition contractors and usually have credible military training and experience.

Box I. The Seven Disbanded PSCs

NCL Security: Established by Hamed Wardak, son of Defence Minister Rahim Wardak, who claims he no longer has any links to the company;

SSSI (Strategic Security Solutions International): Linked to Hasseen Fahim brother of First Vice President Marshal Fahim;

Watan Risk Management: Headed by the Popal brothers, Rateb and Rashed, but closely linked to the late Ahmed Wali Karzai;

Elite: Belonging to Sadeq Mojadedi, son of Hazrat Sibghatullah Mojadedi and Mowdud Popal;

ASG (Asia Security Group): Founded by Heshmat Karzai, who claims to have sold the company.

LSG (Logistic Solutions Group): LSG is said to be linked to the son of an ANA division commander;

Shepherd Security: Reportedly headed by a cousin of Zaher Aghbar, currently Head of the Olympic Committee. Aghbar used to be responsible for PSC registration in the MoI.

Source: [Afghanistan Analysts Network \(AAN\)](#)

Local nationals are usually the least expensive to hire; they have minimal overhead costs and work on a much lower pay scale. The CRS report also suggests [hiring local nationals](#) can create jobs, build relationships and develop contacts with the local population. In addition, the locally-hired personnel have a better understanding of the local customs and context. However, local nationals are often more difficult to screen and may be more susceptible to recruitment into insurgent groups.

The political drawbacks of using PSCs are evident in President Karzai’s [statements](#) in August 2010 and March 2011, which called for dissolution of the PSCs. The Afghanistan Analysts Network ([AAN](#)) reports that the president has articulated his “frustration” that he cannot control who his international partners are employing, arming or empowering (i.e., the PSCs). President Karzai frequently cites the uncontrolled nature of PSCs and his suspicions that private security companies are also engaged in unauthorised intelligence operations. After his announcement about disbanding the PSCs drew a strong backlash, President Karzai acknowledged the need to [coordinate and cooperate](#) with all the entities involved. These included the Afghan Ministry of Interior ([MoI](#)), international partners who employ the PSCs and PSC owners, who are often power-brokers and/or relatives of government officials.

Many PSCs are [owned by powerful individuals](#) with relatives, or at least influence, in the government. Seven such firms (*see Box I*) were targeted for disbandment in President Karzai’s August 2010 decision, and 45 others were put on notice that they would have only one more year to operate. However, many users of these services, including the international military and embassy representatives, were concerned that the handoff from the PSCs to an Afghan government entity would face unanticipated obstacles which might create in a gap in security coverage. Many of the organisations using the companies

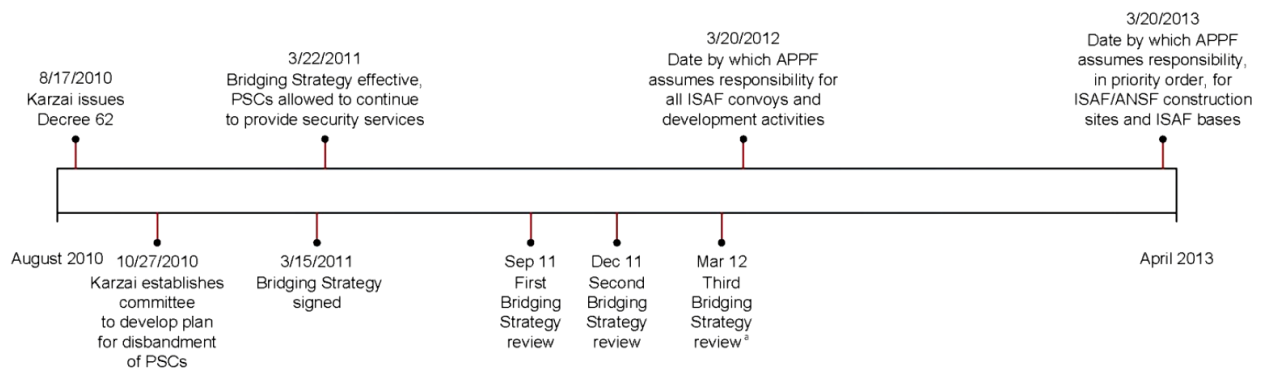


had pointed out the [negative impact](#) of such a quick dissolution. Hence, a more gradual and targeted implementation plan, the “Bridging Strategy”, was developed by the Afghan government in consultation with its international partners.

Launching the Bridging Strategy

President Karzai launched the “[Bridging Strategy](#)” to enable an orderly process by which the APPF will replace PSCs over a two-year period. The SIGAR audit states that, under the strategy, all PSC contracts to protect development and reconstruction projects [will terminate](#) on 20 March 2012. Subsequently, all PSC contracts for ISAF are scheduled to terminate on 20 March 2013 unless the US and Afghan governments have determined that the APPF is not able to fulfil the security requirements. In that case, PSCs may continue to provide the necessary security until the end of a particular development project – given that PSCs have been actively involved in guarding donor-financed reconstruction projects – or until the APPF has the capacity it needs to provide the security. Embassies and entities with diplomatic status are exempt from the decree and can contract with any licensed PSC that is in good standing with the Afghan government. Figure 3 highlights key events of the Bridging Strategy’s implementation schedule.

Figure 3. The Bridging Strategy Timeline



Source: Ministry of Interior, [The Bridging Strategy for Implementation of Presidential Decree 62](#), (Dissolution of Private Security Companies); Bridging Period March 22, 2011 to March 20, 2012.

Experts from the AAN have addressed the feasibility of the timeline for the handover of security provision from PSCs to the APPF. The AAN describes the current deadlines as being more realistic than the one [first announced in August 2010](#), which would have required the dissolution of all PSCs by December 2010.

Phasing Out the Private Security Companies

The Bridging Strategy reflects a number of [negotiated concessions](#) for the international community: (i) embassies, diplomatic missions and police training missions can continue to use the services of PSCs “until deemed unnecessary”; (ii) development/reconstruction programmes as well as ISAF and coalition forces are allowed to use private security companies for convoy and area security until March 2012; and (iii) ISAF and coalition forces are allowed to use private security companies for fixed site security for up to two more years (to March 2013). The APPF, organised within the Afghan MoI, will gradually take over the security responsibilities for reconstruction and development projects. In addition, the APPF and the Afghan MoI, together with the Ministry of Defence ([MoD](#)), will take over for ISAF convoy and site security in the first transition year and potentially in to the future.



Afghan Public Protection Force Mission

The APPF is to [provide “public protection” but not “law enforcement”](#), says an article in *The Long War Journal*. The APPF will have no legal powers of arrest and will only detain suspects for handover to the Afghan Uniform Police (AUP). The mission is very similar to the PSCs they are intended to replace. That is, they are expected to protect key government facilities, key government personnel and critical infrastructure as well as to disrupt insurgent activities and to facilitate development. *The Long War Journal* notes they are also expected [to provide intelligence](#) on Taliban and insurgent movements.

The APPF will comprise lightly armed, quickly trained personnel associated with the regions from which they are recruited. They will be used in important [areas where the government is in danger](#) of losing control, according to *The Long War Journal*.

The APPF is only one pillar of the [three-pillar organisation](#) designed to support police functions, the AAN observes. The first pillar is the regular AUP; stand-up of the APPF, the second pillar, will allow the AUP to turn over to them basic functions such as protecting roads, schools and government buildings. This will allow the AUP to direct its force to more appropriate and complex police functions. The goal is not to create a tribal militia but something [closer to a neighbourhood watch](#), “albeit one more concerned about preventing beheadings and school burnings than burglaries” *The Long War Journal* says. The final pillar is the Anti-Crime Division to provide criminal investigative services (i.e., police detectives).

The Washington Post also reports that the APPF is [intended to be temporary](#); the Afghan National Police (ANP) are intended to eventually assume responsibility for duties temporarily being filled by the APPF. APPF members who prove capable will, in the future, have the opportunity to transfer to the ANA or ANP. But once there is a sufficient number of trained ANP, the programme would be disbanded.

The AAN notes that the [recruits for the APPF](#) must be between 25 and 45 years of age and physically fit. They should also be free of drugs and not possess criminal records. APPF members will be recruited from the district in which they will serve. No [overt tribal or ethnic considerations will be](#) included in the selection process. Training is expected to encompass three weeks and will include classes on values, ethics, police law, use of force, human rights and first aid. Each recruit receive one assault rifle, ammunition and a uniform. Each APPF unit will be issued white pickup trucks marked “APPF” and communication gear. The US military will fund vehicles, communications and clothing for the force while the MoI will provide the weapons. Pay will start at USD 100 per month and will increase to a maximum of USD 250 for an APPF captain.

According to *The Washington Post*, all efforts are being made to ensure this programme is [viewed at the grass-roots level](#) as a domestic force, not one answerable to an outside power or to local strongmen, says. The [success of this programme](#) is not assured, according to the *Long War Journal*; it will depend on the cooperation among the entities which now use the PSCs, the Afghan government which is implementing the programme and, finally, the key figures who own and control the PSCs.

Box 2. The APPF at a Glance

- The APPF programme will not provide security all by itself. It is one of several security initiatives.
- The APPF pilot programme is small. Approximately 8,000 will be trained over approximately six months in 40 of 365 Afghan districts.
- The APPF is an experimental programme. Implementation will evolve over time as experience is gained.
- If it can be made to work, the APPF pilot programme will be expanded. If it cannot, it will be ended.
- Even if successful, the fully implemented APPF programme is still expected to be temporary. APPF members will eventually be integrated into the Afghan National Army and Police.

Source: [Long War Journal](#)



Annex A. Further Readings

- [Forsberg, Carl, and Kagan, Kimberly](#). 2010. *Consolidating Private Security Companies in Afghanistan*. Washington, DC: Institute for the Study of War.
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- [US Department of Defense](#). 2011. *Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghanistan National Security Forces*. Washington, DC: US Department of Defense.
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