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Early results in Afghanistan show close presidential contest. Afghan President Hamid Karzai held a slim lead over his main challenger, Abdullah Abdullah, a former foreign minister, in a partial tally of votes cast in that country's presidential and provincial elections.

In the count of 10 percent of the votes cast in the presidential race that had 40 contestants, Karzai had 40 percent of the vote and Abdullah had slightly more than 38 percent. About 525,000 votes had been counted in Afghanistan's second presidential election.

Election officials said the results were coming largely from the northern part of the country, Abdullah's ethnic and political base. He is the son of a Pashtun father and Uzbek mother. Karzai is Pashtun, the largest ethnic group in Afghanistan with about 40 percent of the population.

Continuing violence in the Pashtun regions in the southern and eastern parts of the country, charges of vote fraud being investigated by the election commission and the election complaints commission and the remote locations of many polling places slowed the tabulation.

Less than 2 percent of the votes in Kandahar Province and none of the votes from Helmand Province, both with Pashtun majorities have been counted, election officials said when they released the first results.

The officials told news organizations Aug. 25 that about 85 percent of the ballots cast had reached Kabul for counting, and their plans were to release results daily. Final results are expected in early September.

If no presidential candidate receives 50 percent of the vote, there will be a run-off election in mid-October.

In the 2004 presidential election 8.5 million Afghans voted, and there were 10.5 million registered to vote. This year there are about 16 million Afghans registered to vote, but turnout will likely be less than in 2004. This is due in large part to Taliban threats to attack polling places and kill anyone who voted.

Karl Eikenberry, the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan and a former American commander there, told CNN "We're really not going to know for several more weeks exactly where we stand in the process."

Foreign fighters pose growing threat in many insurgencies. Foreign fighters, a term barely heard before 2003, are a growing problem for a host of governments from Iraq, to Afghanistan, to Pakistan, to the Philippines and Indonesia in aiding local insurgents, and they are posing a mounting challenge to the United States and its allies in their efforts to help those nations end the civil wars that threaten their very existence.

Dell Dailey, a retired State Department official and Army officer, said, "The problem will not be solved with one military in one country."

He added, these fighters "return [from these wars] with a rolodex of contacts" to use in the future in other places such as Bosnia and Chechnya and their home countries. "The best example of that is Algeria where 50,000 people died" in a civil war fought between the government and returning Mujahedeen following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan.

Looking at what kind of people became foreign fighters, Dell and other speakers at the symposium sponsored by the Foreign Policy Research Institute based in Philadelphia, said the first group coming in the wake of the American invasion was older and more experienced and trained, most often in Afghanistan, and many of them linked up with Ali al-Zarqawi in Iraq.

The second wave was largely made up of men between 18 and 28 who were not socially developed, felt persecuted in their home country and could not fight their autocratic regimes, believed they were being economically deprived and open to ideological extremes.

Many were recent converts to a stricter form of Islam or converting from another faith, like John Walker Lindh who was captured with the Taliban near Mazar-i-Sharif in the early days of the war in Afghanistan.

"A poor person does not necessarily become a terrorist. Not many married 45-year-olds are joining al-Qaeda," but televised reports of abuse at Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay in Cuba "generated hatred and anger for young people."

Young foreign fighters have proven to "be most effective against our forces" by planting improvised explosive devices and undertaking suicide bombing missions.

Army begins advertising for officers. For the first time, the Army is advertising across a host of new and traditional media to attract young men and women to become officers.

The new multimedia recruiting campaign is aimed at raising awareness of the opportunities and professional paths available to those who want to become Army officers. The campaign kicked off Aug. 3.

In the new television ads, Army officers share the experiences and training challenges that allowed them to develop the mental, physical and emotional strength essential to Army leadership.

The new campaign includes Web, television and interactive media presentations, as well as university awareness programs.

“We are emphasizing the fact that Army officership is a path to lifelong success,” said Lt. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley, commander of Army Accessions Command. “We want our prospects to understand that through Army officership, they gain leadership experience by inspiring strength in others. They also gain tangible skills that can be transferred to virtually any profession—both in the Army and the civilian sector.”

Freakley also said Army officers learn to challenge others to do their best.

“Today, more than ever, our nation and our world needs leaders who will rise to the challenge, with the ability to advance their generation into a strong future,” Freakley said.

The paths to a commission provide high-level leadership, management and communications training and the opportunity to have tuition and fees paid for.

Candidates can earn commissions through a university’s or college’s Army Reserve Officers’ Training Corps program, a direct commission, Officer Candidate School or through an appointment to the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, N.Y.

In addition to TV ads, Web-based information can be found at www.goarmy.com/officer. The Web site contains both videos and further information about becoming an Army officer.

And, this fall, the Army will conduct officership panel discussions and information sessions at universities across the country and in Puerto Rico.

Initial officer training will soon change. Initial officer training will see changes later this year as part of the Army’s ongoing effort to improve force generation and make better use of personnel and training resources.

The commander of U.S. Army Accessions Command and Training and Doctrine Command’s deputy commanding general for initial military training, Lt. Gen. Benjamin C. Freakley, observed an example of that efficiency in late July at Fort Lewis, Wash.

The Leader Development and Assessment Course (LDAC) trained more than 5,700 ROTC cadets this summer, most of whom will be starting their senior years in college this fall.

Cadet Command streamlined the 29 days of training by “double stacking,” or moving regiments through the training schedule two at a time, shortening LDAC’s duration from last year’s 79 days down to 49 days, from June 13 to July 31.

“Double stacking gets our cadets immersed in a field environment longer,” Freakley said. “It gets them through in a shorter time period, which allows Fort Lewis as a strategic deployment platform to have more time available to get more units out.”

By the end of the year, all three of the installation’s Stryker brigade combat teams will have deployed since summer.

TRADOC and Accessions Command anticipate announcing a new officer training model for 2010 before the end of this year. “Getting second lieutenants to units in a more timely fashion is critical and we believe changes we’re studying will positively affect that,” said Col. Frank Ippolito, former LDAC commander and now Accessions Command’s director of officer accessions coordination.

Adding, “Operational tempo, resource allocations at training posts, eliminating redundancies in training—all of these factors are driving this study.”

LDAC’s crucial change this year, according to Col. Paul Wood, commander of the course and Cadet Command’s 8th Brigade, was doubling the number of regiments training at once.

“The changes shorten the time on station of thousands for training cadre and support staff—saving the Army money and saving those affected a number of days in the process,” he said. “This requires more rigorous logistical support and a more tightly packed training schedule, but it has proven to be supportable.”

Board recommends reconstructing NSPS.

A Defense Business Board task group has recommended reconstruction of the National Security Personnel System.

Rudy DeLeon, the chairman of the group and a former deputy defense secretary, said NSPS, a pay-for-performance system, tried to do “too much, too quickly,” and his group recommended the moratorium on converting general schedule jobs to NSPS be continued.

About 205,000 of the 865,000 Defense Department civilians are in NSPS. The full Defense Business Board will review the task group’s recommendations and will prepare a report for Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates. The first recommendation is to reconstruct the system.

“Reconstruction is a level of effort and sophistication more than just fixes,” DeLeon said. “It’s going to require a significant amount of diagnosis before you come in with reconstruction.” DeLeon said an effective pay-for-performance system requires commitments in time, money and effort.

“A supportive culture requires leadership commitment, open communication, transparency and employee trust of supervisors and leaders,” he said. A pay-for-performance system needs to evolve, he added. “Trying to do something too quickly, too ambitiously, may not produce the desired result.”

The overall conclusions are that the pay-pool process is overly complex and lacks transparency. Also, payout formulas are confusing.

The task group heard repeatedly that Pay Band 2 is too broad, and reassignments within the pay bands fluctuate from organization to organization.

The group also believes that NSPS has lessened the bonds of trust between first-level supervisors and employees. “Re-establishing the [Defense Department] commitment to collaborating with employees and manager associations is essential,” DeLeon said.

The task group also made recommendations for the general schedule system. “Overall, the department needs to design a collaborative process for [Defense Department] managers and employees to design and implement a pay-for-performance system,” he said. Adding, “Bargaining unit employees and the employees need to start from scratch in terms of any alternatives for the GS system.”

The group recommended replacing the current general schedule classification system.

(Editor’s note: This article is based on an American Forces Press Service story.)

DoD shows increased interest in human capital planning, managing work force.

The Defense Department is showing greater interest in human capital planning, looking at an enterprise-wide approach to managing its work force and now defining “joint” as being government-wide policies to managing the civilian work force, a senior Pentagon personnel official said.

Sharon Stewart, director of the Civilian Management System, said the strategy is to manage the work force by functional communities such as acquisition, intelligence and medicine and looking at where the government wants them to be in two years, five years, 10 years from now. “The military has been better at this.”

Speaking at a symposium sponsored by the Institute for Defense and Government Advancement July 28 in suburban Washington, she said in this approach a manager makes work force forecasts, does a competency assessment of its workers and develops strategies to carry out the mission. “Some of these [functional communities] are much more advanced in this than others.”

Specifically, Stewart cited medicine because of the significant issues the government faces in recruiting and retaining health care professionals. “High attrition rates, lots of competition for their skill sets, stressful [occupation] and needed more than ever before” to treat service members returning from Afghanistan and Iraq and caring for their families while they are deployed.

“Acquisition is more up to speed than most. It has been one of the more sophisticated in work force planning.”

Acquisition is also the functional community most affected by the Defense Department’s shift from out-sourcing jobs to in-sourcing. It is scheduled to receive 10,000 new civilian employees over the next three years. Overall, the department is expecting to add 33,400 civilians to its work force in the coming few years.

“This is really quite new. Everyone is trying to get a handle on this and make it work—across functional areas,” Stewart said. She added that the department has hired 225 human relations civilian specialists to help in this process of replacing military members with civilians. The service members “are already stressed. The idea is to have civilians do what civilians do best.”

The Defense Department and other federal agencies are also working on developing criteria for training future National Security Professionals. “It’s not an occupational skill set and doesn’t hit every position” even in the Defense and Homeland Security Departments.

Civilian augmentees learn about working with military in Afghanistan. John Riordan is a career foreign service officer working with USAID. In 2006 and 2007, he served in Iraq. After that he completed the School for Advanced Military Studies at Fort Leavenworth, Kan. "I'm a real Jedi warrior," he said with a smile.

Now at Muscatatuck Urban Training Center in southern Indiana, he is working with civilian augmentees from USAID, the State Department and Department of Agriculture who will soon be going to Afghanistan as members of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) or working with the Afghan National Government in Kabul.

The augmentees are the second rotation of federal civilian employees training on the Indiana Army National Guard site before deploying.

For many this week is the first experience they have had in being around the U.S. military and becoming familiar with what it does and how it does it. It is an experience that more federal employees will be experiencing this year and into the future.

The State Department will increase its numbers in Afghanistan from about 560 last year to 1,000 this year. The Department of Agriculture will send 55 civilian employees to Afghanistan this year.

Before they came to Indiana, the 20 plus federal civilians received training at the Foreign Service Institute in Arlington, Va. "That gives you a flavor" of what it is like to be in Afghanistan and trying to work there. "This is more real. They get more out of it. They have to deal with [role playing] Afghans, and you're not going home at night."

Command Sgt. Maj. Steve Ridings said, for the augmentees, "This is a totally different environment." Even in his own experience, he found Afghanistan very different from his time in Iraq or his earlier time in Bosnia. Being in Afghanistan "requires a totally different mindset. They're going to be working with the PRTs or a minister in Kabul, and [the Afghans] have to do" what is necessary in getting the work done.

For soldiers and civilians attitude is important. "It's 90 percent of what we do."

In the simulated FOB, "The soldiers are learning too—what it is like to be working with the civilians, and the civilians are learning what it is like to be with the military." Kevin Elder, one of the trainers with IDS International, said, "This gives the National Guard a new skill set" in preparing other federal agencies for deployment.

Stigma in Seeking Care Impedes PTSD Treatment. "I didn't know anything about PTSD," Col. Richard B. O'Connor, the author of "Collateral Damage," told attendees at the Aug. 19 Lemnitzer Lecture Series at the Association of the United States Army's national headquarters in suburban Washington.

Although he knows much more about it now, O'Connor said stigma in seeking treatment remains "the major impediment that soldiers face in getting help. ... There is a culture and stigma that has to change." He cited a recent study of violence committed by soldiers from one unit stationed at Fort Carson. "Violence at home is a consequence of violence in Iraq" for those soldiers. "There are warning signs but we miss them."

Now working on the Joint Staff on Afghanistan-Pakistan issues and scheduled to take a brigade command in Bagram in 2010, he added, "Neither did anyone else in the squadron" of the 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment that deployed to Iraq in 2005. "The brigade commander's focus was on operational training."

About 50 percent of his squadron were then embarking on their second deployment to Iraq and he could see a number of them, particularly in the medical community, were struggling once they arrived.

The AUSA Institute of Land Warfare monograph started as a research paper he was preparing for the Industrial College of the Armed Forces at the National Defense University and his experiences with his son Ryan, a former cavalry scout and now out of the Army, married and working with juvenile offenders, who was suffering from post-traumatic stress.

O'Connor, who has been in the Army for 33 years, wanted to talk about PTSD and Traumatic Brain Injuries with soldiers by going into the Warrior Transition Units and talking with them. "He will tell the truth, the golden nugget was the testimony of the soldier." Adding, "That was what kept me going."

In talking with the soldiers, he found that many had not used Combat Stress Team counselors when they were deployed because they "didn't want to open that wound, so kept [what was troubling them] to themselves."

O'Connor recommended coming to a standard definition of PTSD, more training similar to Battlemind and innovative uses of information technology and media, use of telemedicine to coordinate care with Combat Stress Team counselors forward deployed and mental health and behavioral specialists stateside, streamline the care process between the military and VA and build viable support networks on the installation and in the community.