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August has become the deadliest month for US troops in the nearly 10-year-old war in Afghanistan, where international forces have started to go home and let Afghan forces take charge of securing their country. A record 66 US troops have died so far this month, eclipsing the 65 killed in July 2010. This month's death toll soared when 30 Americans - most of them elite Navy SEALs - were killed in a helicopter crash on August 6. (Military.com 20.08.11)

Militants attacked the British Council in a residential neighbourhood in the Afghan capital Kabul, leaving at least eight people dead. The attack came on the day Afghans celebrate gaining independence from Britain in 1919. The Taliban immediately claimed responsibility. The dead included four Afghan police officers, three security guards and one Afghan civilian. (Rivera/Nordland)

The global community has failed to create a politically stable and economically viable Afghanistan despite pouring billions of dollars into the South Asian nation during a decade-long war against the Taliban, says the International Crisis Group. The Brussels-based think tank said the United States and its allies still lacked a coherent policy to strengthen Afghanistan ahead of a planned withdrawal of foreign combat troops from the unpopular war by the end of 2014. (Reuters)

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan are winding down, Osama bin Laden is dead, and the United States federal government is deeply in debt. This spells the end of what was a golden decade for the defence industry. In the decade since the September 11 attacks, the annual defence budget has more than doubled to \$700 billion and annual defence industry profits have nearly quadrupled, approaching \$25 billion last year. Now defence spending is poised to retreat, and so are industry profits. The US spent \$1.3 trillion in the ten years following the attacks chasing al-Qaida and fighting two wars. That was on top of baseline military spending in excess of \$4 trillion. (AP)

The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has carried out more than 50,000 air missions in Afghanistan over the past year, with three aircraft lost through enemy activities. According to Brigadier General Carsten Jacobson, NATO and Afghan forces have carried out over 2,800 special operations which captured or killed Taliban leaders over the same period of time (Xinhua)

NATO trainers will continue to mentor and train Afghan army and police for years past the pullout deadline of 2014, said Col. Peter Dawe, deputy commander of the Canadian contribution to the NATO training mission. (Postmedia News)

America and Afghanistan are close to signing a strategic pact which would allow thousands of United States troops to remain in the country until at least 2024. (Telegraph)

The United States will remain in control of Afghanistan's highest-profile prison well beyond

January 2012, missing a key milestone in the plan to transfer judicial and detention operations to Afghans. US officials have decided that the Afghan legal system is still too weak to permit the handover of the Parwan Detention Centre. The United States will now be unable to relinquish authority at Parwan until at least 2014, just as the last foreign troops are scheduled to leave Afghanistan. (Washington Post)

What will happen to the country's economy when the troops are gone? Local economists are warning that Afghanistan's economy could face a sharp decline after international troops withdraw. (Institute for War & Peace)

Thousands of Afghans who have worked with American troops and diplomats here, often at great risk, have become stranded for years in a murky wait to emigrate to the United States, despite government efforts to speed them from potential threats in Afghanistan. (New York Times)

Afghan President Hamid Karzai has said he will not run for a third term. President Karzai took power as the first elected president of Afghanistan in December 2004 for a five-year term and his second term as elected president began in November 2009. (Xinhua)

In September or October this year, new regions will be nominated for the second phase of security hand over process. Speaking at a joint press conference with Nato's senior civilian representative spokesman Dominic Medley, ISAF spokesperson General Carsten Jacobson said avoiding insurgents from crossing in and out of Afghan porous border with Pakistan is very difficult. (Tolo News)

Government officials seeking to break up hundreds of small independent militias in the volatile northern province of Kunduz have ordered more than 4,000 members to surrender their weapons within 20 days or face a military crackdown, threatening more violence in a region where security has steadily eroded over the last two years. (New York Times)

The Afghan Ministry of Mines has said that based on the Afghan Trans agreement the price of gas and transit fare of Turkmenistan to India and Pakistan through Afghanistan will soon be determined. The ministry announced that a delegation will go to Turkmenistan to finalise the agreement and determine the price of gas and its transit to India and Pakistan through Afghanistan. Ministry officials said that the practical phase of the project will start in one year and beside transit fees Turkmenistan will provide 5 billion cubic metres to Afghanistan. By signing this agreement more than 30 billion gas from Dawlatabad area of Turkmenistan will be transferred to India and Pakistan through this pipeline. (Tolo News)

At least 19 oil tankers were burnt when a NATO supply convoy came under attack in Pakistan's southwest province of Balochistan. the attack took place at when unknown gunmen opened fire at a NATO convoy on the Sibi to Quetta highway in the Dasht area of Mastung, a district some 60 kilometers south of Balochistan's capital city Quetta. (Xinhua)

The first Regional Open Source Conference-Central Asia takes place on October 15-18 this

year at Kabul. The Conference is a partnership between OSA, NICTAA, Ministry of Communication and IT (MCIT) of Afghanistan and UNESCO Afghanistan. The conference has a regional focus, bringing together speakers and delegates from government, academic, industry, IT professionals, computer scientists, software developers, system engineers, policy and decision makers, business leaders, students, young women and men and the mass media. The participants are mainly the Central Asian nations: Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan. In addition, the following countries are intended to take part: Bangladesh, France, India, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Turkey and USA. (Open Source Afghanistan)

Marriage is big business in Afghanistan, driven by a sense of competition, family honour and pride. No celebration is complete without a lavish guest list, costly jewelry, new outfits, a band of musicians and a sumptuous wedding feast - usually so extravagant that half is thrown away. The average wedding ceremony costs up to 20,000 dollars - about the same as in high-cost UK. Both families invite large numbers of guests, but the bill is footed by the groom's side. President Hamid Karzai recently declared that such lavish spending went against Islamic principles. (IWPR)

Britain and the United States poke fun at incompetent, arrogant middle managers in the television comedy "The Office," but in Afghanistan the target is a fictional minister of garbage in a new series called "The Ministry." Instead of a series mocking drab office life in impoverished Afghanistan, where there is widespread unemployment, "The Ministry" mockumentary puts a satirical spin on some serious issues such as corruption, drug trafficking and nepotism. (Reuters). "A wicked comedy called about an imaginary Ministry of Garbage Collection in the fictitious country of Hechland, or in English "Nothing-Land" (Washington Post).