

Building Health Security in Contemporary Afghanistan

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President Obama recently announced a new strategy to guide US policy in Afghanistan and Pakistan. This strategy focuses the U.S. Government efforts toward meeting one core goal: to disrupt, dismantle and defeat Al Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent al Qaeda's return to Afghanistan and Pakistan. Reinforced was the need to use all elements of US national power; diplomatic, development, military, economic and informational. In support of this strategy, the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs, in partnership with the National Defense University Near East South Asia Center for Strategic Studies, will host a two-day conference entitled "Building Health Security in Contemporary Afghanistan." The intent of this conference is threefold. First is to explore the role of health in establishing and sustaining security and stability in a nation or region. Second is to discuss the role of the military in providing health services to a civilian population. Third and final is to identify/develop the role of the US military in support of the overall U.S. Government effort to develop the Afghan Health System.

The first day of the conference will be open attendance with a target audience of senior policy makers from DoD in both security and health functional areas. The goal of the day is to introduce health as a security issue and to discuss the multiple factors that impact/influence health in Afghanistan. The format will consist of three separate panels that will present and discuss these issues. The first will address the geopolitical determinants of health, such as the 8-year drought, migrations, and narcotics. The second will address emerging responses to those determinants, to include emerging development strategies from the region. The final panel will address strategic parameters relating to health in Afghanistan. The first day will serve as a prelude to the more intensive second day of working groups.

The second day of the conference will consist of invitation-only working groups designed to address specific issues confronting the civil sector health development effort. The goal of the day is to provide a forum to discuss an integrated health development approach to benefit both the overall civilian health system and that of the Afghan National Army and Police.

Invitations have been forwarded to the Afghan Minister of Public Health, Afghan National Army Surgeon General, the Afghan National Police Surgeon General, and other international partners active in the health arena.