

## In Focus

Afghan Officials Suspended  
Over Parade Attack

Several senior Afghan security officials, including Kabul's police chief, have been suspended and were being questioned over an attack last month against President Hamid Karzai, an official said Monday.

Karzai survived the April 27 attack at a military parade, but three other Afghans were killed, including a parliamentarian. The three attackers were killed in return fire by security forces.

The attack was claimed by Taliban militants who have been waging an insurgency against Karzai's US-backed government.



Attorney General Abdul Jabar Sabet has suspended eight officials and taken over investigation of the attack from a government commission, spokesman Haytullah Hayat told AFP.

"We have taken over the investigations," Hayat said. "We have suspended eight senior government officials, including the Kabul police chief (Mohammad Salim Ihsas) so they can be questioned," Hayat said.

The suspended officials include senior security officials in the interior, defense and intelligence ministries. They would be questioned over charges of negligence, Hayat said.

They would be tried if found guilty of negligence, otherwise they would return to their duties, he said.

It was one of the most brazen attacks in an insurgency by the Taliban, who were forced out of government in a US-led invasion in late 2001 for harboring Al-Qaeda—which at the time had training camps here.

In another development, US-led coalition forces called in air strikes against the Taliban, killing a dozen militants during fighting in southern Afghanistan that has displaced many families, officials told AP on Tuesday.

Meanwhile, an old mortar round exploded in the north of the country, wounding 17 children.

The coalition said in a statement that its troops opened fire and called in air strikes on Monday after observing militants trying to set up an ambush. The coalition had been targeting a Taliban commander transporting weapons.

The troops also discovered weapons and ammunition in a search of compounds in the area, it said.

Fighting has intensified in the southern province of Helmand since US Marines pushed into the town of Garmser late last month aiming to cut Taliban supply lines in the heart of the insurgency.

Many families have temporarily left their homes because of the fighting, said Aleem Siddique, a UN spokesman in Kabul. He could not provide an estimate of the numbers displaced.

## Chad Closes Border With Sudan

Chad closed its border with Sudan on Monday, its government said, ramping up tensions between the volatile neighbors after Khartoum accused Ndjamena of backing a rebel assault on the Sudanese capital.

The Chadian government ordered the "airtight sealing of the frontier in order to avoid all infiltration and suspect traffic" across its porous eastern border, and froze economic and cultural ties, a government statement said.

According to AFP, the move aims "to ensure the security of its territory and citizens and protect its economic and cultural interests" and to "guard against all surprises," said the statement, issued after a meeting of Chad's ministers.

The border between Chad's volatile east and the stricken region of Darfur was crossed earlier this year by rebels as they launched an armed coup attempt—the second in as many years—against Chadian President Idriss Deby Itno.

Meanwhile, Sudan arrested and questioned the head of one of the country's largest opposition parties Monday apparently because of his links to Darfur rebels who attacked close to the capital this week, his party and state media said.

Hassan Turabi was arrested after dawn at his home in Khartoum, and at least 10 other Popular Congress Party members were detained in a government sweep across the city, said Awadh Ba Bakr, a relative and close aide to party chief.

## Dozens Killed in Yemen Clashes

Dozens of people have been killed or wounded in renewed clashes between the Yemen Army and rebels in the northwest, tribal sources said on Monday.

"Fighting killed or wounded dozens of people, including many civilians," on Sunday and Monday in several regions across the Zaidi rebel stronghold of Saada, one source told AFP.

A member of parliament said that the fighting erupted a day after Qatari mediators left the northwestern province after failing to stop the violence.

The Qatari mediation aimed at implementing

a peace deal brokered in June 2007 "is at a dead end," said MP Ali Abou Haliqa, who heads a committee set up by Yemen President Ali Abdullah Saleh to monitor the deal.

The defense ministry in a statement on Monday accused the rebels of "not respecting" the Doha peace accord. "The state will have to assume its responsibilities to maintain order," it said.

The rebels are fighting to restore a Zaidi Shiite imamate which was overthrown in a 1962 republican coup in Yemen, one of the world's poorest countries.

An offshoot of Shiite Islam, the Zaidis are a minority in the mainly Sunni country but are the majority community in the far north.

Thousands of people have been killed in the conflict since 2004, when rebel commander Hussein Badr Eddin Al-Huthi was killed by the army.

Unrest in Sadr City  
Despite Ceasefire

Iraqi boys talk with a merchant as US soldiers patrol downtown Yusufiyah, south of Baghdad.

Anti-American cleric Muqtada Al-Sadr gave his personal backing on Monday to a deal between his fighters and the Iraqi government to halt bloodshed in his Baghdad stronghold, even as sporadic fighting there claimed three lives, Middle East Online reported.

Sadr's Spokesman Sheikh Salah Al-Obeidi quoted the firebrand clergyman as saying his Mahdi Army will honor the deal reached on Saturday to end weeks of deadly fighting in the impoverished Baghdad district of Sadr City.

"He welcomed the agreement," Obeidi said. "Sadr himself authorized the delegation to negotiate and to reach an agreement which stopped the flow of Iraqi blood."

"He considered the agreement official," Obeidi said, adding that the deal would still stand even if there were skirmishes.

## &gt;Full Implementation

Obeidi said Saturday's accord, aimed at ending seven weeks of fighting in the Baghdad slum district that has claimed hundreds of lives, was expected to be fully implemented by Wednesday.

"The agreement started Sunday, but it needs four days for full implementation," Obeidi said at a press conference in Baghdad.

The Sadr City fighting followed a government crackdown on fighters in the southern port city and oil hub of Basra and was despite a previous ceasefire called by Sadr.

The US military maintained that it was not

Sadr's men who were keeping up the fight but criminals.

Since Sunday, American troops have fought sporadic battles with fighters in Sadr City, killing three people, in a marked decline in the level of fighting, officials said on Monday.

US military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Steven Stover said troops came under attack in three incidents in the first 24 hours after the deal was agreed.

Government representative Sheikh Khalid Al-Attiya said at the same press conference that the accord set out a road map to restore normality in Sadr City, a teeming area of about two million Iraqis.

Attiya said security forces could go into the area to clear mines and help people come back to their homes, rebuild their lives.

Stover said two criminals were shot dead by US troops in two confrontations while the third was killed by a tank shell in overnight clashes in Sadr City.

Stover said there were no rocket attacks from the area during the past 24 hours, but that seven mortar rounds had been fired in west Baghdad. There were no casualties in those attacks, he added.

Fighting erupted in Sadr City after Prime Minister Nouri Al-Maliki ordered a crackdown on fighters in Basra in late March.

One of the main issues fuelling the fighting in Sadr City has been the US military's construction of a huge barrier in the southern section of the district to control access.

Stover said construction would continue

despite the deal, after the US military said on Sunday it was 80 percent complete.

Iraqi Army Spokesman Brigadier General Qasim Atta said security forces planned to build more such walls in the district.

"We will build walls in Sadr city for security reasons, and to stop the movement of armed men," he said. "Similar walls built elsewhere have proved successful in achieving security."

The wall was to help reduce rocket and mortar fire against the Green Zone compound in central Baghdad where the Iraqi government and the US embassy are located.

## &gt; 11 Killed, 19 Wounded

Iraqi hospital officials say clashes have broken out in Sadr City on Tuesday, killing 11 men and wounding 19.

The clashes came even though Iraq's main political bloc and supporters of Sadr have signed a fragile ceasefire covering the Baghdad slum, AP reported.

There has been sporadic fighting since the four-day ceasefire went into effect on Sunday.

Hospital officials say clashes erupted late Monday and intensified early Tuesday. It was not immediately clear if the killed and wounded were militants or civilians. The officials spoke on condition of anonymity because they were not authorized to talk to the media.

Meanwhile, the US military says an attack helicopter came under fire on Saturday by a surface-to-air missile over Sadr City but escaped the attack.