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Report: Afghanistan reconstruction lacks coordination

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| Comment | A failure to grasp long-term goals and poor coordination among the U.S. and coalition partners tasked with improving security have hamstrung the reconstruction effort in Afghanistan, says a new report. |
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It comes as the Obama administration prepares to roll out a new counterinsurgency that coincides with the deployment of as many as

30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan over the next year to 18 months. "Afghanistan's government is struggling for legitimacy, and it cannot achieve that goal without being able to provide a sustainable security environment on its own," writes Seth Jones, a security specialist and co-author of the Rand Corp. report. "That is the single most significant concern in the long run."

Rand and USIP receive funding from the U.S. government. The report was also critical of NATO's "inability" to deliver adequate mentoring for the Afghan army and police forces under a coherent policy with clear goals and measurements, citing a lack of commitment from European partners and a continuing shift of responsibility among U.S. agencies.

To get back on track, the report recommends a "crash effort" to mentor and fund security programs, arguing that incoming U.S. forces will be helpful only if they can build up Afghan capacity and protect local populations. President Obama is reviewing options, including one that would nearly double the 33,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan.

White House press secretary Robert Gibbs said Monday that Mr. Obama will make the decision on deployments shortly. "Without getting into broad timelines, I don't think this is anything that involves weeks," the presidential spokesman said.

Related concerns highlighted in the report include the failure to disarm and integrate warlords and their private militias, lagging justice-system reforms to strengthen law enforcement and root out corruption and a near absence of resources to fortify porous border areas plied by militants and narco-traffickers.

Beth Cole, director of USIP's Afghanistan security project, said the report was commissioned "because no one, even in the White House, had a handle on what all the programs are."

The yearlong investigation was done to identify and analyze specific weaknesses of coalition programs aimed at stabilizing the country seven years after the U.S.-led invasion that ousted the Taliban.

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