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More than 700 US soldiers set to return home

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KABUL - Hundreds of US troops are set to return home from a seven-month deployment to Afghanistan, an American TV channel reported. Over 700 Task Force Destiny, 101st Combat Aviation Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) soldiers are leaving Afghanistan this month. Nashville quoted Fort Campb ell Public Affairs as saying the first two welcome ceremonies would take place Feb 2 and 4. The 101st Combat Aviation Brigade lent aviation support to the US coalition and Afghan forces. Task Force Destiny transported more than seven million pounds of cargo and 93,000 passengers, and conducting 1,700 security missions and 256 air assault operations. (Pajhwok)

KARUL - The US government’s Special Inspector General for Afghanistan released his quarterly report to Congress on Thursday, saying the Afghan government’s control or influence over the population has slightly declined. The report comes amid increased efforts by the US to pull the American troops from Afghanistan and reach a peace deal with the Taliban. Here are the key points from the report:

-- The Afghan government’s control or influence over the population declined this quarter. According to RS, as of October 31, 2018, 63.5% of the population lived in areas under Afghan government control or influence, down 1.7% from the previous quarter. The insurgency slightly increased its control or influence over areas where 10.8% of the population lives. The population living in contested areas increased to 25.6% of the population.

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Textbooks shortage affects students’ lessons

LASHKARGAH - High school students could not be provided enough textbooks despite half of the academic year passed in southern Helmand province, negatively impacting their studies. Of 1.5 million textbooks required, only 200,000 books have reached students so far. Quatratullah, a student at Shaheed Eng. Abdul Matin High School in Lashkargah, the provincial capital, told Pajhwok Afghan News they had been lacking enough textbooks for the past three years.

"From class 7th to class 9th, we faced the shortage of textbooks and had to buy most of books from the bazaar, but there are many students who could not afford to buy them," Mohammad Jan, eighth grader, said they possessed three to four books as saying many Iranian banks had branches in the strategic zone of Chabahar, and the Afghans can do so after meeting legal formalities.

More than 160 Afghan companies are active in the Chabahar free trade zone, where new firms can start activities after registration in the required timeframe. (Pajhwok)

Kabul Control Declines, US Bombing up: New Report

Afghan Banks in Bid to Open Branches in Chabahar

KABUL - Three Afghan banks plan to set up branches in Iran’s southeastern port of Chabahar, an emerging commercial hub, says an official.

Chabahar Free Trade Zone Organisation official Gholam-Reza Panah said the Afghan banks would launch operations after consent from the Central Bank of Iran. The Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) quoted him as saying many Iranian banks had branches in the strategic zone of Chabahar, and the Afghans can do so after meeting legal formalities. More than 160 Afghan companies are active in the Chabahar free trade zone, where new firms can start activities after registration in the required timeframe. (Pajhwok)

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