KABUL - Afghan officials are downplaying the significance of the United States diverting funds from its military mission in Afghanistan, as a senior American diplomat has arrived in Kabul for high-level discussions.

Acting U.S. Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan on Friday approved the transfer of the $1.3 billion held in accounts on the border with Mexico, including taking more than $600 million designated for Helmand Afghan security forces, which are struggling to contain Taliban battlefield advances.

“We do not see any change in our security-related programs and coordination ongoing with U.S. forces,” Afghan Interior Minister Masoom Andarabi told reporters in Kabul. He noted Washington remains committed to supporting Afghan security forces and emphasized it is an internal U.S. policy matter to reduce expenditures of foreign troops stationed in Afghanistan. Colonel David Butler noted the cost savings will not impact “the effectiveness or the readiness” of Afghan security forces to fight terrorism.

U.S. forces in Afghanistan will return $600 million to the Department of Defense. We did this through very close work with the Afghan security forces and with very close work with the Afghan government to make things more efficient and make things better, and we were spending our money on the right things,” Butler said. The military spokesman reiterated Washington’s commitment to 

**US Diversion of Funds Not to Undermine Security Cooperation**

**Turkish Aid Agency Hosts Iftar Dinner in Afghanistan**

KABUL - Turkey’s state-run aid agency on Sunday hosted an iftar (fast-breaking) dinner in war-torn Afghanistan.

The Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (Tıka) served iftar to 1,000 female students who are staying at the dormitory of Balkh University to a statement issued by the agency’s local office. Tıka will continue to host iftar dinners all around the world during the holy month of Ramadan, the statement added. (Pajhwok)

KABUL - At least 17 Taliban fighters were killed and 16 others wounded in Special Forces raid which was conducted along Highway-1 in Southeastern Ghazni province.

“Afghan Special Forces conducted an operation along Highway 1 in Ghazni killing 17 Taliban fighters and wounding 8 others,” the informed military sources said Monday.

The anti-government armed militants including Taliban have not commented regarding the raid so far. Ghazni is among the relatively volatile provinces in Southeast of Afghanistan.

Taliban militants are active in some of thenette districts of the province where they often attempt to carry out terrorist related activities against the government and security institutions.

In the meantime, the Afghan armed forces have stepped up counter-terrorism operations to suppress the anti-government armed elements across the area. (Pajhwok)

KABUL - Former Health Director of Afghan Defense Ministry, Zia Yaftali, sentenced to six months in prison by an anti-corruption court on Saturday.

In addition, nine members of the procurement directorate of the Ministry of Defense (MoD) were also sentenced to the same period of imprisonment.

Anna Rave, the head of the court said that the verdict was issued after they were found guilty for embezzlement of 17 million Afghans in the procurement of swine influenza capsules and other medical equipment. (More on P4)