

Panjshir quick to address IED

Written by U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Jason Smith Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs
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[e gathered to talk about a recent Improvised Explosive Device incident and the overall security situation in the valley. \(Photo by U.S. Air Force 2nd Lt. Jason Smith, Panjshir Provincial Reconstruction Team Public Affairs\)" class="caption" />](#) PANJSHIR PROVINCE, Afghanistan - Government officials, local elders, scholars, mawlawis, commanders and other various leaders from the Panjshir province gathered at the Astana Guest House to talk about a recent Improvised Explosive Device incident and the overall security situation in the valley, April 13.

An IED was detonated near a provincial reconstruction team vehicle about a week earlier, and although no one was injured and the vehicle sustained very minor damage, the idea of an IED in Panjshir made many people upset.

“There are still some cowards who can’t face us,” said acting Provincial Governor Abdul Rahman Kabiri, through an interpreter, about the unknown people who planted the IED. “They are the worst people in society, and we don’t need them to hurt our reconstruction.”

The IED attack was not only cowardly, it is also disrespectful to the people of Panjshir, and the government will no longer tolerate it.

“They didn’t even have respect for Massoud,” he continued. “They put the bomb near his tomb and then exploded it. We won’t let Panjshir be destroyed because of these individuals. These individuals are not our friends. They work for their own pockets only.”

The governor referenced Ahmad Shah Massoud, “Hero of the Afghan Nation” who was killed in 2001, because the explosion was just north of his burial site. There is a current construction project near the area to build the Massoud Tomb Complex, which will include a mosque, museum and library upon completion.

Kabiri finished his speech by asking God to give the Panjshiris strength for security in order to have a better life. He was followed by Judge Rahila Salem, a female member of the House of the People.

“This is our land,” said Salem. “Let’s take responsibility. Love our land. Have respect for all of the mothers whose sons were killed in war. Let’s have respect for all of the kids who lost their fathers.”

In closing, Salem then asked all in attendance to agree to keep the PRT and the province safe.

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“I’m the servant of the people, and I have a responsibility to you,” said Salem. “From my elders, I need a promise today. That promise is for the security of Panjshir. Security is as important as oxygen. Without it, you will lose your life. Promise that you’ll keep Panjshir secure.”

The audience applauded when Salem finished. She was followed by Senator Mohamed Alem Izidyar, House of Elders member.

Izidyar said the security of Panjshir was earned by those mujahedeen who lost their blood and the recent incident is disrespectful to those heroes. He, like most other speakers, said it’s the responsibility of all people to keep security in the region, which includes keeping the PRT safe.

“We decided the PRT could work in the province,” said Izidyar. “None of us are against the PRT.”

A different discussion did break out at one point during the meeting. One of the provincial representatives said the PRT should coordinate their movement with the government more. Afghan National Army Col. Rajab Khan, commander of the Panjshir Operations Coordination Center (provincial), was quick to raise his voice in defending the PRT.

“The PRT is coordinating with the OCC-P,” said Khan. He emphasized the need for trust and said sometimes local people take advantage of the PRT’s restraint. For example, he said if vehicle drivers acted the way they do here with other PRTs, they “would not be there anymore.”

Other speakers at the meeting included Senator Mullah Mohamed Faizi, a representative from each district in the province, Afghan National Police Panjshir Provincial Chief Gen. Mullah Saboor and Khan.

U.S. Army Lt. Col. Curtis Velasquez, Panjshir PRT commander, was asked to speak near the end of the meeting. Velasquez thanked everyone for their support in keeping the PRT secure. He told the crowd the PRT is here to support the people of Panjshir through the provincial government.

“This cooperation is built on bravery and courage,” said Velasquez. “I’m very glad we could make this shura happen. All of you today have basically stated your support for the PRT. I want to take your words of support and relay them to my higher headquarters.”

At the conclusion of the meeting, several attendees agreed the shura was a success and requested to hold these types of meetings more often.