



JEMBUPDATE

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Islamic Republic of Afghanistan

Joint Electoral Management Body



The Epic Journey of the Ballot



"You have 5,800 candidates, each with a photo file, symbol file, name and number, and they have to be placed correctly on 69 different ballots. There are 1100 trillion ways of doing this, and only one of them is right."

*— Ole Holtved,
Deputy Chief
of Operations,
JEMBS.*

This is the challenge of the 2005 Parliamentary Elections: not one, but 69 different elections are being conducted on one day in September. Each of Afghanistan's 34 provinces has two elections — one for the Wolesi Jirga and one for the Provincial Council — and the Kuchi constituency has one election for the Wolesi Jirga. This means that there will be 69 different ballots needed in the polling stations on Election Day. The JEMBS has been tasked with producing these ballots, from the candidate names to the design to the printing to their delivery to the polling station. This is the five-part journey of the ballots.

Part I: The Names

The ballots began with the names. The

names came from every district of Afghanistan — men and women who nominated themselves as candidates for public office in this year's Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council Elections. The names were entered into laptops wielded by ninety trained Data Entry Clerks who travelled to provincial capitals collecting the details of 6,070 candidates.

The names became a preliminary candidate list and were opened to challenges, responses and disqualifications before the list was finalized with 5,800 names for 69 different ballots. The JEMBS held lotteries to determine the order in which the names would appear on the ballots.

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And then what has historically been a task of graphic design units in elections around the world became a task of computers. "You have 5,800 candidates, each with a photo file, symbol file, name and number, and they have to be placed correctly on 69 different ballots. There are 1100 trillion ways of doing this, and only one of them is right," says Ole Holtved, Deputy Chief of Operations for JEMBS.

The electronic approach would speed up the process and minimize errors. The Graphic Design Section created the background artwork for the ballots, which was then dropped into a file to use as a template. The IT Department undertook a large-scale electronic database merge and wrote a custom software application to build the text and picture boxes for each candidate's name, photo, symbol and placement on the ballots. Each ballot now consisted of two files, one containing graphics and the other containing text, which were handed back to Graphic Design for completion. The entire collaborative process took ten days.

Strict quality control assurance took place throughout the course of a month in a secured room. Representatives from six different JEMBS departments examined the ballots individually for accuracy and quality before signing off on every aspect of every ballot (a total of 700 signatures by the end of the process), at which time the final green light for printing was given beginning on 23 July.

Part II: The Printing Press

It was Jeremy Balmer's task to coordinate the printing process. Mr. Balmer is a Logistics Officer and the focal point in JEMBS for the production of the approximately 40 million ballots for the election process. He also managed the ballot process for the 2005 Iraq elections and the 2002 Kosovo elections.



Printing the ballots in the United Kingdom.

an "Expression of Interest" to experienced election material suppliers from around the world. This was designed to figure out the number and location of suppliers that could be expected to bid for the contract and allowed potential suppliers to begin planning for such a large and complex project.

First Mr. Balmer had to find a printer capable of the enormous task. While Graphic Design and IT were working on the design and content of the ballots, the Procurement Section circulated

Throughout late May and early June, critical decisions on the numbers of ballots per province and polling station were made collaboratively by the JEMB, Operations, Procedures, Training, Field Operations, Public Outreach and Support. These decisions fed into the final production specifications, which were sent to a number of potential suppliers in search of bids.

THE LOGISTICAL CHALLENGE

Materials:

- 19.5 million Wolesi Jirga ballot papers
- 19.5 million Provincial Council ballot papers
- 1 million Kuchi constituency ballot papers
- 1,142 tonnes of ballots
- 150,000 ballot boxes
- 120,000 bottles of ink
- 150,000 polling screens
- 1,000 tonnes of furniture for the polling stations
- 34,000 kits of voting materials for polling stations

Distribution:

- Over 6,000 polling centres nationwide, with 26,000 polling stations
- 15 Antonov 124 airplanes delivering ballot material to Kabul
- 18 cargo planes delivering ballot materials to provincial centres
- 9 helicopters deployed to areas where trucks cannot be used
- 1,200 deliveries by cargo trucks to the provinces.

Staff:

- 160,000 polling officials are currently being recruited
- 6,000 District Field Coordinators will supervise polling staff
- 60,000 security officials will be deployed to secure polling facilities.

A team of JEMBS staff conducted a thorough evaluation of the bids received and made recommendations for the contract award based on cost effectiveness, relevant experience, quality-control procedures and production capacity. The procurement and legal teams ensured that every line and letter of the procurement procedures were followed.

No one printer was thought capable of fulfilling the requirements of printing all 40 million ballots, so it was considered wise to divide the contract between two



Offloading ballots at Kabul International Airport.

capable and experienced printers: Smith & Ouzman in the United Kingdom and Austrian Media Group in Austria and Germany. This had two benefits: it ensured that the entire election would not rely on one supplier alone and it allowed both suppliers to maintain some spare printing capacity should the need arise. It made it harder, however, to ensure that the ballots produced by both suppliers would be identical.

The printing was set to begin. Mr. Balmer and five other JEMBS staff members were deployed to eight production facilities in the UK, Austria and Germany to coordinate and quality-control the production process. These staff members ensured that the printers had conducted the required planning and preparation and were following the quality-control procedures, that production adhered to the agreed project specifications and that any problems that arose were addressed immediately, either on-site or on clarification from Kabul.

The JEMBS team also communicated frequently with Kabul headquarters on a slew of issues, including departures from the specifications and logistical information such as packing lists and flight schedules. A digital photograph of the printing proof for every one of the 69 ballots was uploaded by the printers to an ftp site, downloaded in Kabul, printed off and approved by three departments before each was given the green light for printing.

Mr. Balmer travelled in trains, planes and cars, shuttling among Europe's industrial landscapes to be present at each of the production facilities. A JEMBS staff member was with the ballots at every step. Mark Brooks works for Smith & Ouzman in the UK, and is supervising the final phase of transporting the ballots from the printing press to Kabul. He worked closely with the JEMBS staff at the cargo terminal of the airport in the East Midlands — "We alternated coffee breaks, so that someone was always watching the ballots."

Part III: The Warehouse

Fifteen flights of Antonov 124 airplanes — the second-largest cargo plane in the world — and eight flights of Boeing 747 cargo

planes are being made in the space of three weeks to bring all forty million real ballots, or 1,100 tons, into Kabul.

The Antonovs land at Kabul International Airport, where a team of Support Department staff wait on the side of the runway with forklifts to offload the cargo. Most of the staff have never offloaded a such a large plane before, and they are improving their technique with each flight. "We pull out the whiteboard and markers after each offloading and spend several hours debriefing with the staff on how to improve the process — working out



Moving ballot boxes into the Elections warehouse in Kabul.

the timing and positioning of the trucks and the precise role of each person," says Tim Washington, Deputy Head of Support.

From the runway, the ballot-loaded trucks are escorted by the Afghan National Army (ANA) to warehouses on Jalalabad Road.

JEMBS's three warehouses are filled to capacity with every imaginable material good needed to run an electoral operation. Printer toner is stacked twenty boxes high along one wall; boxes of pens, markers and folders are grouped together; and stacks of folding tables and chairs, mobile phones, computers, cameras, fire extinguishers and office heaters line the aisles. Public outreach leaflets, posters, stickers and flipcharts are shrink-wrapped and readied for delivery to the provinces. Four staff members sit in one corner of the warehouse, testing each of 6,000 Thuraya satellite phones that will be used by the polling centres to report results. 140,000 bottles of indelible ink, used to mark voters' fingers to prevent multiple voting, arrived from Canada last week,



Testing the load capacity of a donkey at Kabul headquarters.



Russian jeeps at the electoral compound in Daikundi. The jeeps will be used for transporting staff around the province in preparation for polling day.

and await distribution to the polling stations. In another warehouse, 300 Afghan day-labourers form an assembly line to pack the training and polling kits and load them onto trucks.

"We have to move materials out as soon as they arrive in the warehouse, or we'll run out of space," says Dennis Quine, Supply Officer for JEMBS. Mr. Quine has managed inventory for humanitarian operations in Bosnia, Albania and Iraq, and says this is the largest operation he has ever seen. "The amount of material moving through here is unbelievable. I've lost fourteen kilos in the past six months, just working in this warehouse."

The warehouse aims for a three-day turnover of all ballots, so that they arrive on one day, are loaded onto trucks or air platforms on the second day and leave Kabul by the third day. On one afternoon, 13 tons of ballots were being loaded onto 13 trucks for transport via road convoys to Takhar and Paktika provinces. The next day, 100 tons of ballots bound for Paktia and Baghlan provinces were due to arrive at the warehouse.

Part IV: The Roads and Skies

Most of the ballots will travel by road to the provincial centres, but where air assets are available and it is logistically appropriate, ballots will be flown by cargo plane or helicopter to the more-remote provinces. The road convoys will typically comprise a number of trucks supported by Afghan National Police escort. Sufficient extra capacity is built into every convoy departing Kabul to ensure a strong contingency plan for the distribution of polling material.

The Southern region of Afghanistan challenges even the most experienced of logisticians. Tom Strang is the Provincial Logistics Coordinator (PLC) for Kandahar

province, and calls this the hardest job he's ever had: "The distance, the terrain, the insecurity, the number of people involved and the massive amount of material that has to be moved are all compressed into a tight timeline."

The PLCs take over the ballot distribution as soon as the convoys arrive from Kabul. The ballots are set to arrive in Kandahar province sometime around the end of August, and will be stored in a warehouse secured by the ANA until September 15th, three days before Election Day. Around the 15th, the ballots will begin travelling along one of seven distribution routes designed to hit all of the district centres: five road missions will travel to the west of the province, the north, the southeast, the east, and to Myanesheen District, and two flights of ANA planes will carry ballots to Marouf, Reg and Shorabak districts, which are too remote to reach by road.

For the road missions, Mr. Strang is contracting around 100 trucks throughout the province for transport first to the district centres and then to the polling stations. In a number of provinces throughout the country where the polling stations are inaccessible by road, the PLCs are hiring horses and donkeys, accompanied by armed escorts, to deliver the ballots.

Giles Beresford-Peirse is the Regional Security Officer for the Southern region, which covers five provinces including Kandahar. His office walls are plastered with maps of topography, district boundaries and security analyses. He's drawn the delivery routes for each province onto the topographical maps. "The link-ups with field coordinators in each district centre can take no more than 45 minutes," he says, "or the rest of the route is in trouble."



A United Nations helicopter that will be used for air support on Election Day.

Mr. Beresford-Peirse works with all the PLCs to coordinate the security and logistics of delivering the ballots. He meets with the ANA every Sunday to plan escorts for the ballots, guards at each of the polling stations and security strategy throughout the region. Sporadic fighting in the region has rendered a number of districts off-limits to international JEMBS staff, forcing them to help coordinate the elections from the provincial centres, but through extensive planning and cooperation with Afghans in every district, the ballots are due to arrive at every polling station in the region in time for the 18 September elections.

Part V: The Polling Station



Moving shipping containers for storage space in Kandahar.

The ballots will arrive at the polling station no more than two days before Election Day and will remain in the custody of JEMBS staff at the stations, where the Afghan National Police will provide security. On Election Day, two stacks of ballots — one for the Wolesi Jirga election and one for the Provincial Council election — will sit behind the Ballot Issuer's table. After each voter's registration card is checked and punched and finger inked, the Ballot Issuer will tear off one ballot from each of the stacks, stamp the back of it and explain the voting process. The voter will take the ballots behind a polling screen, mark the candidates of his or her choice, emerge from behind the polling screen and stuff the ballots into the two waiting ballot boxes.

This is the end of the ballot's journey from the candidate names to the polling station, but two legs remain: the trip to the counting centre and the gauntlet of counting. ■

Commissioner Abdul Hakim Murad



JEMB Commissioner Abdul Hakim Murad was born in Aybak of Samangan Province in 1959. He completed his Bachelor's degree in Plant Science at the Faculty of Agriculture at Kabul University in 1981 and received his Master's degree in Management from Preston University in Peshawar.

After five years with the Ministry of Irrigation, Mr. Murad and his family moved to Peshawar, Pakistan, due to the deteriorating security situation in Afghanistan. While there, he maintained his professional goal-to assist in the recovery and reconstruction of Afghanistan. Shortly after his arrival in Peshawar, Mr. Murad accepted a position with the Swedish Committee for Afghanistan as a Training Manager. He remained there until January 1995 when he transferred to the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR) as a Survey Unit Manager. In 1997, he returned to the Swedish Committee as the Agriculture Program Coordinator. In May 2002, he was finally presented with an opportunity to return to Afghanistan-as a Program Officer with UNDP's National Area-Based Development Program (NABDP).

NABDP was a reconstruction and development program implemented through the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development. The program worked in ten different areas of the country to rebuild infrastructure, agriculture, minor industry and community development.

"I was so happy to return to my home," said Mr. Murad. "I felt like I could contribute much more toward the reconstruction of my country if I was actually there."

After two years with NABDP, Mr. Murad was offered another way to participate in the rebuilding-as a National Regional Electoral Coordinator for the Central Region with the JEMBS.

"I was overseeing voter registration, election day preparation and public outreach," he said. "It was something somewhat new to me and very exciting."

Although his background had been in rural

development, Mr. Murad said the transition was a natural one.

"Having worked in top management of reconstruction of development programs for long years conducted by international communities and holding a Master's degree in general management, moving to elections was not too different," Murad said. "I was accustomed to using my management skills to oversee many projects at the same time and to working on development issues in a post-conflict context."

Mr. Murad so impressed his colleagues and supervisors that he was offered another position with the Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council elections- President Hamid Karzi appointed him as Commissioner to the Independent Electoral Commission of the JEMB in January 2005.

Q: How will a functioning legislative body affect the future of Afghanistan?

A: Mandate and capacity-wise, the interim and transitional administration was able to make many improvements during the transitional period. More development came through the Constitutional Loya Jirga and the Presidential Election in 2004. Now we are preparing for parliamentary elections. Afghans have been missing one important pillar in the foundation of their state-the legislative branch. So, through this election we will put that pillar in place and continue the rebuilding process effectively. Once the legislative powers are all in place, they will provide a solid foundation for law-making, which will in turn support society and help to bring peace and stability. I have worked toward this in my previous positions and I will continue to work for this.

By participating in government and by sending representatives to parliament, the voices of the Afghan people will be considered in the reconstruction and development of their country.

Q: What is the role of the JEMB in this process?

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Meet the Press...

A: The electoral process is political but in a neutral field- we are not politicians but technical experts in many dimensions working for the elections. The IEC must remain independent, impartial and work according to the requirement of their positions to bring solidarity. This is essential to bringing legitimacy to the electoral process.

Q: You speak five languages-Uzbeki, Dari, Pashto, English and Urdu. How have your language skills assisted you in your work?

A: Being able to communicate always helps to bridge gaps. Being able to speak different languages has helped me to maintain communication with my colleagues and with the communities I have worked with. It is very important.

Q: What experience has helped you in your current role as a Commissioner?

A: Both my education and my work experience. Of course, my educational background has sharpened my skills in this area. In my work, I deal with different communities and different groups of people within these communities. It is important to understand the economic, political and social context that you are working in. It is necessary to be flexible and always think of alternative solutions to achieve goals and develop the capacity of the operation. This is especially true for the electoral process because there are no simple solutions when dealing with issues of peace building and political reconstruction.



A newspaper insert explaining the voting process.

PRESS RELEASE OFFICIAL CAMPAIGN PERIOD BEGINS August 15, 2005

The official campaign period for the Wolesi Jirga and Provincial Council Elections will begin this Wednesday August 17, 2005 and will continue until September 15, with a 48 hour 'campaign silence period' before polling day on September 18.

Although candidates have been able to hold campaign rallies, distribute posters and leaflets since they were certified by the Joint Election Management Body (JEMB) and subject to the laws of Afghanistan, the start of the official campaign period means they will now be able to broadcast campaign advertisements on both TV and radio, through a regulated system.

Candidates will be able to access a Sponsored Advertisement system which is being supervised by the Media Commission.

"This facility will enable candidates to produce and broadcast campaign advertisements on radio and television free of charge, courtesy of donors, for an equal amount of airtime. Under the sponsored advertisement system, every candidate will have an equal opportunity to reach voters in their constituencies through the broadcast media", said Bissmillah Bissmil, Chairman of the Joint Electoral Management Body.

Each Wolesi Jirga candidate will be allocated an advertisement of five minutes to be broadcast twice on radio or one advertisement of two minutes to be broadcast twice on television. Provincial Council candidates will be entitled to one advertisement of four minutes broadcast once on radio or one advertisement of two minutes broadcast once on television.

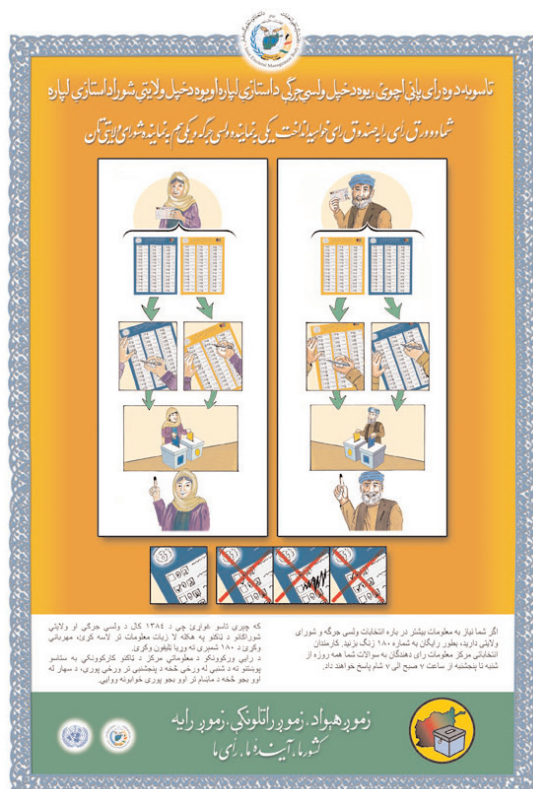
The Media Commission has already started work to ensure that voters have an opportunity to make an informed choice when they vote. It will monitor fair reporting and coverage of the electoral campaign period and will deal with any complaints concerning breaches of the Media Code of Conduct.

Mr Bissmil added: "We want a lively, peaceful campaign of free expression, without fear of intimidation and encourage all candidates to make full use of the official campaign period to reach voters through radio or television, as it is the voters who will have the final responsibility for selecting our representatives and deciding the future of our country."

News in Brief...

- **JEMB decisions:** The JEMB adopted a regulation and procedures on counting, and decided that ballots from Nuristan and Kunar will be counted in Jalalabad for security and logistic reasons.
- **Elections seminar:** The JEMB Commissioners attended a two-day seminar hosted by the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA) on elections, electoral systems and democracy. The seminar provided an excellent opportunity for the commissioners to discuss technical aspects of elections management and different models of participation with the experts from JICA and their colleagues from the JEMB Secretariat.
- **Joint Electoral Operations Centre:** To refine electoral field operations and coordination as election day approaches, the permanent Joint Electoral Operations Centre (JEOC) commenced operations this week at JEMBS headquarters.
- **Material supply and distribution:** A major component of the operation in these weeks is the receipt in Kabul and delivery to the provinces of polling and counting materials. Flights are arriving almost daily at Kabul International Airport with ballots, polling kits and polling station furniture.

- **Polling:** 6,197 proposed polling centre sites were submitted to headquarters by field staff, and will be assessed next week. The District Field Coordinators for Election Day are currently being trained on the recruitment of polling staff in the provinces.
- **Counting:** Counting staff are being recruited and trained. Thirty-two count centre locations for 34 provinces have been finalized and approved by the JEMB; ballots from Kunar and Nuristan will be counted in Jalalabad.



A poster explaining how to mark the ballots.

National Assembly Elections: Financial Status as of 13 August 2005	
Received (funds transferred to UNDP)	
DONOR	AMOUNT USD
USA	12,000,000
Greece committed in 2004 transferred in 2005	678,426
Switzerland committed in 2004 for 2005	1,754,386
Netherlands (carry over from the Constitutional Loya Jirga)	844,712
Australia (exchange gains from 2004)	35,190
New Zealand (exchange gains from 2004)	48,616
Netherlands	5,284,015
UK	7,786,691
Denmark	1,996,531
New Zealand	729,927
Switzerland	1,000,000
Australia	1,550,388
Norway 1	793,650
Italy	4,819,277
Canada	6,349,206
Finland	2,409,638
EC	8,202,654
Sweden	1,277,139
Republic of Korea	500,000
Ireland	965,018
Japan	8,000,000
Norway	1,071,975
Total received to date	68,097,439
Committed (agreement signed)	
DONOR	AMOUNT USD
EC	2,050,000
USAID	20,000,000
USAID	8,000,000
Belgium	500,000
UK	2,000,000
Netherlands	4,800,000
Total committed	37,350,000
Pledged	
DONOR	AMOUNT (USD)
Belgium	500,000
Germany	3,240,000
Spain	1,200,000
Italy	1,200,000
Denmark	1,000,000
Norway	1,000,000
New Zealand	690,000
Austria	120,000
Total pledged	8,950,000
Total Project Budget	148,665,087
Effective Carryover from 2004	14,976,315
Total Received 2005	68,097,439
Total Committed (agreement signed)	37,350,000
UNFUNDED	28,241,333

For further information about the JEMB Update please contact: Jiffer Bourguignon at jifferb@unops.org.af or visit our website www.jemb.org.

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