

CITIZENS REPORT

Performance of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence

June 01, 2013 - May 31, 2014

CIVIL-MILITARY RELATIONS | JUNE 2014

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PILDAT is an independent, non-partisan and not-for-profit indigenous research and training institution with the mission to strengthen democracy and democratic institutions in Pakistan.

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June 01, 2013 - May 31, 2014

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PREFACE

The Citizens Report on the Performance of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence covers the 1st Parliamentary year of the 14th National Assembly of Pakistan, i.e., from June 01, 2013 to May 31, 2014. Prepared by PILDAT, the report closely examines the publicly available data on the work of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence.

This report has been prepared under the overall objective of strengthening Parliamentary oversight on defence and national security in Pakistan. This report is a continuation of the analysis prepared by PILDAT for the past 5 years. To date, PILDAT has prepared and published 9 reports each in English and Urdu on the Performance of Defence specific Standing Committees of National Assembly of Pakistan and Senate of Pakistan.

PILDAT is mindful of the fact that the democratic institutions like the Parliament and Parliamentary committees have not developed over the years due to repeated military intervention and long spells of autocratic or semi-autocratic regimes led by military. The report therefore is meant to assist the committee in its oversight functions. The objective of the report is not to offer a critique of the work of the committee but to analyse the performance in the backdrop of peculiar security needs of Pakistan and the role Parliament is playing in respect to defining and influencing policy and principles of national security.

The purpose of the report is to examine the exercise of available powers of the Parliament with regards to Parliamentary oversight of defence and security sector in the light of the Constitution of Pakistan and assisting Parliament and its committees in undertaking well-researched, objective and non-partisan oversight of defence and security sector alongside other fields in the executive branch.

Acknowledgments

This report has been prepared by PILDAT team including **Ms. Aimen Khan**, Projects Manager-PILDAT, and **Ms. Aasiya Riaz**, Joint Director-PILDAT, under the supervision of **Mr. Ahmed Bilal Mehboob**, President, PILDAT.

Disclaimer

PILDAT and its team have made every effort to ensure the accuracy of the contents of this report and do not accept any omission or error as it is not deliberate.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence was constituted on August 22, 2013. It was nearly 3 months after the formation of the 14th National Assembly. However, the Committee did not become functional until its Chair was elected - another three and a half months later, on December 10, 2013- making it a total delay of nearly 6 months after the election of the Leader of the House.

Sheikh Rohale Asghar, MNA, (NA-124, Lahore-VII, Punjab, PML-N) was elected as Chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence on December 10, 2013.

In the newly elected 14th National Assembly of Pakistan, the Assembly rules were violated when the Standing Committees were formed after an inordinate delay when the formation of Standing Committees is mandatory as per rules within thirty days of the election of the Leader of the House.

During the first Parliamentary year (June 01, 2013 – May 31, 2014), the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence has held a total of 8 meetings. During the previous (13th) National Assembly, the Committee had held a total of 45 meetings, with the average of 9 meetings per year.

Much like other Standing Committees, the most critical task before the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence, soon after its constitution, was to effectively utilise and operationalise the critical power granted to the Committees through the change in rules to effectively oversee and scrutinise the Defence Ministry's budget.

Through this key reform passed by the outgoing National Assembly, Standing Committees have now been empowered to scrutinize and suggest amendments, and recommend their Ministry's Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the next financial year before the same is sent to the Ministry of Finance for inclusion in the Federal Budget for the next financial year. This change in rules now means that every Federal Ministry is supposed to submit its budgetary proposals relating to Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) for the next financial year not later than the 31st January each year while the Standing Committees are required to make recommendations latest by 1st March on the budget back to the Ministry.

In the previous five years (2008-2013), the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence reviewed the Defence Budget only for once. However, the Standing Committee on Defence in the National Assembly has begun its oversight on defence budget by making budgetary proposals on Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP).

During the first Parliamentary year of the 14th National Assembly, the Standing Committee on Defence received briefings from the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI), Ministry of Defence, the Armed Forces and related organisations and visited the Air Headquarters and the Naval Headquarters.

Parliamentary oversight of Defence constitutes an essential part of the democratic control on Defence and National Security. Despite the slow pace, Pakistan's Parliament is showing improved signs of initiating this critical oversight. The first Parliamentary year of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence in terms of playing an effective oversight role on Defence and National Security progressed a step forward. The Committee reviewed the budgetary proposals and finalised recommendations on Public Sector Development Program (PSDP). They also asked the Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) to brief the Committee members on the security situation of Pakistan that depicts headway in the Parliamentary oversight on Defence institutions.

During the 1st Parliamentary year, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence presented a Report on the Bill to provide for the Constitution and Regulation of Survey of Pakistan (The Surveying and Mapping Bill, 2013). The Committee in its meeting on January 07, 2014 considered the Bill in detail and by a vote of majority recommended that the Bill maybe passed by the National Assembly. The National Assembly of Pakistan passed the Bill on March 31, 2014 under the title 'The Surveying and Mapping Act, 2014.'

However, comparing to the work of the Senate Standing Committee on Defence, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence needs to both engage in greater oversight as well as produce reports and lay those in the House. Since its re-constitution in June 2012, the Senate Standing Committee on Defence has set important trends of putting in place a comprehensive work plan, holding public hearings on Defence issues and publishing reports of the Committee.

The two Standing Committees on Defence in the National Assembly and the Senate can also join hands, while learning from each other and the best practices on Defence oversight from the region and around the world, to set traditions of effective and responsible oversight on Defence and National Security in Pakistan.

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Introduction

According to the IPU-DCAF Handbook on Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector: Principles, Mechanisms and Practices, 4 conditions are needed for an effective parliamentary oversight of the security sector:

- i. Clearly defined Constitutional and legal powers
- ii. Customary practices
- iii. Resources and expertise, and
- iv. Political will¹

Constitutional Mandate

The principle of Parliamentary oversight on the Executive is enshrined in the Constitution of Pakistan mandated mainly through Parliamentary powers of legislation and passage of the budget. These powers are further defined under respective rules of the National Assembly that govern the functioning of the Parliamentary committees as well.

Due to peculiar political history of Pakistan, Pakistan has been unable to develop mature traditions of Parliamentary oversight of the defence and security sector. The key reason attributed for this is understood to be “a combination of lack of political will, fear of the khakis, incompetence, and resistance by the security sector.”²

Committees are created in the National Assembly with most of the standing committees set-up to correspond to the Ministries or Divisions of the Federal Government. The functions of Standing Committees are to debate legislation relating to, and oversee the working and performance of, the relevant Ministries or Divisions.

Standing Committees have wide powers to call witnesses, requisition official records, seek statements on oath and take up any matter within their jurisdiction, without reference by the House.

Powers of the Standing Committees

Defining specific roles and powers of the Standing

1. For details, please see The IPU-DCAF Handbook on Parliamentary Oversight of the Security Sector: Principles, Mechanisms and Practices (2003): <http://www.ipu.org/PDF/publications/decacaf-e.pdf>
2. For details, please see Mushahid Hussain Sayed, *Parliamentary Oversight of Security Sector in Pakistan*, Background Paper, PILDAT (October 2010): <http://www.pildat.org/publications/publication/cmr/pildatbparliamentaryoversightofthesecuritysectorinpakistanoctober2010.pdf>
3. For details, please see Rules of Procedures and the Conduct of Business in the National Assembly of Pakistan, National Assembly of Pakistan: <http://www.na.gov.pk>
4. For details, please see Rule 200, Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in the National Assembly of Pakistan

Committees in the National Assembly of Pakistan, clause 198 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business of the National Assembly states that:

“(1) there shall be a Standing Committee for each of the Ministry of the Government
(2) Each Committee shall deal with the subjects assigned, under the rules for the allocation and transaction of business of the Government to the Division or the Ministry with which it is concerned or any other matter referred to it by the Assembly.”

Clause 201 (1) further defines the role of the Committees as “A Committee shall examine a Bill, subject or matter referred to it by the Assembly or the Speaker and shall submit its report to the Assembly or to the Speaker, as the case may be, with such recommendations including suggestions for legislation, if any, as it may deem necessary. In the case of a Bill, the Committee shall also examine whether the Bill violates, disregards or is otherwise not in accordance with the Constitution.”

Clause 201 (4) further states that “A Committee may examine the expenditures, administration, delegated legislation, public petitions and policies of the Ministry concerned and its associated public bodies and may forward its report of findings and recommendations to the Ministry and the Ministry shall submit its reply to the Committee.”³

National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence was constituted on August 22, 2013. It was nearly 3 months after the formation of the 14th National Assembly. The Assembly rules were violated when the Standing Committees were formed after an inordinate delay when the formation of Standing Committees is mandatory as per rules within thirty days of the election of the Leader of the House.

However, the Committee did not become functional until its Chair was elected - another three and a half months later on December 10, 2013 - making it a total delay of nearly 6 months after the election of the Leader of the House.⁴

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Sheikh Rohale Asghar, MNA, (NA-124, Lahore-VII, Punjab, PML-N), was elected as Chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence on December 10, 2013.⁵

The party wise distribution of the Committee is contained in Table 1. As provided for in the rules, the Minister concerned serves as an ex-officio member of the Committee.

Table 1: Membership of National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence⁶

Party	Number of Members in the Committee
Pakistan Muslim League- Nawaz (PML-N)	9
Shaikh Rohale Asghar , MNA, Chairman of the Committee (NA-124, Lahore-VII, Punjab)	
Lt. Col. (Retd.) Ghulam Rasool Sahi , MNA (NA-75, Faisalabad- I, Punjab)	
Muhammad Junaid Anwaar Chaudhry , MNA (NA-143, T.T. Singh-II, Punjab)	
Dewan Ashiq Hussain Bukhari , MNA (NA-153, Multan-VI, Punjab)	
Tahir Bashir Cheema , MNA (NA-190, Bahawalnagar-III, Punjab)	
Mir Dostain Khan Domki , MNA (NA-265, Sibi-cum-Kolhu-cum-Dera Bugti, Balochistan)	
Ms. Surriya Asghar , MNA (NA-288, Punjab-XVI)	
Ms. Shazia Ashfaq Mattu , MNA (NA-294, Women Punjab-XXII)	
Mr. Isphanyar M. Bhandara , MNA (NA-336, Non-Muslim, Punjab)	
Pakistan Peoples Party Parliamentarian (PPPP)	3
Nawab Ali Wassan , MNA (NA-215, Khairpur-I, Sindh)	
Dr. Fehmida Mirza , MNA (NA-225, Badin-Cum-Tando Muhammad Khan-II, Sindh)	
Makhdoom Syed Mustafa Mehmood , MNA (NA-195, R.Y. Khan-IV, Punjab)	
Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI)	2
Ms. Mussarat Ahmadzeb , MNA (NA-323, Women KP-II)	
Dr. Shireen Mehrunnisa Mazari , MNA (NA-305, Women Punjab-XXXIII)	
Malik Nauman Ahmad Langrial , MNA (NA-163, Sahiwal-IV, Punjab)	
Muttahida Quami Movement (MQM)	2
Ms. Kishwer Zehra , MNA (NA-315, Women Sindh-VIII)	
Mr. Sanjay Perwani , MNA (NA-341, Non-Muslim-IX, Sindh)	
Pakistan Muslim League (PML)	1
Ch. Pervaiz Ellahi , MNA (NA-105, Gujrat-II, Punjab)	
Pakhtunkhwa Milli Awami Party (PMAP)	1
Mr. Mehmood Khan Achakzai , MNA (NA-259, Quetta, Balochistan)	
Pakistan Muslim League-Zia (PML-Z)	1
Mr. Ejaz-Ul-Haq , MNA (NA-191, Bahawalnagar-IV, Punjab)	
Total	19

5. For details, please see Rohale Asghar elected chairman of committee on Defence, APP, December 10, 2013: http://www.app.com.pk/en/_index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=254071&Itemid=2

6. For details, please see Members of Standing Committee on Defence: <http://na.gov.pk/en/cmnen.php?comm=Ng==>

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Meetings of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence: 2013-2014

During the First Parliamentary year of the 14th National Assembly (June 2013 –May 2014), the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence held a total of 8 meetings.

During the first Parliamentary year (June, 2013-May 2014), the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence held 8 meetings in total. In the past 5 Parliamentary years, in comparison, the previous National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence held a total of 45 meetings, with the average of 9 meetings per year.

During the 1st Parliamentary year, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence presented a Report on the Bill to provide for the constitution and regulation of Survey of Pakistan (The Surveying and Mapping Bill, 2013). The Committee in its meeting on January 07, 2014 considered the Bill in detail and vote of majority recommended that the Bill maybe passed by the National Assembly.⁷

The National Assembly of Pakistan passed the Bill on March 31, 2014 under the title 'The Surveying and Mapping Act, 2014'.⁸ During the previous Government's tenure (2008-2013), a total of 13 Bills were passed by the Committee.

During the first Parliamentary year (June 01, 2013 – May 31, 2014), the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence has held a total of 8 meetings. During the previous (13th) National Assembly, the Committee had held a total of 45 meetings, with the average of 9 meetings per year.

In the previous five years (2008-2013), the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence reviewed the Defence Budget only for once. However, the Standing Committee on Defence in the National Assembly has begun its oversight on defence budget by making budgetary proposals on Public Sector Development Program (PSDP).

Comparatively, the reports laid and Bills passed by the House in the past tenure (2008-2013) of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence is laudable.

However, due to the delay in the formation of Parliamentary Committees during the first Parliamentary year of the current Government, the Committees could not get ample time to discuss legislation.

However, comparing to the work of the Senate Standing Committee on Defence, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence needs to both engage in greater oversight as well as produce reports and lay those in the House. Since its re-constitution in June 2012, the Senate Standing Committee on Defence has set important trends of

Table 2: Meetings of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence: 2013-2014

Month	Number of Meetings held
December 2013	02
January 2014	01
February 2014	01
March 2014	02
May 2014	02

Table 3: Meetings by the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence: 2008-2014

Parliamentary Year	Number of Meetings held
2008-2009	01
2009-2010	14
2010-2011	12
2011-2012	09
2012-2013	09
2013-2014	08
Total	53

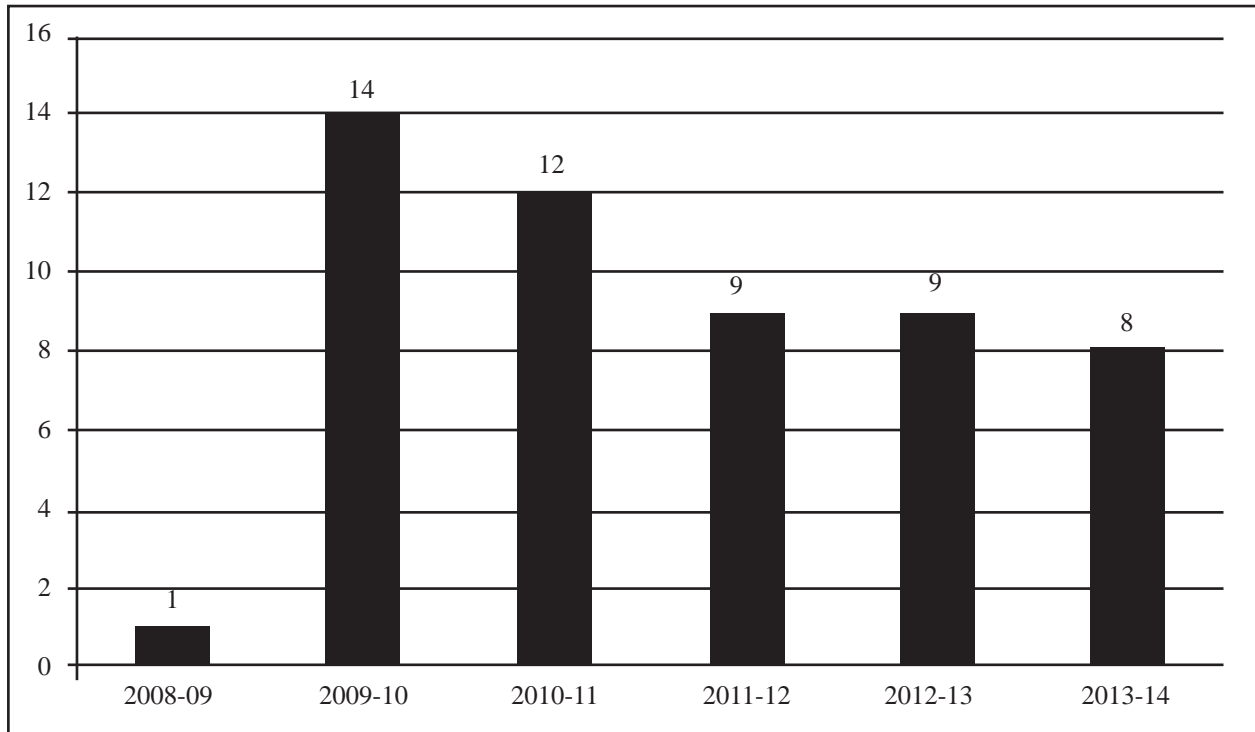
7. For details, please see Report on The Surveying and Mapping Bill, 2013: http://www.na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1398153185_166.pdf

8. For details, please see The Surveying and Mapping Bill as passed by the National Assembly, http://na.gov.pk/uploads/documents/1397721138_588.pdf

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putting in place a comprehensive work plan, holding public hearings on Defence issues and publishing reports of the Committee.

Figure 1: Year-wise meetings of National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence



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Details of Meetings

December 10, 2013: Meeting on Election of the Chairman of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence

On December 10, 2013, members of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence held a meeting to elect the Chairperson of the Committee. Sheikh Rohale Asghar, MNA, (NA-124, Lahore-VII, Punjab, PML-N) was elected as the Chairman of the Committee with a vote of majority.⁹

December 19, 2013: Meeting on Role and Functions of Defence Division

Meeting of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Defence was held at National Assembly Secretariat on December 19, 2013.

The Secretary, Ministry of Defence, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Asif Yasin Malik, briefed the Committee on the role and functions of Defence Division. He stated that the role of the Ministry is to defend the National unity and territorial integrity of Pakistan and protect its interests and assets through military means and other Defence-related capabilities.

Various departments and organisations have been established for the achievements of its missions. He also added that Army, Navy, Air Force, Joint Services HQs and inter services organizations are ready to assist civil administration in order to control public order, combating internal threats, battling natural disasters, calamities and emergencies, if required, and when asked for. In the end, it was also decided that the Committee would visit the Headquarters of the Armed Forces to further receive comprehensive briefings.¹⁰

January 08, 2013: Passing Surveying and Mapping Bill, 2013

On January 08, 2014, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence reviewed and passed the Surveying and Mapping Act, 2013. The members believed that this step will effectively enable the National Mapping Organisation to assume its role effectively.

During the course of the proceedings, some of the

members suggested that foreign consultants, firms or organisation shall not be allowed access on classified maps or data. Major General Zahid Shah, Surveyor General of Pakistan, said the main objective was to introduce the bill to meet the surging security challenges in the country.

During the meeting, the chairperson also directed the Defence Ministry to make necessary arrangements for committee members' visit to the Waziristan Agency.¹¹

February 18, 2013: Briefing on Budget Proposals relating to the PSDP

Secretary Defence, Lt. Gen. (Retd.) Asif Yasin informed the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence that buildings of majority of the Federal Government institutions are dilapidated and require proper maintenance. It was briefed that in a bid to implement standard of education plan in Federal Government Educational Institutions (Cantonments/Garrisons) FGEI (C/G), Ministry of Defence required Rs. 15.28 billion. The Committee was also briefed about as many as 18 new unapproved projects for the FGEIs (C/G).

Secretary Defence apprised the Committee members that in new plan, all primary schools must be separated from high schools and recruitment of female teachers would be made mandatory. The Secretary, Ministry of Defence also informed the Committee regarding Budget proposals relating to the Public Sector Development Programme (PSDP) for the year 2014-2015 and role and functions of the FGEIs (C/G).

The Committee unanimously endorsed the recommendations of the previous Standing Committee. About the project for saving the Air force Base of Jacobabad, which was badly affected by the flood three years ago, the Committee was apprised that this project would take 2 to 3 years to save the Jacobabad Air base in future.¹²

March 25, 2014: Briefing on Security Situation of the Country by Security Agencies

An unnamed Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) Brigadier, during a session of the National Assembly's Standing Committee on Defence on March 25, 2013,

9. For details, please see PILDAT Monitor on Civil Military Relations in Pakistan: December 2013-February 2014,

http://www.pildat.org/Publications/Publication/CMR/MonitorOnCivil-MilitaryRelationsinPakistan_December2013_February2014.pdf

10. For details, please see NA Standing Committee on Defence meets, Associated Press of Pakistan, December 19, 2013, <http://app.com.pk/video/preview.php?id=69781>

11. For details, please see No love lost: Army has no stake in treason trial, says defence aide, The Express Tribune, January 08, 2014, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/656278/no-love-lost-army-has-no-stake-in-treason-trial-says-defence-aide/>

12. For details, please see Uniform standard of education plan for FGEI (C/G): Ministry of Defence requires Rs 15.28 billion, National Assembly body told, Business Recorder, February 19, 2014: <http://www.brecorder.com/general-news/172/1154872/>

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briefed the Parliamentarians on National Internal Security Policy (NISP) and asked lawmakers to formulate strong laws to defeat terrorism.

The official said that sectarian terrorist organisations were posing a renewed threat to the country's peace. He particularly referred to the increasing activities of sectarian outfit Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ), saying the Security Agencies were acting against such notorious organisations. The official said it is the collective responsibility of politicians, Security Forces, Government, civil society and people of Pakistan to join hands against terrorism and make and support laws that strengthen Security Forces' hands in their fight against terrorism.

Chairman, Nation Assembly Standing Committee on Defence, Shaikh Rohale Asghar, MNA, said that the briefing was satisfactory. *“Problems and grey areas have been pinpointed in the meeting, which is a good sign. We hope this would be a productive addition in our efforts for the elimination of terrorism,”* he said. The Chair said that the reservations of the Security Agencies need to be considered to forge unity among the stakeholders in order to defeat terrorism.

Further, unnamed sources in the National Assembly Defence Committee said that the ISI official said strong laws were required so that the missing persons' issue was resolved.¹³

March 26, 2014: Members of National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence Visit Air Headquarters

Members of National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence visited the Air Headquarters, Islamabad on March 26, 2014. The delegation was led by Shaikh Rohail Asghar, MNA, Chairman National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence.

The Chairman called on the Air Chief Marshal Tahir Rafique Butt, Chief of the Air Staff, Pakistan Air Force.

The visiting members of the Standing Committee were given a briefing on the role and task of the PAF.¹⁴

May 28, 2014: Members of NA Standing Committee on Defence visit Naval Headquarters, Islamabad

Members of National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence visited the Naval Headquarters, Islamabad on May 28, 2014. The Committee was led by Shaikh Rohale Asghar, MNA, Chairman National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence. A briefing was given by the Chief of Naval Staff during the visit.

May 29-31, 2014: Members of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence visit PN facilities

A 20-member delegation of National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence, headed by Shaikh Rohail Asghar, MNA, visited facilities and installations of Pakistan Navy at Karachi and coastal areas during their three-day visit.

The delegation visited Pakistan Navy Dockyard, Submarine Centre and Karachi Shipyard & Engineering Works. During the visit, a comprehensive briefing was given to the Committee on the emerging contemporary challenges in the region and infrastructural up gradation & modernization and future projects of the Pakistan Navy.

The Committee undertook a detailed visit to Jinnah Naval Base at Ormarah, considered as future homeport of PN Fleet, where they were briefed on the existing facilities and various developmental projects of the Base that will help achieve early commencement of sustained fleet operations.

During the visit to Gwadar Port, the Committee Members were briefed on the initiatives taken by Pakistan Navy and apprised that, in line with the vision of the Naval Chief, PN is committed to provide all out support for the development and early activation of Gwadar Port.¹⁵

13. For details, please see Enact tough anti-terror laws, unnamed ISI official tells NA Standing Committee, South Asia Terrorism Portal, March 26, 2014: http://www.satp.org/satporgtp/detailed_news.asp?date1=3/26/2014&id=14#14
14. For details, please see Members of National Assembly Visit Air Headquarters, Pakistan Air force Official Website, March 26, 2014: <http://www.paf.gov.pk/news/uploaded/1399599001.pdf>
15. For details, please see NA standing committee visits PN facilities, May 31, 2014: <http://pakistan.onepakistan.com.pk/news/city/karachi/306631-na-standing-committee-visits-pn-facilities.html>

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Table 4: A Snapshot of Meetings of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence

No.	Date	Issue (s) discussed
1.	December 10, 2013	i. Election of Chairman, NA Committee on Defence
2.	December 19, 2013	i. Meeting on Role & Function of Defence Division
3.	January 08, 2014	i. Surveying & Mapping Act, 2013 passed by the Committee
4.	February 18, 2014	i. Briefing on Budget Proposals relating to PSDP ii. Briefing on Strengths of Teaching & Non-Teaching Staff, appointment and promotion Criteria
5.	March 25, 2014	i. Briefing on Security Situation by the Security Agency
6.	March 26, 2014	i. Defence Committee members visited the Air Headquarters, Islamabad. ii. Briefing on the Role and Task of PAF
7.	May 27, 2014	i. Visit of Committee Members to Naval Headquarter, Islamabad
8.	May 28-31, 2014	i. Visit of Defence Committee members to Navy facilities in Karachi

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Conclusions

The first Parliamentary year of the Government started on June 05, 2013. In the newly-elected 14th National Assembly of Pakistan, the Assembly rules were violated when the Standing Committees were formed after an inordinate delay when the formation of Standing Committees is mandatory as per rules within thirty days of the election of the Leader of the House. The National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence was constituted on August 22, 2013. It was nearly 3 months after the formation of the 14th National Assembly. However, the Committee did not become functional until its chair was elected – another three and half months later on December 10, 2013 - making it a total delay of nearly 6 months in activation of the Committee.

Much like other Standing Committees, the most critical task before the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence was to effectively utilise and operationalise the critical power granted to the Committees through the change in rules to effectively oversee and scrutinise the Defence Ministry's budget. Through this key reform passed by the outgoing National Assembly, Standing Committees have now been empowered to scrutinize and suggest amendments, and recommend their Ministry's Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) for the next financial year before the same is sent to the Ministry of Finance for inclusion in the Federal Budget for the next financial year. This change in rules now means that every Federal Ministry is supposed to submit its budgetary proposals relating to Public Sector Development Program (PSDP) for the next financial year not later than the 31st January each year while the Standing Committees are required to make recommendations latest by 1st March on the budget back to the Ministry.

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence is one of the few Committees that reviewed the Budgetary Proposals for PSDP during the next fiscal year 2014-2015.

During the first Parliamentary year, the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence held a total of 8 meetings. Compared to the average of 9 meetings per year (total of 45 meetings in past 5 years: 2008-2013) the present Committee falls slightly below the average during the first year. Performance of the National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence, in terms of playing an effective oversight role on Defence and National Security, has covered important ground but requires greater effectiveness.

Some of the key themes emerging from the analysis are narrated below:

Effective Oversight on Defence

Parliament and Parliamentary committees are at the heart of the efforts of creating this 'credible civilian alternative' together with the elected Executive. Regardless of the number of times the Committee has met, it is unclear from the aforementioned analysis how effectively it has helped influence the elected executive on defence and security policies of the country. From earning the label of "*debating clubs rather than making the defence services accountable for their actions and non actions*,"¹⁶ to not fulfilling the basic requirement of reporting their recommendations to the House, the Committee has made modest achievements on the path of effective oversight on Defence.

Oversight of Intelligence

It is of the essence of our democratic parliamentary system that elected leaders must be accountable for the work of all Government agencies funded by public money. The intelligence services cannot be an exception to this rule. Intelligence services have vast powers and abilities to collect information not available to members of the society.¹⁷ There is a widespread public demand in Pakistan for a legal framework and Parliamentary oversight on the role of intelligence agencies. As intelligence agencies are strategic assets of Pakistan, public strongly feels that the agencies should be facilitated within their prescribed professional mandate without encroaching into the political sphere. Indigenous citizens organisations like PILDAT have been demanding that the Parliament must extend its oversight mechanism on intelligence apparatus in Pakistan also. The example of UK is of special relevance to Pakistan where a Parliamentary Special Committee (Intelligence and Security Committee), placed inside the Cabinet office and not the Parliament,

16. For details, please see Muhammad Ziauddin, Parliament's Quest for Oversight on Defence in Pakistan, Issue Paper, PILDAT (January 2012): <http://www.pildat.org/Publications/publication/CMR/ParliamentsQuestforOversightOnDefenceinPakistan-CMR.pdf>

17. For details, please see Mr. Shahid Hamid, Democratic Control of Intelligence Services in Pakistan, Issue Paper, PILDAT (September 2012): http://www.pildat.org/Publications/publication/CMR/DemocraticControlofIntelligenceServicesinPakistan_PILDATIssuePaper.pdf

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examines the policy, administration and expenditure of the intelligence agencies.¹⁸ As a first step, it has been proposed to existing Defence Committees in the Parliament to create sub-committees on intelligence, a step that has not been undertaken during the reporting period.

A positive development towards strengthening Parliamentary oversight has been seen in the Senate Standing Committee on Human Rights approval of a draft bill titled "Regulate the Functioning of Intelligence Agencies" to make civil and armed forces intelligence agencies accountable to the Parliament. The proposed bill, approved by the Committee on September 5, 2013 focused on re-defining the role of intelligence agencies.¹⁹ It is pertinent to mention here that the Senate of Pakistan approved the Bill.

Reviewing Defence Budget

The National Assembly Standing Committee on Defence is one of the few Committees that reviewed the Defence Budgetary Proposals for PSDP during the next fiscal year 2014-2015.

During the First Parliamentary year of the 14th National Assembly, the Defence Committee reviewed the Defence Budget under the Chairmanship of Shaikh Rohale Asghar, MNA.

In India, as a regular practice, the Standing Committee on Defence reviews the Defence Budget of India and presents its reports to the Lok Sabha. Although, legally and technically, the recommendations of the Committee are not binding, the Indian government usually accepts most of them. The Committee extensively reviews the Demands for Grants before the budget every year and details of the latter, along with committee recommendations that are published in the form of a report for public knowledge. The standing committees through their reports have succeeded in putting defence budget in proper perspective. Through the medium of their published reports there is information in the public domain about Defence budgeting process.²⁰

18. The UK Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC) is a special committee of the House of Commons. The Prime Minister, in consultation with the leaders of the two main opposition parties, appoints the ISC members. The Committee reports directly to the Prime Minister, and through him to Parliament, by the publication of the Committee's reports. The Members are subject to Section 1(b) of the Official Secrets Act 1989 and have access to highly classified material in carrying out their duties. The Committee takes evidence from Cabinet Ministers and senior officials – all of which is used to formulate its reports. For details, please see: Pakistan Parliamentary Defence Committee Delegation Study Tour To United Kingdom: PILDAT Report, (May 2009): <http://www.pildat.org/publications/publication/ils/ukstudyvisitapril2009report.pdf>
19. For details, please see PILDAT Releases Report on Assessment of the Quality of Democracy in First 100 Days of National and Provincial Governments, PILDAT Events, September 26, 2013 <http://www.pildat.org/eventsdel.asp?detid=652>
20. For details, please see Amiya Kumar Ghosh, How to Review the Defence Budget: the Case of Indian Parliamentary Committee on Defence, Background Paper, PILDAT, (June 2009): http://www.pildat.org/Publications/publication/budget/howtoreviewdefencebudget_20-06-09.pdf



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