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## Parliament unseats ministers over incursions

by Mir Agha Samimi & Abasin Zaheer

Aug 4, 2012 - 15:20

The lower house of parliament on Saturday voted, unseating defence and interior ministers over a string of rocket and missile attacks from Pakistan into eastern Afghanistan.

Kunar officials say eight people were killed and at least 20 others wounded in the latest shelling by Pakistani forces on Thursday. Dozens of families were forced into migration and their property damaged.

A day earlier, Governor Syed Fazlullah Wahidi criticised the trilateral Afghanistan-Pakistan-ISAF military commission for failing to resolve the issue. He said so far 2900 rockets had been slammed into the province.

Summoned by the assembly on the explosive issue, the ministers answered a volley of queries from lawmakers. Defence Minister Abdul Rahim Wardak agreed the incursions were no longer tolerable for Afghan the government and people.

Within the resources available to it, the defence ministry is fully prepared to safeguard the country, according to Wardak, who said that reinforcements and heavy artillery had been dispatched to Kunar and Nuristan provinces.

He added the ministry had given complete details on the attacks to relevant departments and the matter had also been shared with NATO-led troops. The subject was taken up at the trilateral meeting among Afghanistan, Pakistan and ISAF officials.

Pointing to a strategic deal with the United States, he asked American and NATO troops to take stern action to prevent the cross-border assaults.

Interior Minister Bismillah Mohammadi said they were ready to implement any orders from the government. He once again said the rockets showed the incursions were carried by the Pakistan army. He denied corruption and nepotism in appointments to the interior ministry.

But parliamentarians, unsatisfied with the ministerial explanations, decided that Wardak and Mohammadi seek fresh trust votes from the *Wolesi Jirga*.

Eighty-six MPs found Wardak's remarks satisfactory, but as many expressed their dissatisfaction. When it came to voting, 146 ballots were cast against the defence minister.

Seventy-two votes were cast in the defence minister's favour. Failing to achieve more than 50 percent of votes, the minister automatically lost his position.

Of the legislators present during the session, 126 voted against the interior minister continuing in his office. Another 90 cast their ballots in Mohammadi's favour. A number of votes were found invalid.

Meanwhile, the speaker urged President Hamid Karzai to introduce new candidates for defence and interior ministers to the house for a vote of confidence.