

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE
Aid in Afghanistan

A-6

Possible Question

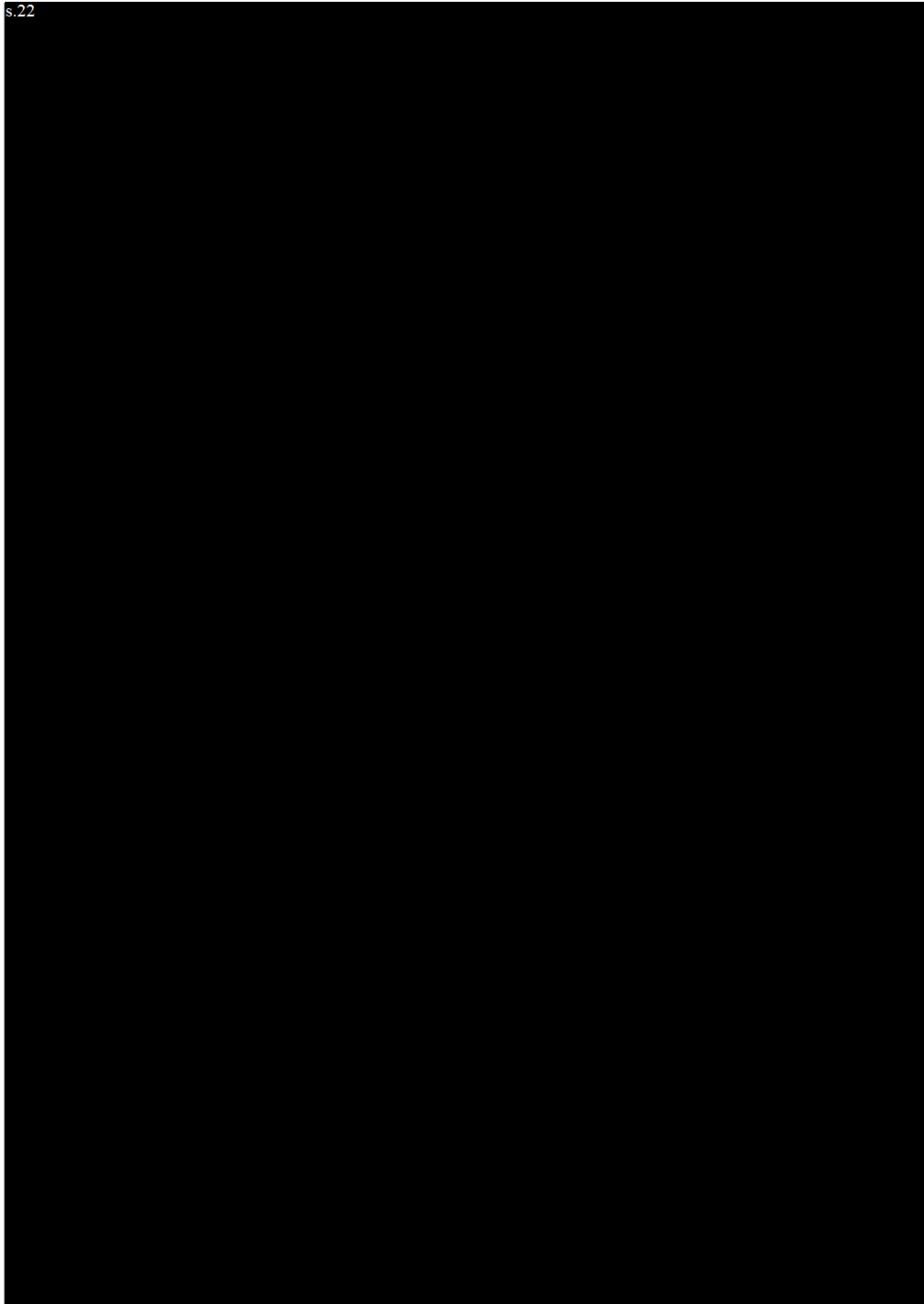
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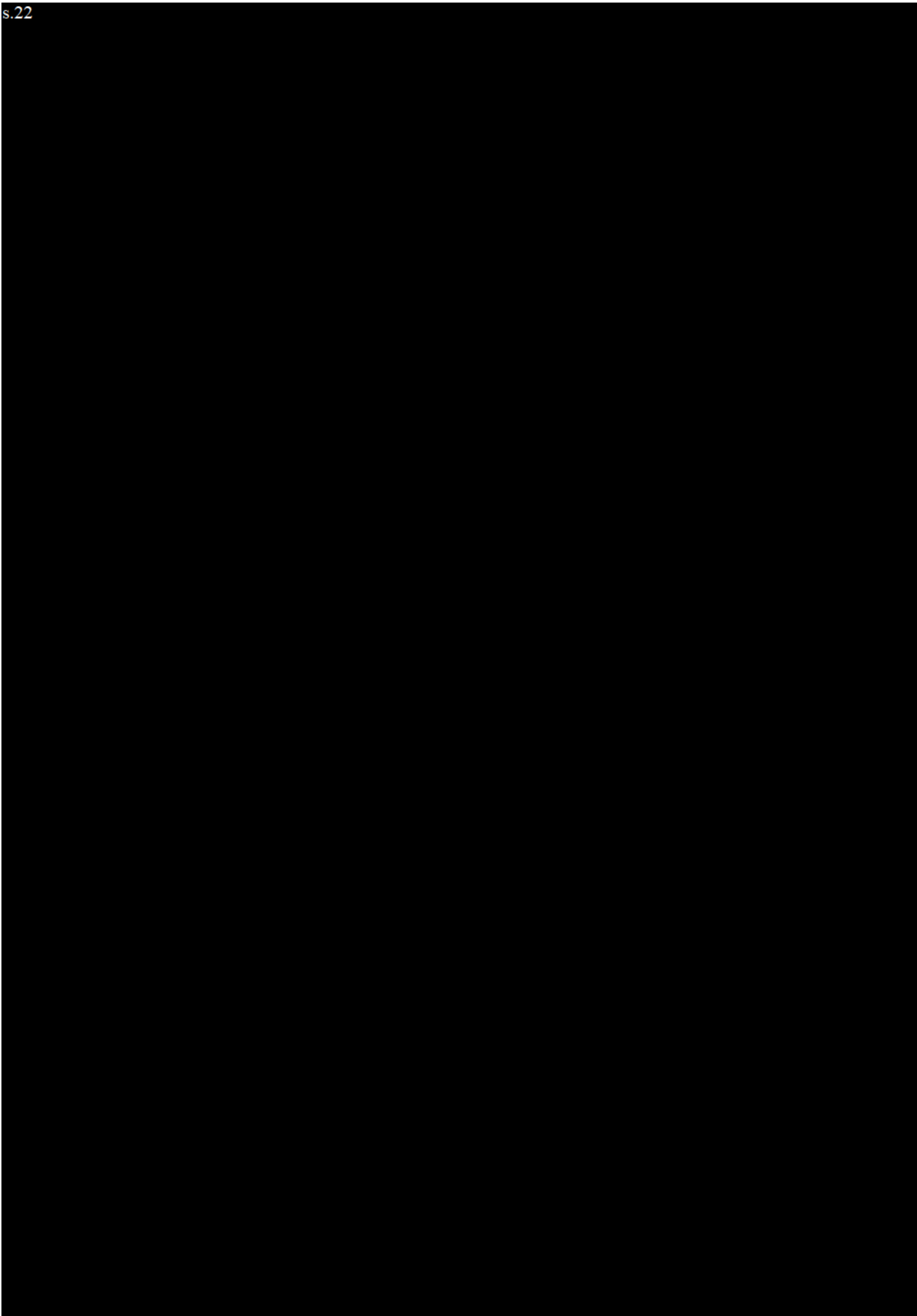


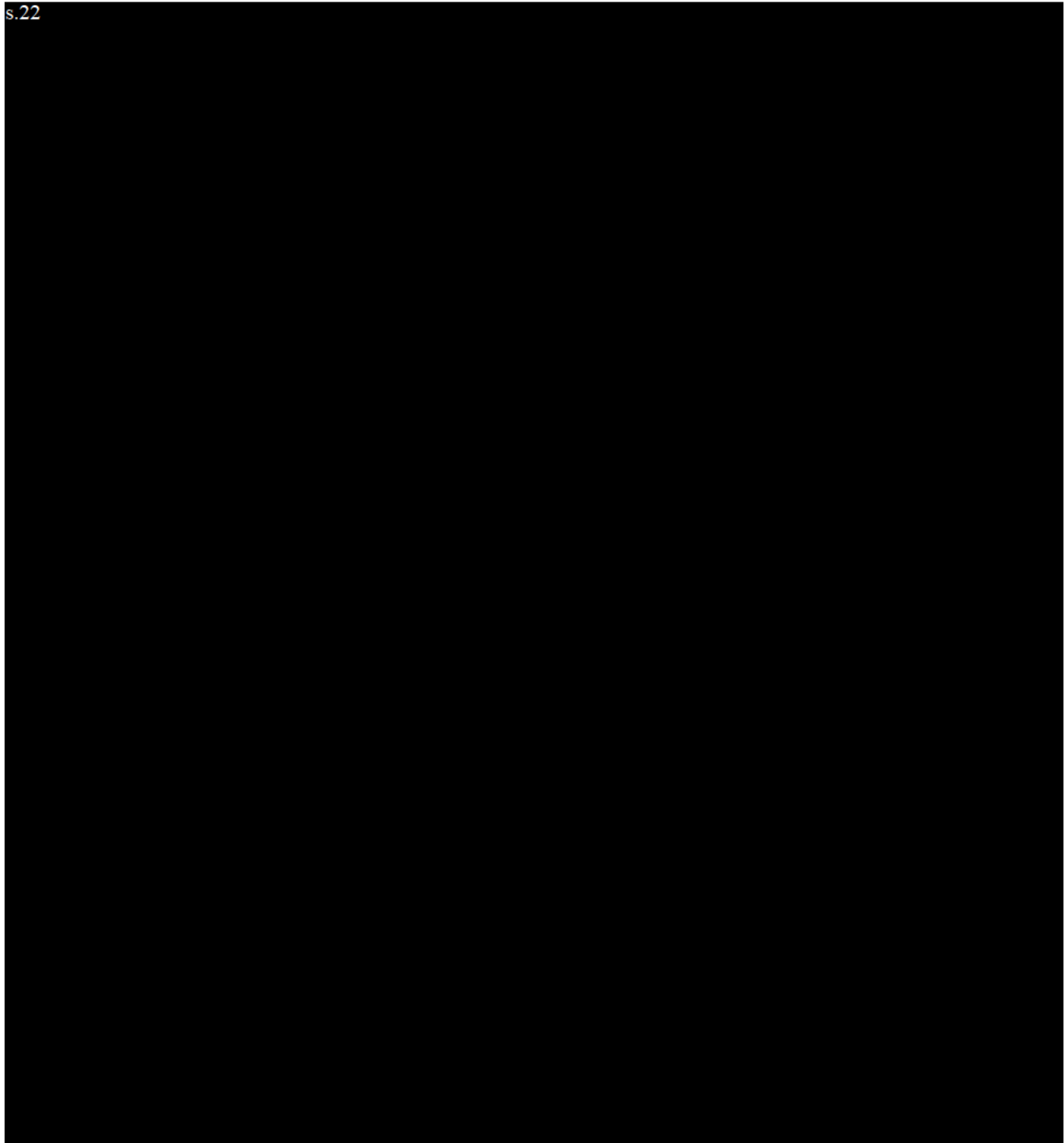
Talking Points

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If Asked: Has AusAID terminated its Agreement with the research organisation The Liaison Office (TLO)? Why?

- Yes. On 16 May AusAID and TLO agreed on the Deed to terminate the arrangement.
- In accordance with the Effective Aid policy, AusAID terminates non-performing agreements.
- TLO was unable to meet its obligations under its funding agreement with AusAID, with repeated instances of reports being delayed beyond deadlines and not published

If Asked: Are you terminating this agreement because TLO had a negative view of the security situation in Uruzgan?

- No. AusAID's decision to terminate predates media comments about TLO alleging that we were unhappy with their report
- Furthermore, we did not dispute their characterisation of the security situation.

What is the program with TLO? How much has been paid?

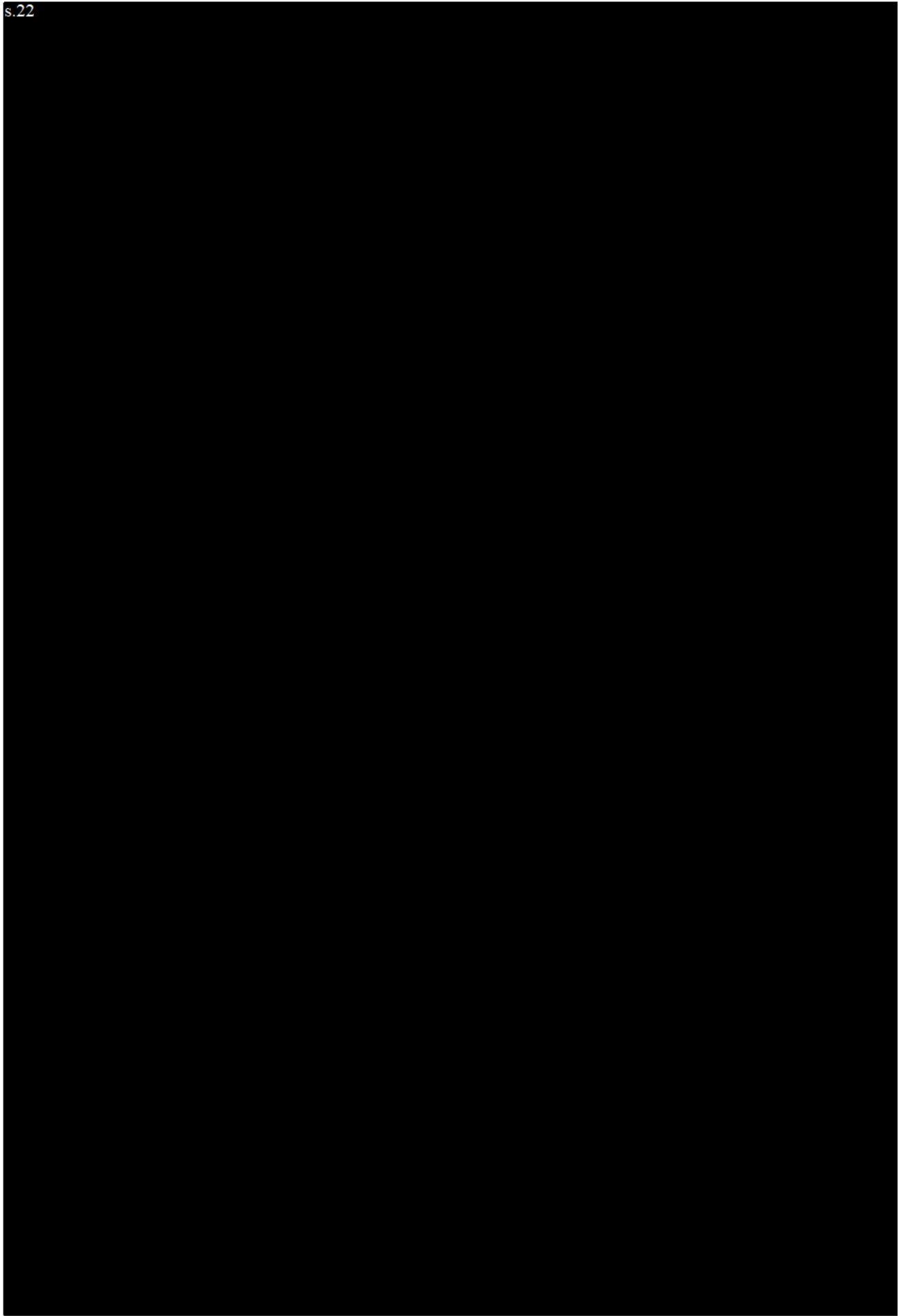
- TLO was engaged by AusAID under a Grant Agreement as an independent research organization.
- The agreement with TLO is a tripartite arrangement between AusAID, TLO and the Netherlands Government for a range of activities including:
 - Peace building, including community dialogue facilitation
 - Research and analysis to support development programming in the province; and,
 - Building provincial and community based monitoring and evaluation capacity.
- The AusAID Grant agreement with TLO is for the period 2010-14 for a maximum of US\$3.6 million
 - as at 30 April 2012, AusAID had provided US\$ 1,213,150 in funding to TLO of which around US\$1.2 million had been acquitted in accordance with the Grant Agreement.

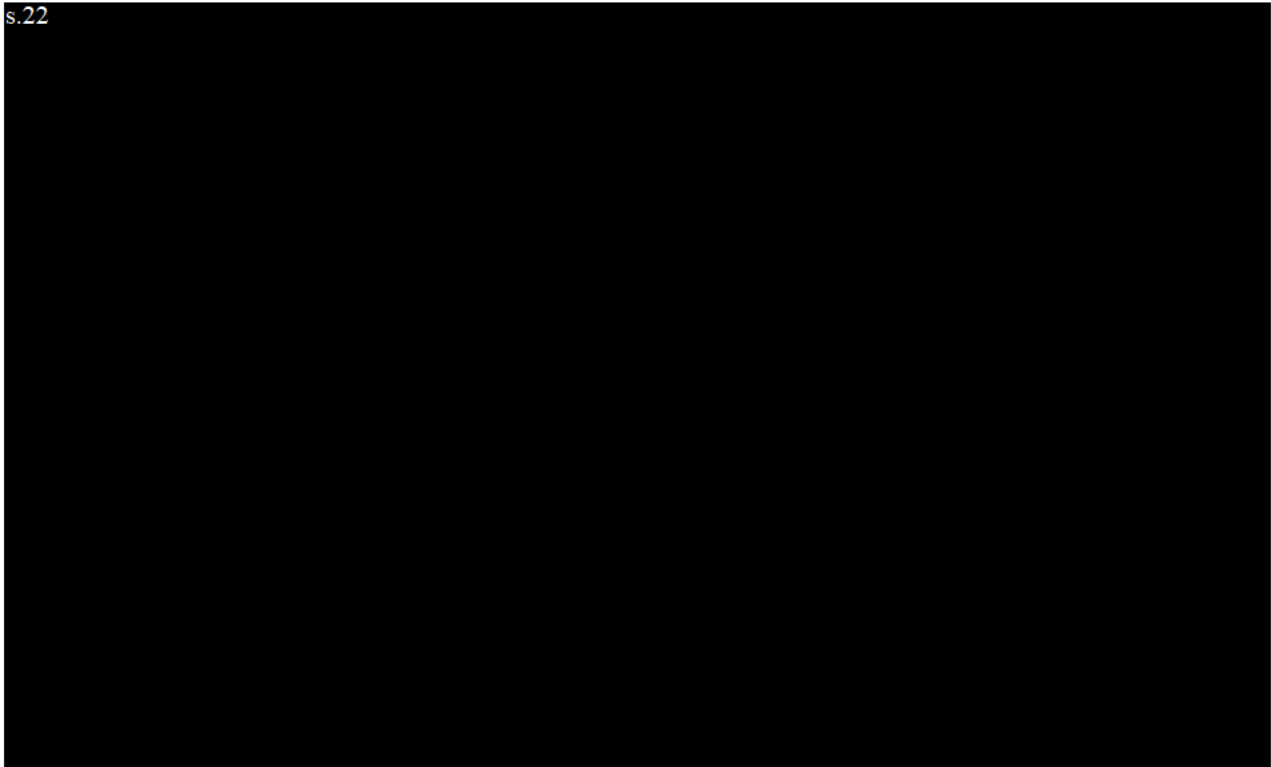
If asked: Does AusAID intend to engage an alternative agency that can provide the type of consultancy service offered by The Liaison Office?

- No. AusAID engaged TLO to do analysis and monitoring when we were commencing our civilian scale up and growing our program in Uruzgan.
- Australian has an extensive Whole of Government presence and a greater capacity to develop and monitor our programs including strong direct relationships with implementing partners and Provincial and District government counterparts.

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Background

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The Liaison Office

On 8 April, the Sunday Age ran an article titled “War analysis ‘doctored’” (attachment A) which was picked up by multiple Australian news sources. The article contended that AusAID ‘rejected an expert report critical of conditions in Afghanistan, demanding that it be rewritten to match upbeat government claims of dramatic progress and improved security’. The claim is in reference to TLO’s annual report, which (following submission delays) covers the 18 month period following the Dutch/Australia leadership change that occurred in August 2010. AusAID provided feedback on the first draft of this report on 9 February 2012.

On 22 April, the Sunday Age ran a second article on the issue titled “Taliban far from defeated in Australian zone: report”. The report claims Australian officials rejected the report as too pessimistic and questioned its accuracy.

AusAID has not rejected any reports provided by The Liaison Office (TLO) or demanded any re-writing of reports. As standard practice, AusAID offers suggestions and feedback on draft reports from implementing partners such as TLO. These comments and corrections seek

clarification between fact, perception and analysis or correct factual inaccuracies. The content of the final report is entirely a decision for the implementing partner.

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Prepared By:

Name: Michael Abbot

Branch: Pakistan and Afghanistan Branch

Phone: s.47F

Edit Date: 28 May 2012

Cleared By:

Name: Michaela Browning

Position: ADG

Branch: Pakistan and Afghanistan

Phone: s.47F