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Note: For information on the security situation and socio-economic situation in Herat-City and Mazar-e Sharif please refer to the following link:

<https://www.ecoi.net/en/countries/afghanistan/featured-topics/security-situation-and-socio-economic-situation-in-herat-city-and-mazar-e-sharif/> (/en/countries/afghanistan/featured-topics/security-situation-and-socio-economic-situation-in-herat-city-and-mazar-e-sharif/)

1. Security in the Country
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3. Sources

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Overview of security in Afghanistan

1. Security in the country

For information on the security situation in Afghanistan during the period from January 2010 to September 2018, see the following report:

- ACCORD: Afghanistan: Entwicklung der wirtschaftlichen Situation, der Versorgungs- und Sicherheitslage in Herat, Mazar-e Sharif (Provinz Balkh) und Kabul 2010-2018, 7 December

2018

<https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2001546.html> (/en/document/2001546.html)**2018**

According to data of the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) of the University of Sussex, 43.750 people (civilians and non-civilians) were killed in reported conflict events in 2018 in Afghanistan, as compared to 41.689 in 2017. (ACLED, 29 April 2019 (<https://www.acleddata.com/data/>))[i]

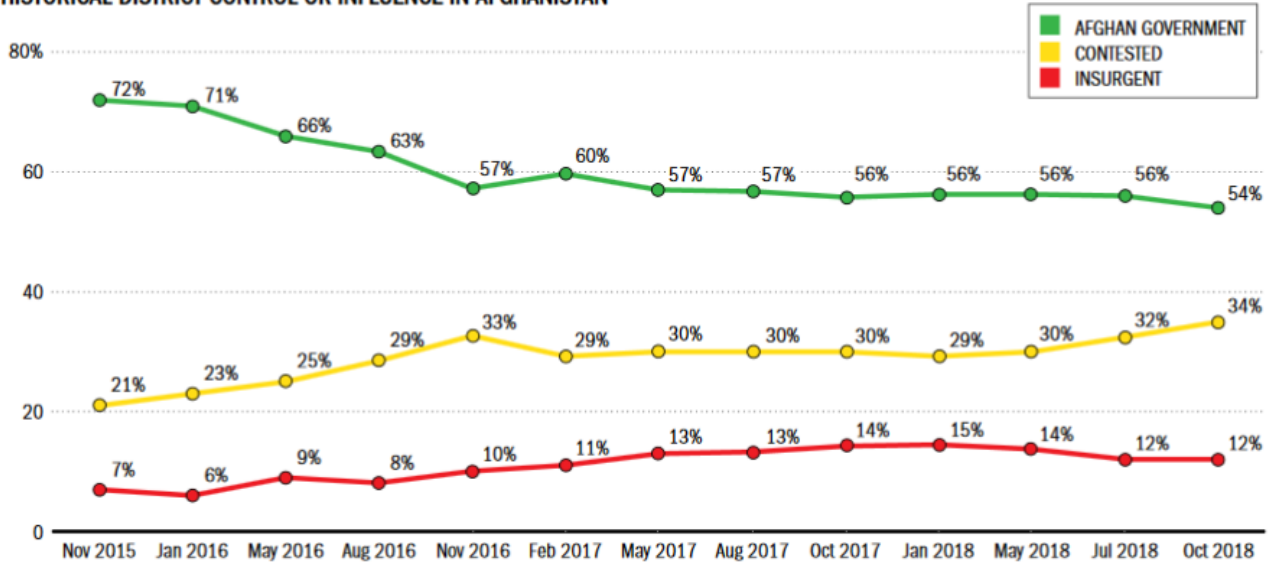
"The Taliban is reported to continue its offensive to gain increased control over a larger number of districts, while Islamic State are reported to be increasingly demonstrating their ability to expand their geographical reach, further destabilizing the security situation." (UNHCR, 30 August 2018, p. 18) (/en/document/1442171.html)[ii]

"Hanif Atmar, der Chef des afghanischen Nationalen Sicherheitsrats (NSR) und damit wohl zweitmächtigster Mann im Land, ist am 25.8.18 zurückgetreten. [...] Berichten aus Afghanistan zufolge hatte Präsident Aschraf Ghani Atmar wegen jüngst gehäufte erheblicher Sicherheitsvorfälle zum Rücktritt aufgefordert (auch die beiden Minister und den gleichrangigen Geheimdienstchef – aber diese wohl nur als Schuss vor den Bug). Zu diesen Vorfällen gehören laut afghanischen Medienberichten die fünftägige Besetzung der Großstadt Ghasni durch die Taleban Mitte August, die offenbar stark erhöhte Zahl der Verluste der afghanischen Streitkräfte (genaue Zahlen werden weiter trotz gegenteiliger Ankündigungen Ghani geheim gehalten) sowie der Mörserangriff am 21.8.18 auf Kabul während einer Rede Ghani zum Eid-al-Adha-Fest." (Ruttig, 27 August 2018 (/en/document/1442316.html))[iii]

"Afghan President Ashraf Ghani says more than 45,000 members of the country's security forces have been killed since he became leader in 2014." (BBC News, 25 January 2019 (/en/document/1457130.html))[iv]

"Since SIGAR began receiving district-control data in November 2015, Afghan government control and influence over its districts has declined by more than 18 percentage points; contested districts have increased by about 13 points; and insurgent control or influence has risen by about five points." (SIGAR, 30 January 2019, p. 71 (/en/file/local/1458001/1788_1550585444_3001.pdf))[v]

The following table by SIGAR illustrates the percentages of territories under Afghan government control or influence, territories under insurgent control or influence, and contested territories for selected months since November 2015:

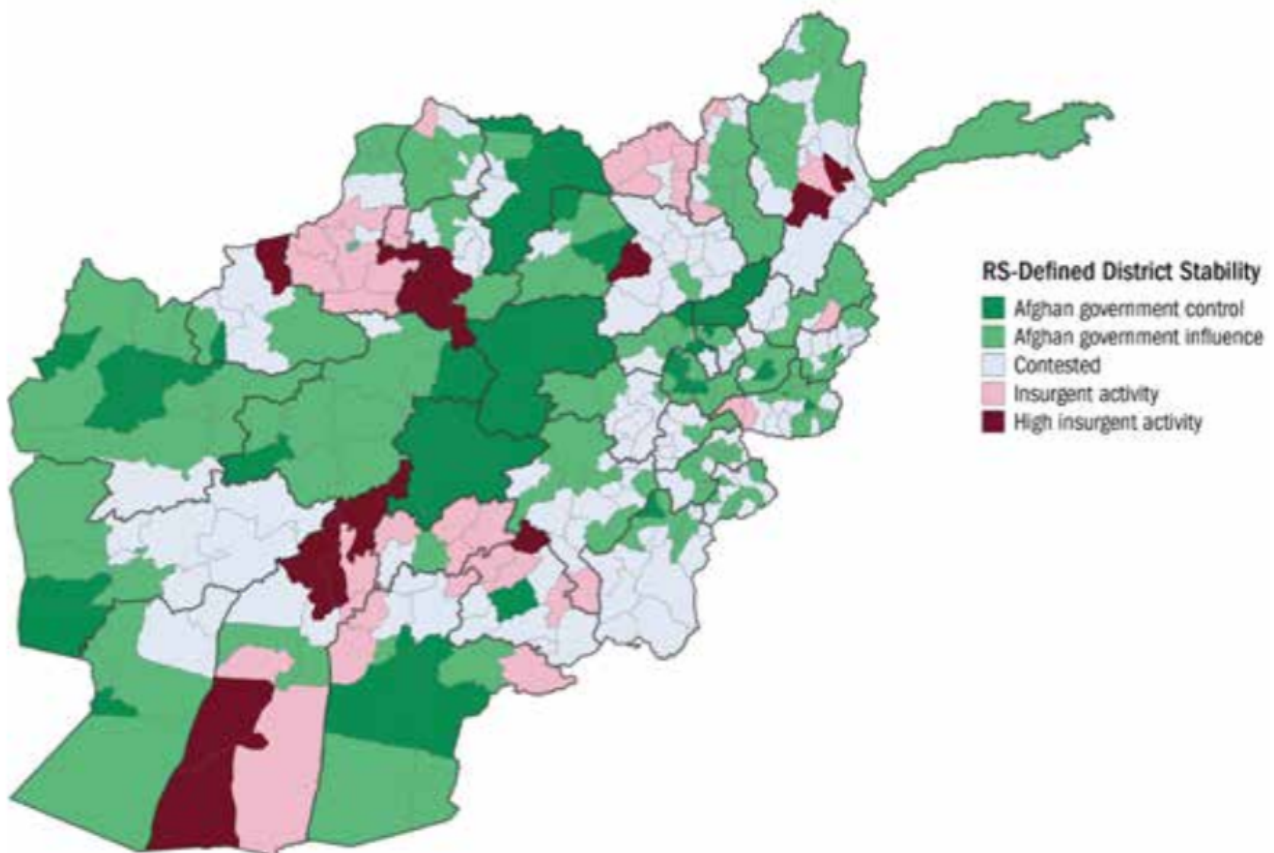
HISTORICAL DISTRICT CONTROL OR INFLUENCE IN AFGHANISTAN

Note: Component numbers may not add to 100 due to rounding. Afghan government and insurgent figures include control and influence.

Source: RS, response to SIGAR data call, 11/27/2015, 1/29/2016, 5/28/2016, 8/28/2016, 11/15/2016, 2/20/2017, 5/15/2017, 8/28/2017, 10/15/2017, 3/22/2018, 6/22/2018, 9/19/2018, and 12/20/2018; RS, response to SIGAR vetting, 1/16/2018.

(SIGAR, 30 January 2019, p. 70 ([/en/document/1458001.html](https://en.document/1458001.html)))

The SIGAR report also contains a map illustrating population density in conjunction with level of control of territory by the Afghan government and insurgent groups:

STABILITY LEVEL OF AFGHANISTAN'S 407 DISTRICTS AS OF OCTOBER 22, 2018

(SIGAR, 30 January 2019, p. 71 ([/en/document/1458001.html](https://en.document/1458001.html)))

According to RS [Resolute Support Mission], as of October 22, 2018, there were 219 districts under Afghan government control (74) or influence (145), 53.8% of the total number of districts. This represents a decrease of seven government-controlled or influenced districts compared to last quarter and eight since the same period in 2017. Insurgent control or influence of Afghanistan's districts increased marginally: there were 50 districts under insurgent control (12) or influence (38) this quarter. This is an increase of one district since last quarter, but a decrease of eight compared to the same period in 2017. Therefore, 12.3% of Afghanistan's districts are now reportedly under insurgent control or influence. The number of contested districts—controlled or influenced by neither the Afghan government nor the insurgency—increased by six since last quarter to 138 districts, meaning that 33.9% of Afghanistan's districts are now contested." (SIGAR, 30 January 2019, p. 69 (/en/file/local/1458001/1788_1550585444_3001.pdf))

"The Afghan Taliban has announced the launch of its annual spring offensive. In a statement released online on April 25, the militant group said the offensive will be "mainly focused on crushing, killing, and capturing American invaders." It said the Americans' "internal supporters" -- the Afghan government and troops -- are considered secondary priorities." (RFE/RL, 25 April 2018 (/en/document/1430719.html))[vi]

"Defense minister Tariq Shah Bahrami on Monday said the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) have thwarted over 1,700 operations by the Taliban since the group announced its spring offensive 'Al Khandaq' last month. He said, since then the group has launched over 2,600 operations across the country, from which the security forces have foiled 1,700 operations." (Tolo News, 7 May 2018 (https://www.tolonews.com/afghanistan/ansf-foils-1700-operations-taliban-defense-ministry))[vii]

"For a three-day period from 15 to 17 June 2018, corresponding with the start of the Eid-ul-Fitr holiday, unilateral ceasefires declared by Government and Taliban overlapped, resulting in the first real cessation of hostilities in 17 years. The break in fighting led to unprecedented improvements in freedom of movement for ordinary Afghans, some of whom visited family homes in Taliban controlled areas that they had been prevented from reaching for years. It also spared the lives of countless Afghan civilians, who continue to suffer at extreme levels from the armed conflict. Two Daesh/ISKP [Islamic State Khorasan Province] - claimed suicide attacks in Nangarhar on 16 and 17 June targeting civilians killed 48 and injured 133, particularly brutal attacks which crushed the peaceful atmosphere in Nangarhar. Apart from these attacks, UNAMA documented almost no other civilian casualties during the break in fighting. The brief ceasefire offered a glimmer of hope to the civilian population at a time when many may have been unable to imagine respite ahead." (UNAMA, 15 July 2018, p. 6-7 (/en/document/1438474.html))[viii]

"Analysts warn that ongoing security concerns are continuing to deter Afghans from registering to vote in the run-up to parliamentary and district council elections due in October." (IWPR, 11 June 2018 (/en/document/1435190.html))[ix]

"UNAMA's findings indicate that violence targeting voters and polling centres on the three days on which voting in the parliamentary elections took place caused 435 civilian casualties (56 deaths and 379 injured) in 108 verified incidents of election-related violence, the highest level of civilian harm compared to the four previous elections held in Afghanistan. UNAMA is currently reviewing credible allegations of dozens of additional incidents which resulted in civilian casualties and damaged civilian property." (UNAMA, November 2018, p. 1 (/en/document/1449064.html))

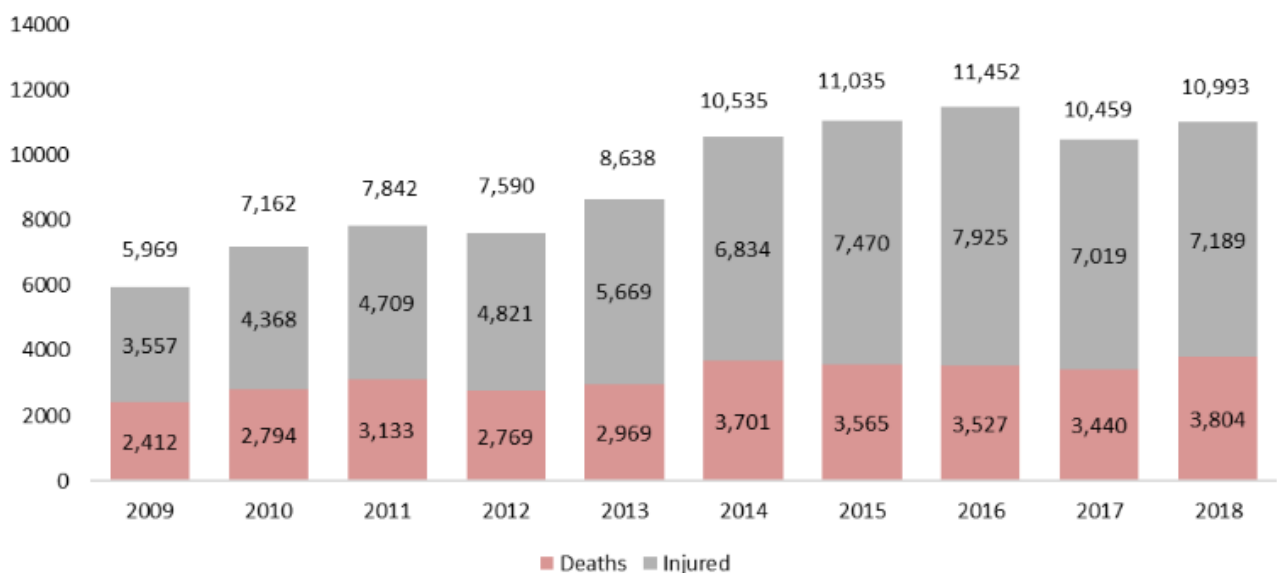
"The ISIL-KP [Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan] presence remained significant in the eastern region, where the group claimed responsibility for three suicide and complex attacks in Nangarhar Province during the reporting period (10 September 2018 - 7 December 2018) and six attacks in Kabul City. However, the robust presence of the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in Jalalabad City since August appeared to have a positive impact on the overall security situation in the city. ISIL-KP continued to fight against the Taliban, with armed clashes between the two groups reported in Nangarhar and Kunar Provinces. International military forces continued to target ISIL-KP, conducting a series of air strikes against targets in Deh Bala, Achin, Khogyani, Nazyan and Chaparhar districts of Nangarhar Province." (UNGA, 7 December 2018, p. 6-7 (/en/file/local/1454726/1226_1545059804_n1840273.pdf))[x]

"The number of IS-K [Islamic State Khorasan]-claimed attacks decreased this quarter. According to ACLED [Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project], the group claimed three attacks in Afghanistan this quarter (October 2, 2018, to January 15, 2019) that killed 20 people, compared to 14 claimed attacks last quarter (July 16 to October 1, 2018) that killed 96 people. However, there were 74 attacks this quarter conducted by unidentified armed groups— some of which could have been IS-K—that killed 220 people." (SIGAR, 30 January 2019, p. 73 (</en/document/1458001.html>))

"The armed conflict in Afghanistan continued to harm civilians at unacceptably high levels in 2018, with overall civilian deaths, including child deaths , reaching record high levels. UNAMA documented 10,993 civilian casualties (3,804 deaths and 7,189 injured) as a result of the armed conflict, representing a five per cent increase in overall civilian casualties and an 11 per cent increase in civilian deaths as compared to 2017. There were significant increases in civilian casualties from suicide attacks by Anti-Government Elements, mainly Daesh/Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP). This, in addition to increases in harm to civilians from aerial operations and search operations, more than offset the continued decrease in civilian casualties from ground fighting. Suicide attacks and aerial operations each caused the most civilian casualties ever recorded by UNAMA for those tactic types." (UNAMA, February 2019, p. 1 (</en/document/1458166.html>))

The following chart shows numbers of civilian casualties (deaths and injured) documented by UNAMA for each year since 2009:

**Total Civilian Deaths & Injured
January to December 2009 - 2018**



(UNAMA, February 2019, p. 1 (</en/document/1458166.html>))

"In 2018, UNAMA attributed 6,980 civilian casualties (2,243 deaths and 4,737 injured) to Anti-Government Elements, a three per cent increase compared with 2017. The increase came mainly from the indiscriminate use of suicide and other IED tactics in civilian areas and the deliberate targeting of civilians with these devices, mainly by Daesh/ISKP, as well as the use of indirect fire systems such as mortars, grenades and rockets in and from civilian-populated areas during ground engagements. [...] UNAMA attributed 4,072 civilian casualties (1,348 deaths and 2,724 injured) to Taliban, a seven per cent decrease compared with 2017, comprising 37 per cent of all civilian casualties. UNAMA attributed 2,181 civilian casualties (681 deaths and 1,500 injured) to Daesh/ISKP, an increase of 118 per cent compared to 2017, comprising 20 per cent of all civilian casualties. UNAMA attributed 678 civilian casualties (196 deaths and 482 injured) to undetermined Anti-Government Elements. [...]

UNAMA documented 2,612 civilian casualties (1,185 deaths and 1,427 injured) attributed to Pro-Government Forces, a 24 per cent increase in civilian casualties as compared to 2017. The increase was mainly driven by a significant increase in civilian casualties resulting from aerial operations by international military forces as well as from search operations conducted by Afghan national security forces and pro-Government armed groups. Aerial operations and ground engagements caused the same number of civilian casualties, and were the two leading causes of civilian casualties attributed to Pro - Government Forces in 2018. UNAMA attributed 1,535 civilian casualties (606 deaths and 929 injured) to Afghan national security forces, approximately the same number as in 2017. UNAMA attributed 674 civilian casualties (406 deaths and 268 injured) to international military forces, mainly from aerial operations, which is more than the number recorded in 2017. Pro-Government armed groups caused 180 civilian casualties (99 deaths and 81 injured), approximately double the number from 2017." ([UNAMA, February 2019, pp. 4-5 \(/en/document/1458166.html\)](/en/document/1458166.html))

ACLED recorded 7,399 security-related events in Afghanistan in 2018, roughly the same as the 7,345 recorded in 2017. The three provinces with the most events were unchanged from 2017 to 2018: Nangarhar, Ghazni, and Helmand. The events occurring in these three provinces accounted for 35% of 2018's total events. Eight of the top 10 provinces with the most ACLED-recorded security-related events in 2018 were also within the top 10 provinces where RS recorded the most enemy-initiated attacks in 2018 (Helmand, Farah, Faryab, Uruzgan, Kandahar, Herat, Ghazni, and Nangarhar). ([SIGAR, 30 April 2019, p. 76 \(/en/document/2008013.html\)](/en/document/2008013.html))

According to USAID[xi], iMMAP[xii] and the World Health Organization's (WHO)[xiii] Health Cluster, in the period between January and November 2018 there have been 85 security incidents targeting health centres and health workers in 21 provinces. ([USAID, et al., 19 December 2018 \(https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/attacks_on_health_november_2018.pdf\)](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/attacks_on_health_november_2018.pdf))

"This year's increase in the number of media fatalities is due in part to bombings and shootings targeting the media in Afghanistan, which was the world's deadliest country for journalists and media workers in 2018, with a total of 15 killed in violent attacks." ([RSF, 14 December 2018, p. 8 \(https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/worldwide_round-up.pdf\)](https://rsf.org/sites/default/files/worldwide_round-up.pdf)) [xiv]

"The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) says militant attacks on schools in Afghanistan increased almost threefold last year, making it increasingly difficult to ensure education for children in many parts of the country. The agency, which promotes education and children's

rights, said in a report on May 28 that the number of attacks against Afghan schools jumped from 68 in 2017 to 192 in 2018. It was the first time since 2015 that a rise in attacks had been recorded." (RFE/RL, 28 May 2019 ([/en/document/2009520.html](https://www.rferl.org/en/document/2009520.html)))

"In December, 2018 [...], 1,121 people lost their lives and 475 others wounded during 140 different attacks" (PAN, 3 February 2019 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2019/02/03/1000-lives-lost-afghan-conflict-january>)) [xv]

"Pajhwok reports based on different sources show 1,262 people were killed and another 720 injured in 28 out of the country's 34 provinces during the month [November 2018]." (PAN, 2 December 2018 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/12/02/afghan-attacks-down-62pc-casualties-11pc-november>))

"Violence in Afghanistan killed and injured 2,552 people in October with 91 percent spike in attacks compared to September and two percent decline in casualties. [...] According to Pajhwok report, 374 attacks took place in October in different parts of the country while 196 attacks took place in September. Pajhwok reports based on different sources showed 1,398 people were killed and 1,154 injured in 31 out of 34 provinces of the country." (PAN, 3 November 2018 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/11/03/over-2550-people-killed-injured-afghanistan-last-month>))

"Attacks decreased by 33 percent in August compared to July in Afghanistan, leaving 1,641 people dead and another 1,113 injured in 30 out of the country's total 34 provinces. [...] According to Pajhwok reports from different areas of the country, there were 163 attacks in August compared to 239 attacks in July.[...] According to Pajhwok reports, 1,754 people lost their lives and another 1,028 were wounded in the month of August." (PAN, 4 September 2018) (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/09/04/august-attacks-leave-1641-people-dead-afghanistan>)

"In total 839 people were killed and another 783 wounded in Afghanistan last month, when 172 attacks took place, showing a 16 percent decrease in assaults and a 46 percent decline in casualties compared to May, Pajhwok has learnt." (PAN, 4 July 2018 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2017/07/04/june-attacks-leave-over-1600-killed-wounded-afghanistan>))

"In May, around 1,449 people were killed and 1,550 others wounded in 205 attacks across Afghanistan, with one-fifth of the assaults happening in Kabul. The statistics indicate a 58 percent increase in attacks and a 39 percent spike in casualties in May over April." (PAN, 4 July 2018 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2017/07/04/june-attacks-leave-over-1600-killed-wounded-afghanistan>))

"Nearly 2,100 people have been killed and injured in 173 attacks in Afghanistan in April showing 15 percent increase in casualties happened in April compared to March. [...]"

According to Pajhwok Afghan News daily reports 1,018 people have been killed and 792 others injured in 171 different attacks in 31 provinces of the country in March.

Reports based on different sources showed 1,220 people were killed and 866 others injured in 27 out of total 34 provinces of the country during April. [...]"

More than half of the April [2018] attacks took place in Faryab, Nangarhar, Ghazni, Jawzjan and Kunduz provinces and the remaining attacks happened in 25 other provinces while Pajhwok had no report of violent incidents from Bamyan, Nuristan, Panshir, Paktia, Nimroz, Takhar and

Nuristan [sic!] provinces. [...]

Among the dead and wounded were rebels, security forces and civilians, but Pajhwok could not share separate and exact number of dead and injured of each category because different sources shared different views." (PAN, 3 May 2018 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/05/03/april-casualties-over-2000-people-killed-and-wounded-afghanistan>))

"Casualties' figures show that current year is more violent compared to the last year." According to PAN, the majority of (civilian and non-civilian) casualties in April 2018 resulted from face-to-face combat (1,211 casualties). The second most important cause were suicide attacks, which accounted for 316 casualties, followed by airstrikes (224 casualties), armed attacks (192 casualties) and explosions (143 casualties). As noted by PAN, 279 persons were killed or injured in Kabul province in April 2018, while 252 casualties were documented in Ghazni province, 223 in Kunduz province, 213 in Faryab province, 195 in Nangarhar province, 125 in Jawzjan province, 114 in Herat province, 91 in Farah province, 83 in Uruzgan province and 73 in Kapisa province." (PAN, 3 May 2018 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/05/03/april-casualties-over-2000-people-killed-and-wounded-afghanistan>))

"One hundred and eighty eight civilians have been killed and 306 wounded during last month in 23 provinces of Afghanistan, The Civilian Protection Advocacy Group (CPAG) said on Wednesday. [...] Most of the civilian casualties belonged to Kabul as a result of terrorist attack in the Kala-i-Nazer locality of Dasht-i-Barchi. 57 civilians were martyred and 119 others got injured in the bombing, the statement said." (PAN, 2 May 2018 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/ps/node/513525>))

"At least 121 civilians were martyred and 322 others injured in 15 provinces of the country in March, a civil society group said on Sunday." (PAN, 1 April 2018 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/04/01/121-civilians-killed-322-injured-march-cpag>))

"According to Pajhwok reports, around 1,400 people had suffered casualties in February." (PAN, 4 April 2018 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/04/04/afghan-casualties-1018-killed-792-wounded-march>))

"Two Hundred and two civilians have suffered casualties in February with 113, including 16 women and 17 children killed, and 89 others injured, including 20 children, Civilian Protection Advocacy Group (CPAG) said on Sunday." (PAN, 4 March 2018 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/03/04/202-civilians-killed-wounded-february-cpag>))

"As many as 228 people were killed and 364 others injured in Afghanistan in the first month of 2018, the Civilian Protection Advocacy Group (CPAG) said on Thursday." (PAN, 1 February 2018 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/02/01/228-killed-364-wounded-january-attacks-cpag>))

The March 2018 German-language expert opinion on Afghanistan by Friederike Stahlmann provides comments on the validity of casualty figures for Afghanistan (Stahlmann, 28 March 2018, section 7 (/en/document/1431611.html))[xvi]

"As of 4 June, 127,045 individuals have been newly displaced by conflict in 2018 and profiled by OCHA as internally displaced persons (IDPs) in need." (UNHCR, June 2018, p. 1 (/en/document/1435669.html))

"Military operations and insecurity continue to generate population displacement in Afghanistan. In early June, military operations displaced nearly 3,800 people in Nangarhar Province's Dehbalā and Pachieragam districts, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

(OCHA). In addition, insecurity recently displaced more than 2,600 people in Kunar, Nangarhar, and Nuristan provinces. Further, ongoing clashes between Government of Afghanistan (GoA) forces and armed groups in southern Afghanistan displaced nearly 1,130 people in Helmand Province, approximately 900 people in Uruzgan Province, and an estimated 380 people in Zabul Province in early June, according to OCHA. In total, conflict displaced nearly 133,000 people - approximately 20 percent of whom are seeking shelter in hard-to-reach areas - from January 1-June 17, OCHA reports." ([USAID, 9 July 2018, p. 2 \(/en/document/1438053.html\)](#))

"In 2018, UNAMA documented 1,015 civilian casualties (536 deaths and 479 injured) from 173 aerial operations conducted by Pro - Government Forces, a 61 per cent increase in civilian casualties from this tactic from 2017. This is the highest number of civilian casualties from airstrikes in a single year since UNAMA began systematic documentation in 2009 and the fourth year in a row in which civilian casualties from aerial operations increased. [...] In 2018, approximately the same number of civilians were killed from airstrikes as in 2014, 2015 and 2016 combined." ([UNAMA, February 2019, p. 38 \(/en/document/1458166.html\)](#))

"Of concern, UNAMA documented an increase in the number of women and child casualties for the fourth year in a row, with an 85 per cent increase in child casualties from aerial operations from 2017. Of the 492 child casualties (236 deaths and 256 injured) caused by this tactic, an airstrike incident in Dasht-e-Archi district, Kunduz Province, by the Afghan Air Force in May 2018, caused 79 child casualties alone." ([UNAMA, February 2019, pp. 38-39 \(/en/document/1458166.html\)](#))

"Between 1 November and 10 January, 49,001 people were newly displaced by the conflict, bringing the total number of displaced in 2018 to 364,883 people. More than half of this figure (58 per cent) comprised children under the age of 18. Although conflict-related displacement in 2018 was down by more than a quarter compared with 2017, many displaced families continued to have no immediate prospect of returning to their areas of origin in safety and dignity." ([UNGA, 28 February 2019 \(/en/document/2004124.html\), p. 12](#))

"Based on the available data, as many as 372,000 conflict displacements are estimated to have occurred in 2018. Despite the historically high levels of violence, this number is lower than the estimated displacements in 2017 (about 474,000 displacements). [...] Total number of IDPs [as of 31 December 2018] 2,598,000" ([IDMC, May 2019, p.1 \(/en/document/2008239.html\)](#))[xvii]

2019

"Press reports in December 2018 and early 2019 indicate that the Trump Administration may be considering withdrawing some U.S. forces, though U.S. officials maintain that no policy decision has been made to reduce U.S. force levels. Many observers assess that a full-scale U.S. withdrawal would lead to the collapse of the Afghan government and perhaps even the reestablishment of Taliban control. By many measures, the Taliban are in a stronger military position now than at any point since 2001, though at least some once-public metrics related to the conduct of the war have been classified or are no longer produced (including district-level territorial and population control assessments, as of the April 30, 2019, quarterly report from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction)." ([CRS, 1 May 2019, p. ii \(/en/document/2008094.html\)](#)) [xviii]

„Das neue Jahr in Afghanistan ist erst gut zwei Wochen alt, aber schon deutet sich an, dass die Kämpfe landesweit zunehmen. Beide Seiten haben angekündigt, dass sie Frühjahrsoffensiven starten wollen bzw werden. [...] Am 19.3.19 informierten der nationale Sicherheitsberater Hamdullah Moheb, der amtierende Innenminister Massud Andarabi, Verteidigungsminister Assadullah Chalid (den einige westliche Länder, darunter Truppensteller für Resolute Support,

wegen Foltervorwürfen nicht offiziell treffen), Geheimdienstchef Massum Stanaksai und Präsidentenberater Fasl Faslī Mahmud den Präsidenten Aschraf Ghani über „geplante Sicherheitsoperationen“. Am darauffolgenden Tag gab das Innenministerium den Beginn seiner „Operation Chalid“ für den nächstfolgenden Tag bekannt. [...] Die offizielle Ankündigung über den Start der Taliban-Jahresoffensive steht noch aus. (Im letzten Jahr geschah das erst am 25. April [...]) Trotzdem wurde bereits vor dem Naurus-Fest in mehreren Provinzen gekämpft.“ (Ruttig, 7 April 2019, ([/en/document/2006788.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/document/2006788.html)))

“American military officials have told Crisis Group they are escalating the pressure on Taliban strongholds in hopes of encouraging the insurgents to soften their approach to peace talks. The strategy includes heavy reliance on air power. The nine months that followed the 2018 ceasefire brought a record-breaking 5,914 airstrikes to Afghanistan, more than a 50 per cent increase from the same period a year earlier. The period from July 2018 to March 2019, the latest month for which data is available, included 5,914 weapons released by U.S. manned and remotely piloted aircraft. The same nine-month period a year earlier included 3,913 weapons releases. These numbers do not include strikes by the Afghan Air Force, which have also escalated in 2019. “2013-2019 Airpower Statistics”, Combined Forces Air Component Commander, 31 March 2019. [...] The bulk of these airstrikes hit rural areas from where there is generally little public reporting about daily life and the impact of the conflict on it. [...]

Patterns of violence are changing. In the past, the insurgents inflicted the majority of civilian casualties. That started to change this year. The latest wave of fighting includes a greater number of civilians killed by international forces and their Afghan allies.” (ICG, 5 July 2019 ([/en/dokument/2012717.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/dokument/2012717.html))) [xix]

“On 28 September, Afghanistan held its fourth Presidential election since 2004. While levels of election-related violence remained relatively low in the months leading up to polling day, two high-profile suicide attacks on election-related sites in July and September, alongside an extended campaign by the Taliban to intimidate Afghan citizens not to participate in the election, raised concern and doubt as to what would transpire on election day. [...] [O]n 28 September, the day of the presidential elections, UNAMA documented 100 election-related incidents with civilian casualties across the country, mainly attributed to the Taliban, including many civilians who were not participating in the presidential election” (UNAMA, October 2019, p. 1 ([/en/dokument/2019227.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/dokument/2019227.html)))

“From 1 January to 30 September, UNAMA documented 8,239 civilian casualties (2,563 deaths and 5,676 injured), similar to the same period in 2018. Anti-Government Elements continued to cause the majority of civilian casualties in Afghanistan and also caused slightly more civilian deaths than Pro-Government Forces in the first nine months of 2019, contrary to the first half year of 2019 when Pro-Government Forces caused more civilian deaths. Forty-one per cent of all civilian casualties were women and children. Civilians living in the provinces of Kabul, Nangarhar, Helmand, Ghazni, and Faryab were most directly impacted by the conflict (in that order). During the first nine months of 2019, the combined use of suicide and non-suicide improvised explosive devices (IEDs) was the leading cause of civilian casualties causing 42 per cent of the overall total, up from 28 per cent after the first two quarters of 2019. Ground engagements was the second leading cause of civilian casualties (29 per cent), followed by aerial attacks (11 per cent). Aerial operations remained the leading incident type of civilian deaths, causing 23 per cent of civilian deaths.” (UNAMA, 17 October 2019, pp. 1-2 ([/en/dokument/2019223.html](https://www.ecoi.net/en/dokument/2019223.html)))

“From 1 January to 30 September 2019, Anti-Government Elements caused 5,117 civilian casualties (1,207 deaths and 3,910 injured), accounting for 62 per cent of all civilian casualties. While this represents a three per cent overall decrease in civilian casualties attributed to Anti-Government

Elements compared to the same period in 2018, the recent increase of civilian casualties attributed to Taliban is noteworthy. UNAMA attributed 3,823 civilian casualties (922 deaths and 2,901 injured) representing 46 per cent of all civilian casualties to the Taliban. Civilian casualties attributed to the Taliban increased by 31 per cent in the first nine months of 2019 as compared to the same time period in 2018. However, comparing the months of July, August and September of 2019 to the third quarter of 2018, it shows more than a tripling of civilian casualties caused by the Taliban. UNAMA attributed 1,013 civilian casualties (229 deaths and 784 injured) representing 12 per cent of all civilian casualties, to Daesh/Islamic State Khorasan Province (ISKP). This is a 49 per cent decrease as compared to the first nine months of 2018. Unidentified Anti-Government Elements caused 281 civilian casualties (56 deaths and 225 injured) three per cent of all civilian casualties." ([UNAMA, 17 October 2019, p. 3 \(/en/dokument/2019223.html\)](#))

"From 1 January to 30 September 2019, Pro-Government Forces caused 2,348 civilian casualties (1,149 deaths and 1,199 injured), a 26 per cent increase from the corresponding period in 2018. Pro-Government Forces were responsible for 28 per cent of civilian casualties overall. During the first nine months of 2019 UNAMA attributed 1,261 civilian casualties (484 deaths and 777 injured), representing 15 per cent of all civilian casualties, to Afghan national security forces, similar to the civilian casualty figures from the same time period in 2018. UNAMA attributed 682 civilian casualties (468 deaths and 214 injured), representing eight per cent of civilian casualties, to International Military Forces, which is over a four-fold increase as compared to last year. UNAMA attributed 155 civilian casualties (79 deaths and 76 injured), representing two per cent of all civilian casualties, to pro-Government armed groups, with Paktika-based Shaheen Forces surpassing the Khost Protection Force in terms of civilian casualties caused. The remaining 250 civilian casualties (118 deaths and 132 injured), representing three per cent of all civilian casualties, were attributed to undetermined or multiple Pro-Government Forces." ([UNAMA, 17 October 2019, p. 8 \(/en/dokument/2019223.html\)](#))

"AIHRC figures show that during the first six months in 1398 [21 March - 21 September], a total of 6,487 civilians were killed and injured in Afghanistan, of which 1,611 were killed and 4,876 civilians were injured. These figures show an increase of 8.36% compared to the first six months in 1397. [...] According to findings by AIHRC during the first six months in 1398, almost 75% of civilian casualties were committed by the Taliban, 3% by Daesh and 11% by the government forces. The perpetrators were not identified for 10% of civilian casualties. Remaining casualties were caused by Pakistani rockets fired on Kunar province." ([AIHRC, 21 October 2019 \(/en/dokument/2018949.html\)](#))[xx]

"This quarter [1 July – 30 September] saw heavy fighting among all parties to the Afghan conflict, as President Donald J. Trump called off peace negotiations with the Taliban after the insurgents claimed an attack that killed a U.S. soldier on September 5, and as the Afghan government carried out its late-September presidential election." ([SIGAR, 30 October 2019, p. 67 \(/en/document/2019950.html\)](#))

"ACLED-recorded 4,005 political-violence and protest incidents this quarter (June 1–August 31, 2019), a 61% increase compared to the same period last year, with incidents concentrated in southern and eastern Afghanistan. The data show that this significant year-on-year change was mainly driven by an increase in the number of battles recorded this quarter: 2,530 versus 1,579 recorded during June–August 2018. ACLED defines a battle as "a violent interaction between two politically organized armed groups at a particular time and location," such as armed clashes or the government or non-state actors taking territory. Battles can occur between armed and organized state, non-state, and external groups, or in any such combination." ([SIGAR, 30 October 2019, p. 72 \(/en/document/2019950.html\)](#))

"Around 1,000 people were killed and another 800 injured in violence in Afghanistan last month [January 2019], amid peace negotiations and hopes for an end to the bloodshed. In December, 2018, 1,121 people lost their lives and 475 others wounded during 140 different attacks, compared 131 attacks in January." (PAN, 3 February 2019 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2019/02/03/1000-lives-lost-afghan-conflict-january>))

"Around a thousand people suffered casualties in the conflict in February when the fatality rate dropped by 43 percent compared to the previous month. Pajhwok Afghan News reports show that February was the only month in the last two years when casualties fell unprecedentedly and no suicide attacks happened during the period. [...] In February, 392 people were killed and 653 others injured. Rebels, security forces and civilians were among the casualties. But Pajhwok could not compile specific casualty figures because different sources provided different accounts"(PAN, 4 March 2019 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2019/03/04/conflict-related-casualties-down-43pc-february>))

"At least 484 civilians have suffered casualties -- 184 martyred and 300 others wounded -- in 18 provinces of the country in March, the Civilian Protection Advocacy Group (CPAG) said on Tuesday. The group said 54 children and 27 women were among the victims." (PAN, 2 April 2019 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2019/04/02/despise-ghani%E2%80%99s-orders-civilian-casualties-persist>))

"Nearly 2,100 people have been killed and injured in 173 attacks in Afghanistan in April showing 15 percent increase in casualties happened in April compared to March. [...] Reports based on different sources showed 1,220 people were killed and 866 others injured in 27 out of total 34 provinces of the country during April." (PAN, 3 May 2019 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2018/05/03/april-casualties-over-2000-people-killed-and-wounded-afghanistan>))

"Over 2,300 people have been killed and wounded last month in Afghanistan as attacks surged by 37 percent while casualties increased by 24 percent compared to the previous month. [...] Pajhwok reports based on different sources showed that last month 1,317 people were killed and 995 others injured in attacks in 30 provinces of the country. These casualties inflicted in May as a result of 210 attacks, 37 percent higher compared to April." (PAN, 2 June 2019 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2019/06/02/more-2000-people-killed-injured-may>))

"1,500 people died or [were] wounded as a result of the decades-old conflict in Afghanistan during the month of June --- 35 percent down compared to May's casualties." (PAN, 3 July 2019 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2019/07/03/afghan-violence-leaves-1500-dead-or-wounded-june>))

"Civilian casualties jump amid intensified efforts on national, regional and international levels to find a negotiated end to the Afghanistan conflict. According to Pajhwok Afghan News reports, nearly 1,500 people suffered casualties in June, but the figures rose to 3,625 in July. Pajhwok reports based on different sources show 1,957 people lost their lives and 1,668 others sustained injuries in attacks in 32 provinces of the country in July. The casualties in July resulted from 246 attacks -- 86 percent up compared to May's attacks. The Taliban carried out 89 attacks, unidentified gunmen 73, Afghan forces 70 and foreign forces carried out 14 attacks." (PAN, 4 August 2019 (<https://www.pajhwok.com/en/2019/08/04/afghan-civilian-casualties-double-deadliest-july>))

The June 2019 EASO report on Afghanistan provides further information on the security situation at provincial level (EASO, June 2019 (</en/document/2010329.html>))[xxi]

2. State and Non-State Actors

2.1. Afghan Government and Security Forces

"Three ministries have responsibility for law enforcement and maintenance of order in the country: the Ministry of Interior, the Ministry of Defense, and the NDS. The ANP, under the Ministry of Interior, has primary responsibility for internal order and for the Afghan Local Police (ALP), a community-based self-defense force. The Major Crimes Task Force (MCTF), also under the Ministry of Interior, investigates major crimes including government corruption, human trafficking, and criminal organizations. The Afghan National Army, under the Ministry of Defense, is responsible for external security, but its primary activity is fighting the insurgency internally. The NDS functions as an intelligence agency and has responsibility for investigating criminal cases concerning national security. The investigative branch of the NDS operated a facility in Kabul, where it held national security prisoners awaiting trial until their cases went to prosecution." (USDOS, 13 March 2019, section 1d (</en/document/2004129.html>))[xxii]

"[T]he Government continued to face increasing challenges owing to the high levels of attrition in the Afghan National Army and the Afghan National Police as a result of casualties and desertion as well as difficulties in securing new recruits, in particular at the officer entry level." (UNGA, 15 September 2017, p. 5 (</en/document/346867>))

"According to CSTC-A [Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan], as of July 28, 2019, there were 162,415 MOD [Ministry of Defence] and 91,435 MOI [Ministry of Interior] personnel, for a total ANDSF [Afghan National Defence and Security Forces] assigned strength of 253,850 personnel reported in the Afghan Personnel and Pay System (APPS) [Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan Air Forces (AAF): 162,415; Afghan National Police (ANP): 91,435]. This does not include roughly 18,000 Afghan Local Police (ALP). This quarter's figures reflect a decrease of 18,615 reported personnel (18,454 fewer MOD and 161 fewer MOI) than the 272,465 APPS-derived ANDSF assigned strength reported for May 28, 2019 (also not including the ALP)." (SIGAR, 30 October 2019, p. 77-79 (</en/document/2019950.html>))

"ALP [Afghan Local Police] members, known as "guardians," are usually local citizens selected by village elders or local leaders to protect their communities against insurgent attack, guard facilities, and conduct local counterinsurgency missions. [...] NSOCC-A [NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan] reported that according to the ALP Staff Directorate, the ALP had roughly 28,000 guardians on hand as of July 17, 2019, roughly 23,500 of whom were fully trained, the same as last quarter." (SIGAR, 30 October 2019, p. 99 (</en/document/2019950.html>))

While [the ANP] suffers higher casualties than the army because it is often at the front during the "hold" phase of counterinsurgency operations, its poorly rated performance is largely due to "inadequate training in counter-insurgency, poor planning processes and sub-optimal force postures" that leave personnel vulnerable at static checkpoints. The ANP and ALP are, moreover, ridden with corruption and nepotism. ANP officer appointments are often patronage based; staff positions are stacked with junior and inexperienced officers, appointed due to nepotism, corruption or simply the ability to read and write." (ICG, 10 April 2017, pp. 14-15 (</en/document/339479>))

The March 2018 German-language expert opinion on Afghanistan by Friederike Stahlmann provides further information on state actors in Afghanistan (Stahlmann, 28 March 2018, section 3.2 (</en/document/1431611.html>))

"The Government continued to reform the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces in accordance with its four-year road map on security sector reform. During the reporting period [27 February – 6 June 2017], the Government completed the transfer of the Afghan Border Police from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Defence and renamed it the Afghan Border Forces, in line with its new focus on combat operations. The Government also continued to scale up the Afghan Special Forces as part of a plan to double their number under the four-year road map. During the reporting period, 2,000 additional commandos joined the special operations battalions. Efforts also continued to increase the size of the Afghan Air Force, which is expected to double by 2023 under the road map. In addition, the Government brought forward the retirement of senior military officials under the provisions of the Inherent Law of 2017, with a retirement order for a second group of 61 Afghan National Army generals issued by the President on 12 May." ([UNGA, 6 June 2018, p. 5-6 \(/en/document/1435757.html\)](#))

"During the reporting period the Government began preparations for the establishment of a new security force, the Afghan National Army Territorial Force. The Force is expected to comprise about 36,000 personnel and will mainly be responsible for defending areas cleared of insurgents by military operations. Around 5,000 soldiers have been recruited in a pilot phase to be rolled out in four provinces and have commenced training under the auspices of the Ministry of Defence." ([UNGA, 6 June 2018, p. 6 \(/en/document/1435757.html\)](#))

2.2 Insurgent Groups

"Anti-Government Elements encompass all individuals and armed groups involved in armed conflict with or armed opposition against the Government of Afghanistan and/or international military forces. They include those who identify as 'Taliban' as well as individuals and non-State organised armed groups taking a direct part in hostilities and assuming a variety of labels including the Haqqani Network, Hezb-e-Islami, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Jihad Union, Lashkari Tayyiba, Jaysh Muhammed, groups identified as 'Daesh' and other militia and armed groups pursuing political, ideological or economic objectives including armed criminal groups directly engaged in hostile acts on behalf of a party to the conflict." (UNAMA, August 2015, p. 2, Footnote 5 ([/en/document/309705](#)))

"The total number of foreign terrorist fighters in Afghanistan with all terrorist groups (including ISIL) is estimated at 10,000 to 15,000." ([UN Security Council, 30 May 2018, p. 3 \(/en/document/1435051.html\)](#))[xxiii]

"This presents a grave threat to an already embattled Afghanistan. The recent wave of Taliban terrorist attacks in urban centers across the country suggests a reinvigorated insurgency, with the Afghan government and security forces now also facing an onslaught from an emboldened IS-K." ([JF, 14 June 2018 \(/en/document/1435576.html\)](#))[xxiv]

"Terrorist and insurgent groups exploit Afghanistan's ungoverned spaces, including the border region of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Islamic State's Khorasan Province (ISIS-K), elements of al-Qa'ida, and terrorist groups targeting Pakistan, such as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), continued to use the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region as a safe haven. The Government of National Unity (GNU) struggled to assert control over this remote terrain, where the population is largely detached from national institutions." ([USDOS, 1 November 2019 \(/en/document/2019264.html\)](#))

Taliban

"The insurgency is still led primarily by the Taliban movement. The death in 2013 of its original leader, Mullah Umar, was revealed in a July 2015 Taliban announcement. In a disputed selection process, he was succeeded by Akhtar Mohammad Mansour, who in turn was killed by a U.S. unmanned aerial vehicle strike on May 21, 2016. Several days later, the Taliban confirmed his death and announced the selection of one of his deputies, Haibatullah Akhunzadeh, as the new Taliban leader. The group announced two deputies: Mullah Yaqub (son of Mullah Umar) and Sirajuddin Haqqani (operational commander of the Haqqani Network)." (CRS, 19 May 2017, p. 16 (/en/document/326376))

"The Taliban is an umbrella organization comprising loosely connected insurgent groups, including more or less autonomous groups with varying degrees of loyalty to the leadership and the idea of The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. The Taliban's organisational structure is hierarchical, with an Amir ul - Muminin (Commander of the Faithful) on the top. He gives moral, religious and political statements, oversees judges, courts, and political commissions, assigns shadow governors and is in command of the military organization." (Landinfo, 13 May 2016, p. 4 (/en/document/323848)) [xxv]

"By the start of the 2019 fighting season, which was announced on 12 April under the name 'Al-Fath' or 'Victory' the political backdrop had changed. In fact, extensive talks had already taken place in early 2019 between the Taliban and the United States of America. The first week of Al-Fath saw the highest level of security incidents in two years. The Taliban enjoy robust supplies of weapons, ammunition, funding and manpower, with 60,000 to 65,000 fighters and half that number or more of facilitators and other non - combatant members" (UN Security Council, 13 June 2019, p. 3) (/en/document/2010658.html)

"[T]he Taliban had reportedly undertaken a restructuring and made numerous appointments to senior leadership positions inside Afghanistan, which were described as the removal of the older generation in favour of younger Taliban leaders. According to the same interlocutors, the provincial shadow and deputy shadow governors, along with the provincial military commanders, were all replaced in the Provinces of Bamyan, Baghlan, Kabul, Kapisa, Kunar, Laghman, Parwan, Samangan, Takhar and Uruzgan. Ousted individuals were reportedly removed owing to complaints from rank and file Taliban concerning deficiencies in logistical and financial support." (UN Security Council, 30 May 2018, p. 5) (/en/document/1435051.html))

"Since the post-2014 U.S. military withdrawal from Afghanistan (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Afghanistan>), there is little sign that the Taliban's firepower has waned, or that the group is suffering from battle fatigue. Through persistent violence, the Taliban formations have proven they are still a major force in Afghanistan. It is likely the support structures the group has established over the last two decades remain intact. Since the fall of its so-called Islamic Emirate in 2001, the militant group has restricted the governments that followed from fully governing the country." (JE, 2 June 2018 (/en/document/1435560.html))

Hezb-e-Islami

"Another significant insurgent leader is former mujahedin party leader Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, who leads Hizb-e-Islami - Gulbuddin (HIG). The faction received extensive U.S. support against the Soviet Union, but turned against its mujahedin colleagues after the Communist government fell in 1992. The Taliban displaced HIG as the main opposition to the 1992 - 1996 Rabbani government. In the post-Taliban period, HIG has been ideologically and politically allied with the Taliban insurgents, but HIG fighters sometimes clash with the Taliban over control of territory in HIG's

main centers of activity in provinces to the north and east of Kabul. HIG is not widely considered a major factor on the Afghanistan battlefield and has focused primarily on high-profile attacks [...]." (CRS, 6 June 2016, p. 22 (/en/document/315254))

"The peace deal signed today by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of Hezb-e Islami, and President Ashraf Ghani, has been hailed by the Afghan government as the first major peace achievement of the last fifteen years. However, expectations should be tempered. Given Hezb-e Islami's almost total absence on the battlefield, the deal is unlikely to significantly lower the current levels of violence." (Osman, 29 September 2016 (/en/document/330273))[xxvi]

Haqqani Network

The "Haqqani Network," founded by Jalaludin Haqqani, a mujahedin commander and U.S. ally during the U.S.-backed war against the Soviet occupation, is often cited by U.S. officials as a potent threat to U.S. and allied forces and interests, and a "critical enabler of Al Qaeda." [...] Some see the Haqqani Network as on the decline. The Haqqani Network had about 3,000 fighters and supporters at its zenith during 2004-2010, but it is believed to have far fewer currently. However, the network is still capable of carrying out operations, particularly in Kabul city. [...] The group apparently has turned increasingly to kidnapping to perhaps earn funds and publicize its significance." (CRS, 19 May 2017, p. 20 (/en/document/326376))

"Strength: HQN [Haqqani Network] is believed to have several hundred core members, but it is estimated that the organization is able to draw upon a pool of upwards of 10,000 fighters. HQN is integrated into the larger Afghan Taliban and cooperates with other terrorist organizations operating in the region, including al-Qa'ida and Lashkar e-Tayyiba.

Location/Area of Operation: HQN is active along the Afghanistan-Pakistan border and across much of southeastern Afghanistan, particularly in Loya Paktia, and has repeatedly targeted Kabul in its attacks. The group's leadership has historically maintained a power base around Pakistan's tribal areas.

Funding and External Aid: In addition to the funding it receives as part of the broader Afghan Taliban, HQN receives much of its funds from donors in Pakistan and the Gulf, as well as through criminal activities such as kidnapping, extortion, smuggling, and other licit and illicit business ventures." (USDOS, 19 September 2018a (/en/document/1445040.html))

Al Qaeda

"From 2001 until 2015, Al Qaeda was considered by U.S. officials to have only a minimal presence (fewer than 100) in Afghanistan itself, operating mostly as a facilitator for insurgent groups and mainly in the northeast. However, in late 2015 U.S. Special Operations forces and their ANDSF partners discovered and destroyed a large Al Qaeda training camp in Qandahar Province—a discovery that indicated that Al Qaeda had expanded its presence in Afghanistan. In April 2016, U.S. commanders publicly raised their estimates of Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan to 100-300, and said that relations between Al Qaeda and the Taliban are increasingly close. Afghan officials put the number of Al Qaeda fighters in Afghanistan at 300- 500." (CRS, 19 May 2017, p. 17 (/en/document/326376))

Islamic State - Khorasan Province

"An Islamic State affiliate—Islamic State-Khorasan Province (ISKP, often also referred to as Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant-Khorasan, ISIL-K), named after an area that once included parts of what is now Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan—has been active in Afghanistan since mid-2014." (CRS, 19 May 2017, p. (/en/document/326376)20)

"IS formally launched its Afghanistan operations on January 10, 2015, when Pakistani and Afghan militants pledged their allegiance to its so-called caliphate in Syria and Iraq[...]. Since then, IS-Khorasan has proved itself to be one of group's most brutal iterations, attacking soft targets, targeting Shia populations, killing Sufis and destroying shrines, as well as beheading its own dissidents, kidnapping their children and marrying off their widows. [...]

IS-Khorasan chose to base itself in Afghanistan's Nangarhar Province, a strategic location bordering Pakistan's tribal areas. Its recruits came from both sides of the porous border and could easily escape a surgical strike or military operation by fleeing to either side of the Durand line. [...]

From the very beginning, IS-Khorasan identified its targets—Shia communities, foreign troops, the security forces, the Afghan central government and the Taliban, who had not previously been challenged by an insurgent group. [...]

Despite rigorous bombing and military operations against IS-Khorasan—including the deployment of the largest conventional bomb, the GBU-43 Massive Ordnance Air Blast, in April last year—the group has maintained its presence in almost 30 districts across the country. In the north, the group has made bases in Kohistanat, Sar-e-Pol province, Khanabad, Kunduz province and Darzab, Jowzjan province. [...]

Kabul became the first target on the IS-Khorasan agenda after the group established a base in neighboring Logar province in early 2015. From the beginning, it carried out small-scale attacks and targeted killings, but most of these went unnoticed by the international media.

Over time, these cells have become increasingly active, sophisticated and barbaric." (JF, 6 April 2018 (/en/document/1428951.html))

"On January 26, 2015, Abu Muhammed al-Adnani, Islamic State's chief spokesperson, released an audio statement in which he declared the establishment of Wilayat Khorasan, a branch of the group "encompassing Afghanistan, Pakistan and other nearby lands" (Jihadology, January 26, 2015)." (JF, 3 March 2016 (/en/document/320838))

"IS Khorasan gained its new strength through forging alliances with local sectarian pro-al-Qaeda or Taliban militant groups like Lashkar-e-Jhangvi al Alami (LeJ-A), Lashkar-e Islam (LeI), or disgruntled Taliban factions like Jundallah and Jamaat ul Ahrar (JuA), which have been active in the region for many years. It has also reportedly recruited operatives from the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU).

The success of this strategy is manifest in the geographical distribution of the recent attacks, which suggests a logistical penetration and influence that extends from Kabul and Jalalabad in Afghanistan to Quetta and Peshawar in neighboring Pakistan." (JF, 15 December 2016 (/en/document/333833))

"At present, ISIL strongholds in Afghanistan are in the eastern provinces of Nangarhar, Kunar, Nuristan and Laghman. The total strength of ISIL in Afghanistan is estimated at between 2,500 and 4,000 militants. ISIL is also reported to control some training camps in Afghanistan, and to have

created a network of cells in various Afghan cities, including Kabul. The local ISIL leadership maintains close contacts with the group's core in the Syrian Arab Republic and Iraq. Important personnel appointments are made through the central leadership, and the publication of propaganda videos is coordinated. Following the killing of ISIL leader Abu Sayed Bajauri on 14 July 2018, the leadership council of ISIL in Afghanistan appointed Mawlawi Ziya ul-Haq (aka Abu Omar Al-Khorasani) as the fourth 'emir' of the group since its establishment." (UN Security Council, 1 February 2019, p. 7 (/en/document/2002892.html))

Strength: Estimates of ISIS-K strength ranged from 1,500 to 3,000 fighters in 2017.

Location/Area of Operation: The group operates in eastern and parts of northern Afghanistan and western Pakistan.

Funding and External Aid: ISIS-K receives some funding from ISIS. Additional funds come from taxes and extortion on the local population and businesses." (USDOS, 19 September 2018b (/en/document/1445054.html))

"Fierce fighting between the Taliban and Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K), the Afghan chapter of IS, have seen hundreds of militants killed in Jowzjan and Faryab provinces, two provinces in northern Afghanistan considered to be IS-K strongholds. About 300 militants were killed in two weeks of clashes between IS-K and the Taliban, which began on July 25 in the Darzab district of Jowzjan. It was the Taliban's third major offensive against their rivals, and saw about 200 IS-K fighters hand themselves over to government forces rather than face the Taliban. [...] The Taliban reportedly attacked IS-K forces, inflicting heavy losses on the group. Senior commanders on both sides were killed in the fighting." (JE, 10 August 2018 (/en/document/1440615.html))

"IS-K's initial losses were considerable—it lost its first three emirs to U.S. drone strikes in just two years. However, the group was nevertheless able to maintain its rudimentary structure, and the eventual inflow of jihadists following the fall of the main IS operations in Iraq and Syria has paved the way for further development. A change in the leadership of the Afghan Taliban has allowed IS-K to consolidate, and Akhundzada [Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada, leader of the Taliban], in the midst of this year's spring offensive, appears unwilling to risk rupturing relations with an entrenched IS-K and open up fighting on another front." (JE, 14 June 2018 (/en/document/1435576.html))

"Throughout 2018, ISIL is assessed to have carried out 38 terrorist attacks in Afghanistan, many of them high profile, including some in Kabul. ISIL targets have included Afghan security forces, the Taliban, North Atlantic Treaty Organization military personnel, diplomats, employees of the United Nations and non-governmental organizations, journalists and medical institutions, as well as religious minorities viewed by ISIL as soft targets. ISIL suffered a severe setback in northern Afghanistan during the reporting period. In July 2018, 1,000 Taliban attacked ISIL positions in Jowzjan province, killing 200 ISIL fighters, while 254 ISIL fighters surrendered to government forces and 25 foreign terrorist fighters surrendered to the Taliban." (UN Security Council, 1 February 2019, p. 7 (/en/document/2002892.html))

The March 2018 German-language expert opinion on Afghanistan by Friederike Stahlmann provides further information on non-state actors in Afghanistan (Stahlmann, 28 March 2018, section 3.1 (/en/document/1431611.html))

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[i] The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) of the University of Sussex collects data on reported conflict events in selected African and Asian countries.

- [ii] The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) is a United Nations agency with the mandate to protect and support refugees and assist in their voluntary repatriation, local integration, or resettlement to a third country.
- [iii] Thomas Ruttig is one of the co-directors of the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN).
- [iv] The British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) is a British public service broadcaster headquartered in London.
- [v] The Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) is a US government body that provides oversight on reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan.
- [vi] Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty (RFE/RL) is a US government-funded broadcasting organisation that provides news, information, and analysis to countries in Eastern Europe, Central Asia and the Middle East.
- [vii] Tolo News is an Afghan news and current affairs broadcaster.
- [viii] The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is a political UN mission established on 28 March 2002 by United Nations Security Council Resolution 1401.
- [ix] The Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR) is an international NGO network which, through reporting and capacity building, aims at promoting journalism to secure human rights, raise awareness and strengthen civil society.
- [x] The UN General Assembly (UNGA) is one of the six principal organs of the United Nations and the only one in which all member nations have equal representation.
- [xi] The US Agency for International Development (USAID) is an agency of the US federal government mainly responsible for administering civilian foreign aid and development assistance.
- [xii] iMMAP is an international non-governmental organisation that provides information management services to humanitarian and development organizations.
- [xiii] The World Health Organization (WHO) is the directing and coordinating authority for health within the United Nations system.
- [xiv] Reporters Sans Frontières (RSF) is a Paris-based international non-governmental organisation devoted to protecting freedom of expression by reporting on violations of press freedom.
- [xv] Pajhwok Afghan News (PAN) is an independent news agency headquartered in Kabul.
- [xvi] Friederike Stahlmann is a researcher at the Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (Germany) with a focus on Afghanistan.
- [xvii] The Internal Displacement Monitoring Centre (IDMC) is an international non-governmental organisation based in Geneva, which advocates a better protection of and a more effective support for Internally Displaced Persons.
- [xviii] The US Congressional Research Service (CRS) is a public policy research arm of the US Congress.

[xix] The International Crisis Group (ICG) is a Brussels-based transnational non-profit, non-governmental organization that carries out field research on violent conflict and advances policies to prevent, mitigate or resolve conflict.

[xx] The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission (AIHRC) is a national human rights organisation in Afghanistan, dedicated to promoting, protecting and monitoring human rights and the investigation of human rights abuses.

[xxi] The European Asylum Support Office (EASO) is an agency of the European Union providing support to EU member states in asylum issues.

[xxii] The US Department of State (USDOS) is the US federal executive department mainly responsible for international affairs and foreign policy issues.

[xxiii] The UN Security Council is an organ of the United Nations, charged with the maintenance of international peace and security.

[xxiv] The Jamestown Foundation (JF) is an independent, nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that provides information on terrorism, the former Soviet republics, Chechnya, China, and North Korea.

[xxv] The Norwegian Country of Origin Information Center Landinfo is an independent body within the Norwegian immigration authorities that provides COI services to various actors within Norway's immigration authorities.

[xxvi] Borhan Osman is an analyst for the Afghanistan Analysts Network (AAN), an independent non-profit policy research organisation headquartered in Kabul which provides analysis on Afghanistan and its surrounding region.

This featured topic was prepared after researching within time constraints. It is meant to offer an overview on an issue and is not, and does not urport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status, asylum or other form of international protection. Chronologies are not intended to be exhaustive. Every quotation is referred to with a hyperlink to the respective document.

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