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Overview: Afghanistan cooperates with the United States in a bilateral counterterrorism effort as part of Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS), the U.S. operation in Afghanistan. The U.S. military also works with Afghanistan to improve the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces' (ANDSF) ability to combat insurgent groups through Resolute Support (RS), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization "Train, Advise, and Assist" mission. The Taliban, the affiliated Haqqani Network (HQN), and groups claiming affiliation with the Islamic State's Khorasan Province (ISIS-K) increased high-profile terrorist attacks targeting Afghan government officials and members of the international community. Terrorist groups targeting Pakistan, such as Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan, exploit ungoverned spaces in the Afghanistan-Pakistan border region, using them as safe havens to coordinate terrorist attacks inside Pakistan.

President Ghani and the National Unity Government have strongly supported the new U.S. South Asia strategy, which was announced by President Trump in August 2017 and seeks to create conditions for a political settlement with the Taliban. The Afghan High Peace Council (HPC) effectively replaced the Afghanistan Peace and Reintegration Program in 2017, agreeing with donor nations in July to a new UN Development Program-drafted action plan intended to promote reconciliation with insurgent groups. While the HPC action plan outlines a strategic approach to reintegration and implementation of peace agreements, the HPC's focus was on building the capacity of its Provincial Peace Committees and their subsequent outreach to build a national consensus for the peace process.

The peace agreement signed between the Afghan government and Hizb-e Islami Gulbuddin (HIG) in September 2016 hit some roadblocks, but it has led to party leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's return to Kabul, the removal of UN sanctions against him, and peaceful reintegration of HIG supporters. The parts of the agreement that have not been fully implemented include the release of some HIG detainees, the provision of land to HIG returnees, and the disarmament of all HIG members.

Afghanistan is a member of the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS.

2017 Terrorist Incidents: Insurgents continued to use vehicle-borne improvised explosive devices (VBIEDs) and complex attacks involving multiple attackers wearing suicide vests to target ANDSF, Afghan government buildings, foreign governments, and soft civilian targets to include international organizations. Kabul remained a focus of high-profile attacks. The following list details a fraction of the incidents that occurred:

- On May 31, a VBIED on the perimeter of the international zone killed more than 150 and wounded at least 400 people. While there was no claim of responsibility, Afghanistan's intelligence service blamed the attack on HQN.
- On July 24, a VBIED detonated in a Kabul neighborhood whose residents were primarily of Hazara ethnicity. The explosion killed 28 and wounded 43. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, which was reportedly targeting a bus carrying government employees.
- On August 1, ISIS-K claimed responsibility for an attack on a Shia mosque in Herat City, which left 29 civilians dead and 64 injured.
- On September 27, ISIS-K insurgents launched more than 30 rockets at the Hamid Karzai International Airport during Defense Secretary Mattis's visit to Kabul. During the attack, ISIS insurgents also directly targeted Camp Sullivan, a U.S. Chief of Mission facility in Kabul, with mortars and heavy weapons fire.
- On October 17, Taliban insurgents used VBIEDs to launch complex suicide attacks on police headquarters in Paktiya and Ghazni provinces. The attacks killed 21 police, including Provincial Chief of Police Torkyalai Abdiani and 20 civilians, and wounded more than 150 police and civilians. In Ghazni, more than 30 ANDSF personnel were killed and 25 others injured. The Andar district police headquarters building was destroyed.

Legislation, Law Enforcement, and Border Security: The Afghan Attorney General's Office investigates and prosecutes violations of the laws that prohibit membership in terrorist or insurgent groups, violent acts committed against the state, hostage taking, murder, and the use of explosives against military forces and state infrastructure. These laws include Crimes against the Internal and External Security of the State (1976 and 1987), Combat Against Terrorist Offences (2008), and Firearms, Ammunition, and Explosives (2005).

Notable cases in 2017 included:

- Anas Haqqani: In 2016, the Primary and Appellate Courts sentenced him to death for terrorist acts (including recruiting and fundraising), terrorist membership, and forgery. In February, the Supreme Court remanded the case to the Appellate Court. Anas is the brother of Sirajuddin Haqqani, the operational leader of the Haqqani Network. Anas's co-accused is Hafiz Abdul Rasheed, whose case followed the same path.
- Abdul Saboor: The Appellate Court affirmed a 20-year sentence and murder conviction after he shot and killed two U.S. advisors at the Ministry of Interior. The case is pending Supreme Court review.
- Abdul Qahir Korasani: One of the earliest prominent Afghans to pledge allegiance to ISIS-K, he served as a mullah and judge for ISIS-K. Korasani used internet videos and publications to recruit and issue fatwas. He was convicted in the Primary and Appellate Courts for terrorist acts and membership. He received a sentence of 16 years in the Primary

Court and 20 years in the Appellate Court. Prosecutors are seeking the death penalty in the Supreme Court.

U.S. law enforcement assisted the Ministry of Interior, National Directorate of Security (NDS), and other Afghan authorities with disrupting and dismantling terrorist operations and prosecuting terrorist suspects.

Specialized police units known as Crisis Response Units (CRUs) for Afghanistan's major cities continued to thwart attacks. For example, CRU-222 responded swiftly during the March 2017 Kabul hospital attack, clearing all eight floors of the hospital after entering from both the roof and ground. This same unit responded and killed the attackers during Secretary Mattis' visit and President Ghani aims to double the number of these units.

Twenty-five checkpoints have been established around the international zone, and the Afghan government is standing up a new unit with sole responsibility for security of an expanded perimeter. The new unit will replace a patchwork of police, military, and private security contractors that report to MoI or MoD through different chains of command in order to establish a unity of effort with IZ security.

Afghan civilian security forces continued to participate in the Department of State's Anti-Terrorism Assistance program, receiving capacity-building training and mentorship in specialized counterterrorism-related skillsets such as crisis response, methods of entry, and response to active shooter.

Afghanistan continued to face significant challenges in protecting the country's borders, particularly in the border regions with Pakistan. Afghan and Pakistani officials have agreed in principle to create a mechanism for communication between forces on each side of the border. The means for implementation was still under discussion at the end of 2017.

Afghanistan continued to process traveler arrivals and departures at major points of entry using a U.S.-provided border security system, the Personal Identification Secure Comparison and Evaluation System (PISCES), which has been successfully integrated with INTERPOL's I-24/7 system.

Countering the Financing of Terrorism: Afghanistan is a member of the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering, a Financial Action Task Force (FATF)-style regional body. In June, FATF removed Afghanistan from the list of "jurisdictions with strategic deficiencies" (the "grey list"). Despite technical compliance, insufficient cooperation and lack of capacity still hamper terrorist finance investigations.

Afghanistan's financial intelligence unit, the Financial Transactions and Reports Analysis Center of Afghanistan (FinTRACA), distributes UN sanctions lists under the 1267 and 1988 sanctions regimes to financial institutions via a circular and a link on FinTRACA's website. As of October 31, FinTRACA revoked 49 business licenses and imposed US \$42,000 in fines on money service businesses for failure to comply with anti-money laundering/countering the financing of terrorism laws.

For further information on money laundering and financial crimes, see the [2018 International Narcotics Control Strategy Report \(INCSR\), Volume II, Money Laundering and Financial Crimes](#).

Countering Violent Extremism (CVE): Five thousand out of 160,000 mosques are registered with the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education. Many mosques and associated religious schools (madrassas) are unregistered and operate independently of the government. The government estimated 370,000 students attend independent madrassas.

Regional and International Cooperation: Other multilateral fora include an Afghanistan-Pakistan-China trilateral on border security and counterterrorism as well as a C5+Russia+Afghanistan forum, which includes the security chiefs of the five Central Asian states, Russia, and Afghanistan. Afghanistan is also an observer state within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), which revived the long-dormant SCO-Afghanistan Contact Group to focus on enhanced security and counterterrorism.

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