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# Afghanistan: Conflict Metrics 2000-2018

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In Strategy

# Introduction

# Putting the Survey in Context

The U.S. has now entered its seventeenth year of war in Afghanistan, and there is no clear end to the war in sight. At present, there seems to be little prospect that a combination of Afghan government, U.S., and allied forces can defeat the Taliban and other insurgent and terrorist forces, or will be defeated by them. The conflict has become a war of attrition which can drag on indefinitely, and can only be ended through some form of peace negotiation or the sudden, unexpected collapse of either Afghan government or threat forces – a transition from a war of attrition to a war of exhaustion on one side.

The analysis focuses on the periods leading up to the surge in Afghanistan, failed plans for U.S. withdrawal, and the change in U.S. strategy to a continuing conditions-based presence. It also focuses on combat metrics – maps and graphics. This is only a small part of the history and nature of the war – it omits the civil side of the conflict, Afghan force development, and many other key factors, but it does provide a picture of how the U.S., UN, Afghan, allied, and NGO sources have appraised the ebb and flow of conflict over time.

It does not provide dramatic new insights into the course of the war : A war of attrition is a war of attrition, but it does warn that the U.S. either failed to properly assess the war, or properly react to it, from the period after 20023 when the Taliban began to return as a major threat through U.S. plans to withdraw all most forces after 2014, and that no current official assessment of the war provides any clear picture as to when it might end. In fairness, the current “conditions-based” strategy is still in the process of being implemented and full implementation and its effects will not be apparent until 2019-2020 –and only then if Afghanistan can conduct a successful election and create a more effective and unified government.

Nevertheless, the survey does raise serious question about the combat metrics the United States and its allies have used throughout the war, and the degree that these have been consciously or unconsciously politicized to overstate success or support efforts at withdrawal.

**The analysis helps illustrate this by grouping the data into various time clusters to provide easier comparison. It also provides progressively more competing narratives to help explain what are sometimes major differences in the trends portrayed by given sources.**

**It does not, however, attempt to reconcile the major differences that emerge between sources, or in comparing different types of metrics. In many cases, the source never attempts to defined key terms, indicate the methodology used, or describe the level of uncertainty in the information provided.**

**In any case, the metrics often speak for themselves. Anyone familiar with the conflict will be all too well aware of the extent to which the metrics provide in a given period did or did not fully present a valid picture of the war. Anyone who participated in the policies shaping the war over time will be aware of the extent to which official sources chose metrics that exaggerated success, never addressed the deep divisions and lack of actual effective governance on the part of the Afghan government, and emphasize tactical outcomes over insurgent influence**

**That said. there are several aspects of the survey that the reader should be aware of:**

- There was considerable strategic warning that the Taliban were re-emerging as a major threat. The U.S. was slow to react, evidently because the Iraq War had to be given higher priority.**
- The graphics and reporting on the on the civil side of the fighting, and the effectiveness of the Afghan central government and aid efforts, were largely cancelled after 2011, evidently because the maps and graphics did not reflect the planned level of progress.**
- The data highlight the fact that the “surge” in U.S. forces in Afghanistan failed to have a lasting effect and the levels of violence have grown sharply in the process of Transition. A comparison of the previous civil trends, and overall trends in Afghan perceptions, shows the interaction between civil progress and violence, and that the Transition is not succeeding in its current form.**
- Erratic over-classification is a major problem. As SIGAR notes in its April 30, 2018 Report to Congress, there are a number of areas where reporting is not made public where the motive seems to be to spin to war more favorably on downplay serious problems in the Afghan effort.**

- The quality of reporting by the Office of the Secretary of Defense has been particularly is erratic. Some graphics and maps seem to have been designed to support given withdrawal policies, rather than reflect real world trends.

There has been an improvement in reporting since the U.S. shifted from a withdrawal based strategy to a conditions based commitment top say. Such improvements come from within the Office of the Secretary of Defense or in the form of contributions to this report from other agencies.. The Department of Defense's 1225 reports on the war—*Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan -- have been cut back over time.* Its metrics now consist largely of an early meaningless metric called “Effective Enemy Initiated Attacks.” These statistics are poorly defined, and unrelated to the overall success of each side.

OSD (Public Affairs) has not helped. Some of the best explanations of the war that have been provided by U.S. commanders and in command briefings provided by the U.S. Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A) and the Resolute Support Mission. These briefings often involve maps and graphics, but the department of Defense only provides transcripts, and does not disseminate such material. Other useful data has come in the form of testimony by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, but again without public metrics.

It is the maps, graphics, and data from the United Nations, the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction, NGOs, and more recently from the Lead Inspector General that provide a broader and more objective and detailed view of the fighting.

Once again, however, most such data compare the outcome of tactical clashes, or provide sweep comparisons of control that do not address the deep limitations and division the Afghan government control, by District, properly map insurgent influence, or attempt to map the relative level of government and insurgent influence and control.

Accordingly, the official combat metrics and statements are supplemented by UN casualty and threat analysis data, work by NGOs and media sources, and data on Afghan public opinion and the interaction between combat outcomes and the growth of narcotics production.

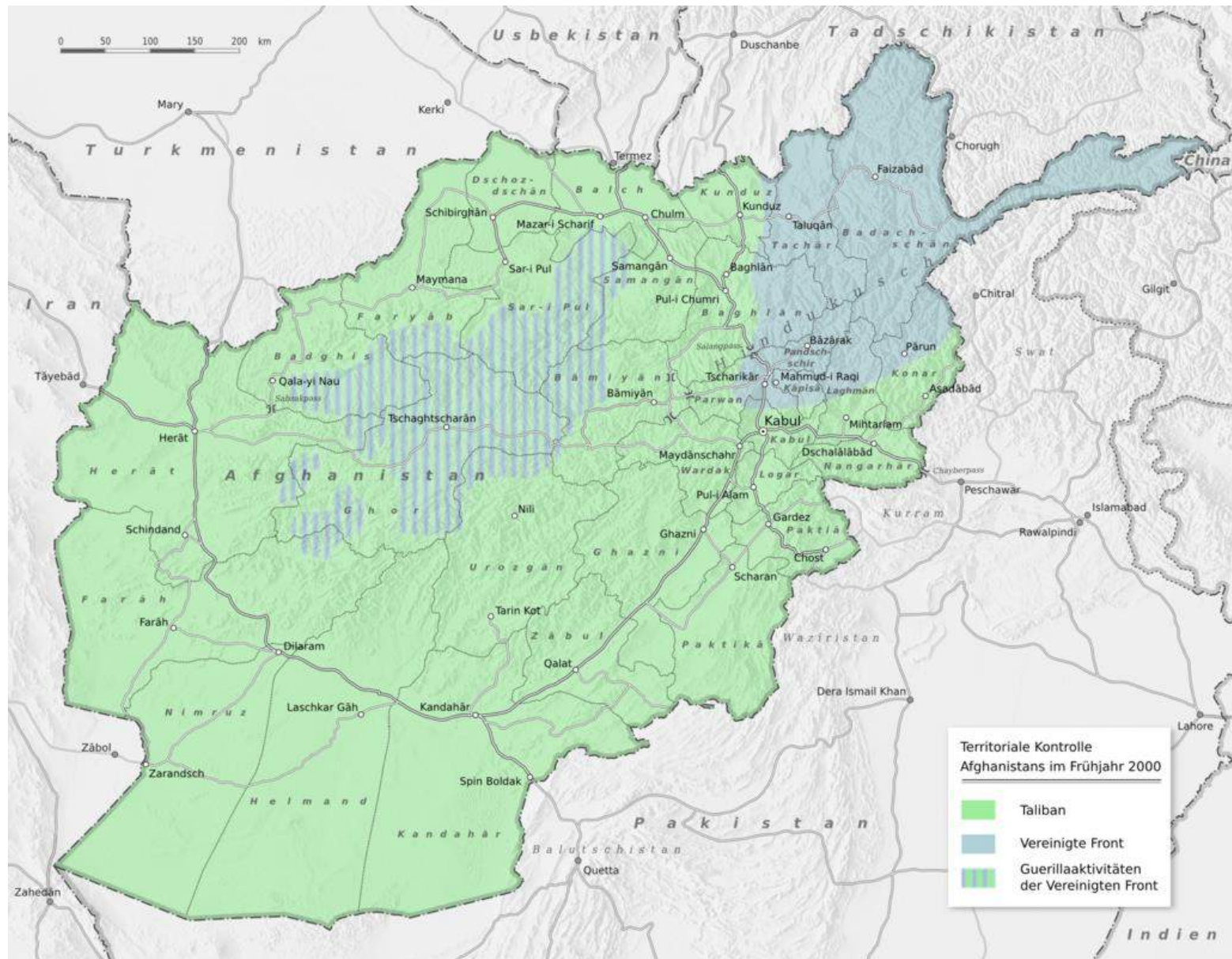
The reader should be aware that:

- **The U.S. data on government or threat control seem questionable at best, and to sometimes count Districts as under government control that are actually under the control of various power brokers and warlords, or where the government has only a limited presence in the District capital.**
- **The UN data casualty data sometimes seem to reflect an expansion of threat activity that is not reflected in the estimates of control of the disputed districts.**
- **Some of the assessments made by governments, the United Nations, media, and think tanks are so different that there is a clear need to improve the official data collection and analysis effort.**

# **Watching the Threat Return: Trends and Indicators: 2001-2010**



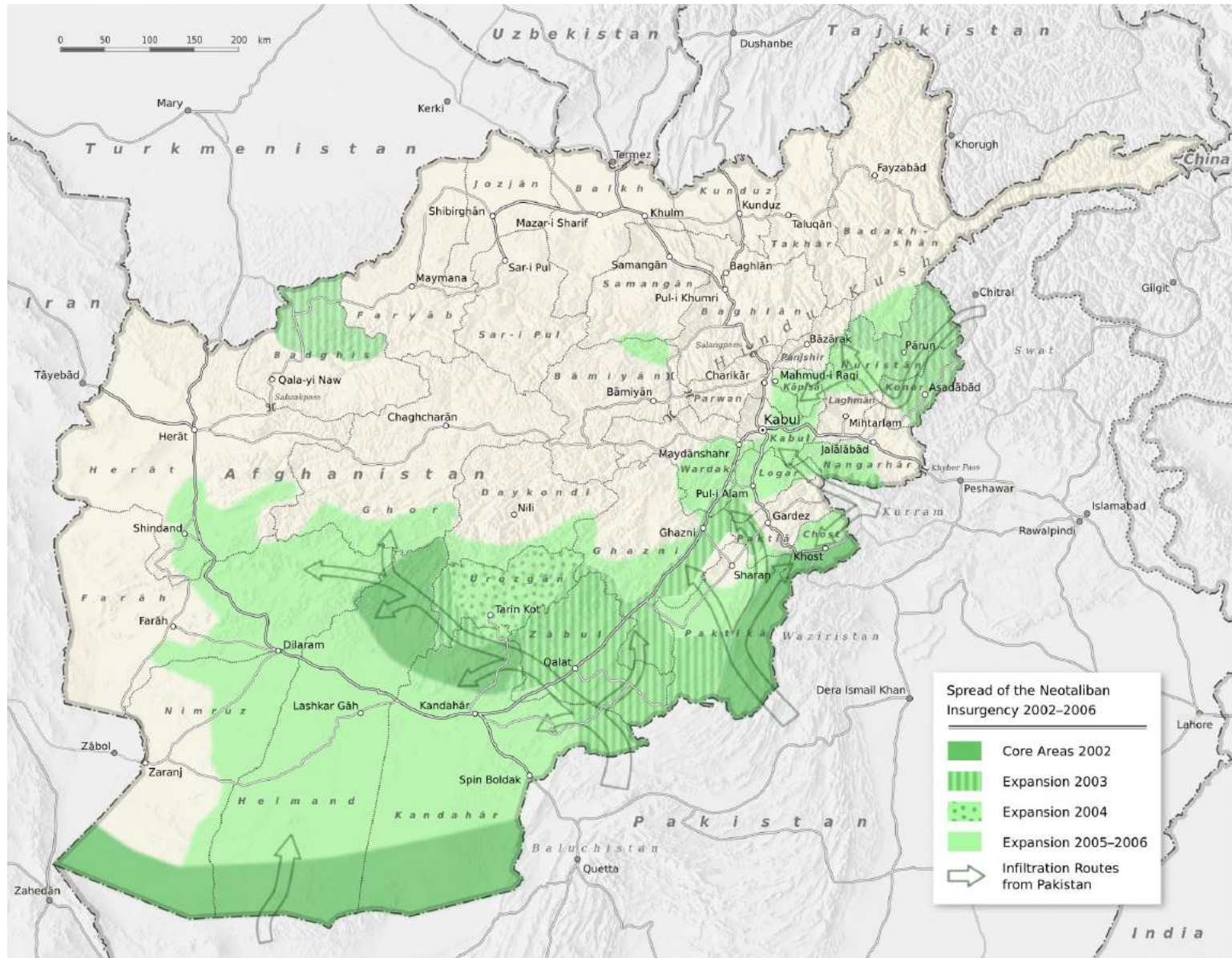
# Peak of Taliban Control: 2000-2001





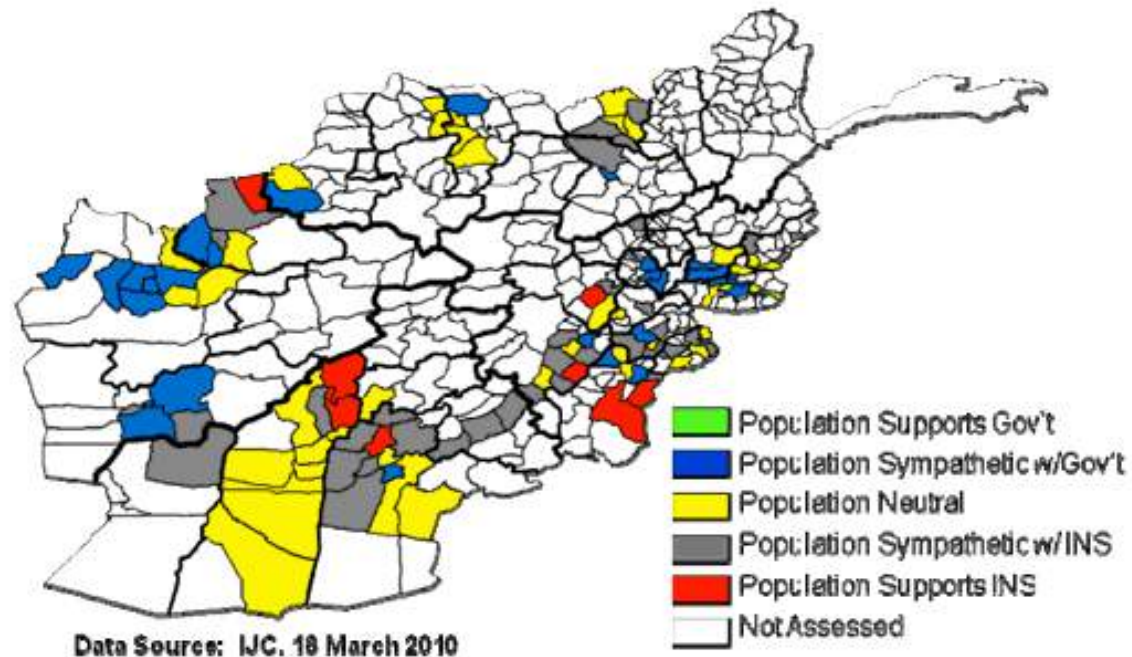
## Taliban Resurgence 2002-2006:

U.S. Treats with Near-Denial in part because of Rising commitment to Iraq



## Overall Assessment of Key Districts

Figure 5 - Overall Assessment of Key Districts, March 18, 2010

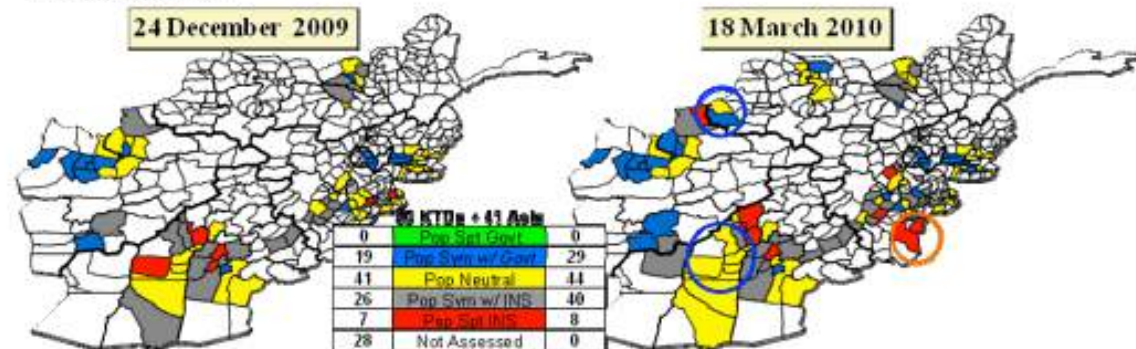


**Killing a Key Metric for Being Too Negative I: The USG Issues its Last Full Report on District Support for the Afghan Government in April 2010**

(Reporting Halted Once Shows Decline. Population only sympathized or support Afghan government in 24% (29 of 121 Key Terrain and area of Interest Districts) )

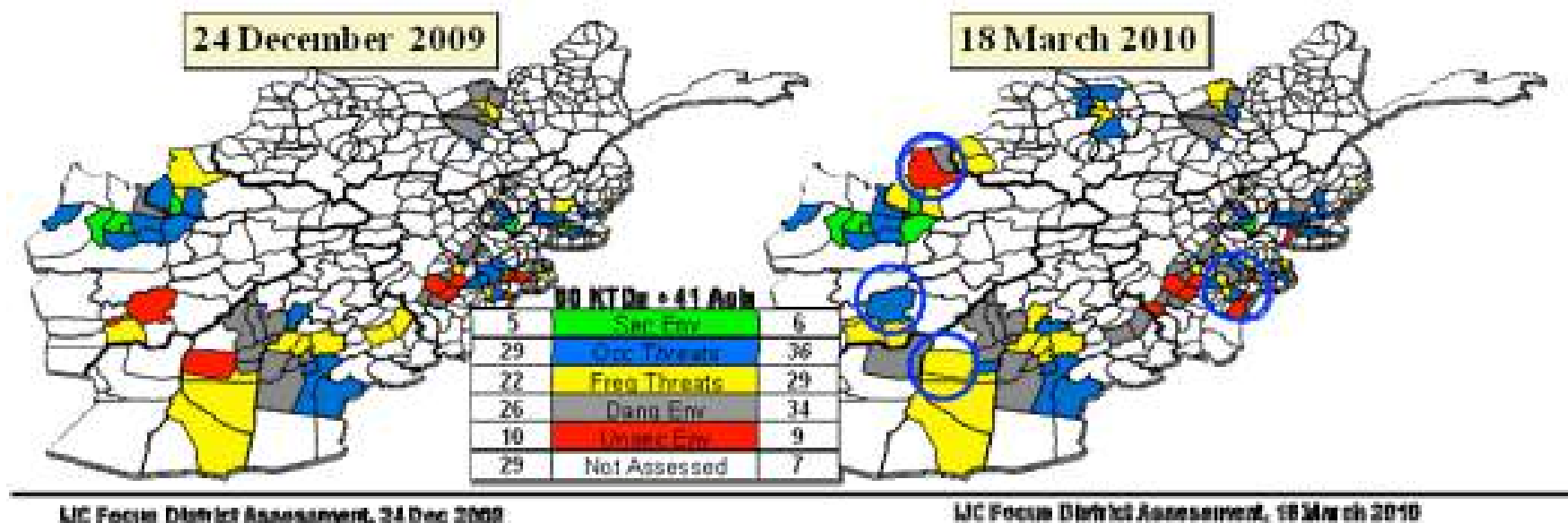
Source: Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, 1230, April 2010,, p. 36.

Figure 6 - Comparison of Overall Assessment of Key Districts, December 24, 2009 - March 18, 2010





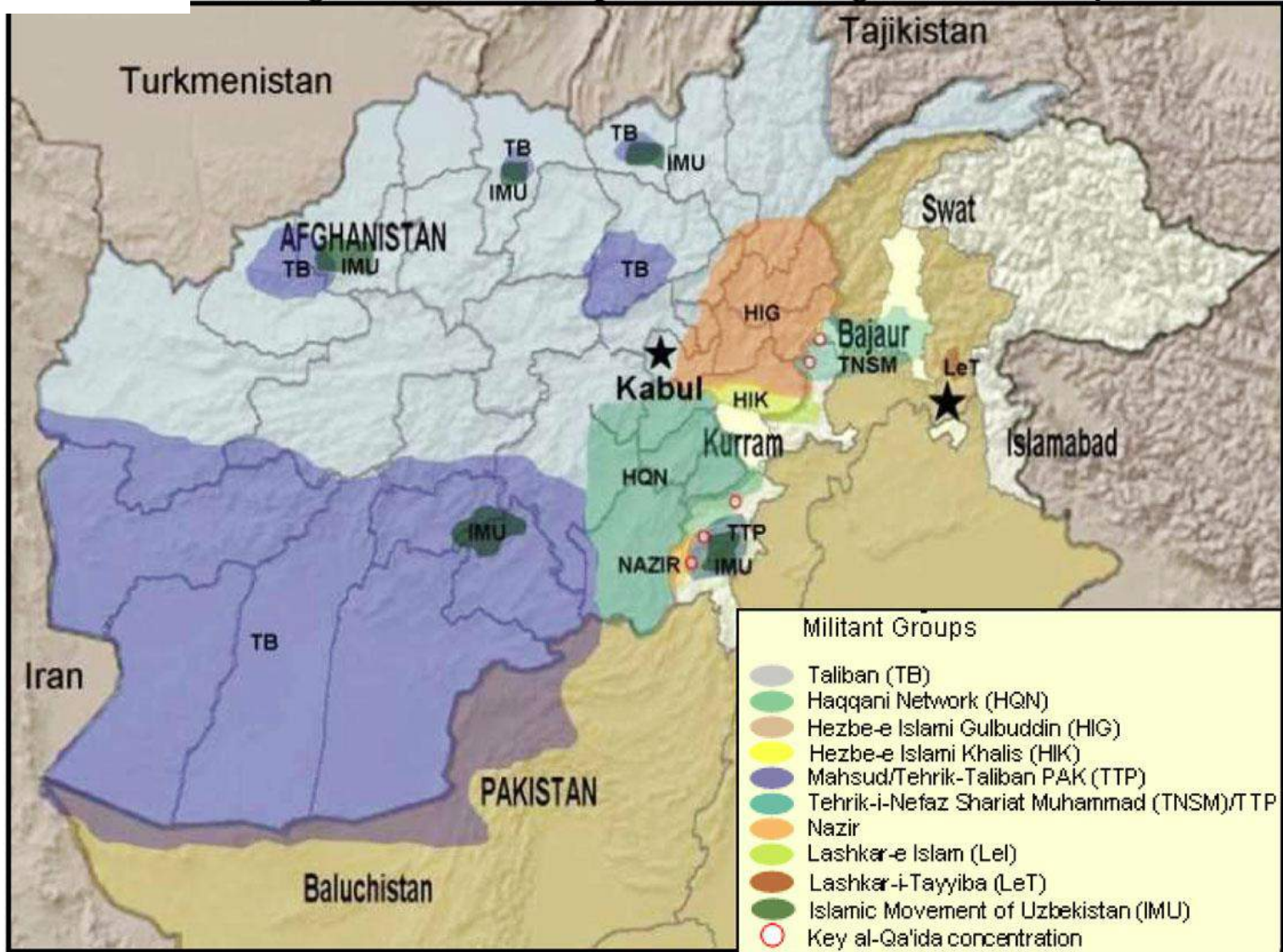
## Killing a Key Metric for Being Too Negative : II: The Last USG Report Comparing Security Assessment of Key Districts Over Time in April 2010



Currently 35% (42 of 121) of the Key Terrain and Area of Interest districts are assessed favorably at the “occasional threats”<sup>13</sup> level or better.

Although the overall security situation has stabilized somewhat since the end of 2009, violence during the current reporting period is still double that for the same period in 2008-2009. However, some individual islands of security exist in the sea of instability and insecurity. A new contiguous island of security is reported by RC-North in the districts surrounding Mazar-e-Sharif. Additionally, a small secure contiguous area exists within RC-South from the Ring Road to the Wesh-Chaman Border Control Point. The limits of security are significantly related to the presence of well-led and non-corrupt ANSF. In a significant number of cities, the secure zone is primarily the inner portion of the city center, with the outlying, more rural areas less secure due to insurgent presence. The location and size of the security zones is primarily the location where improvements in governance and development can occur. Therefore, the expansion of the security zones leads to the opportunity to improve governance and development in those areas.

## Insurgent Areas of Operation in Afghanistan April, 2010

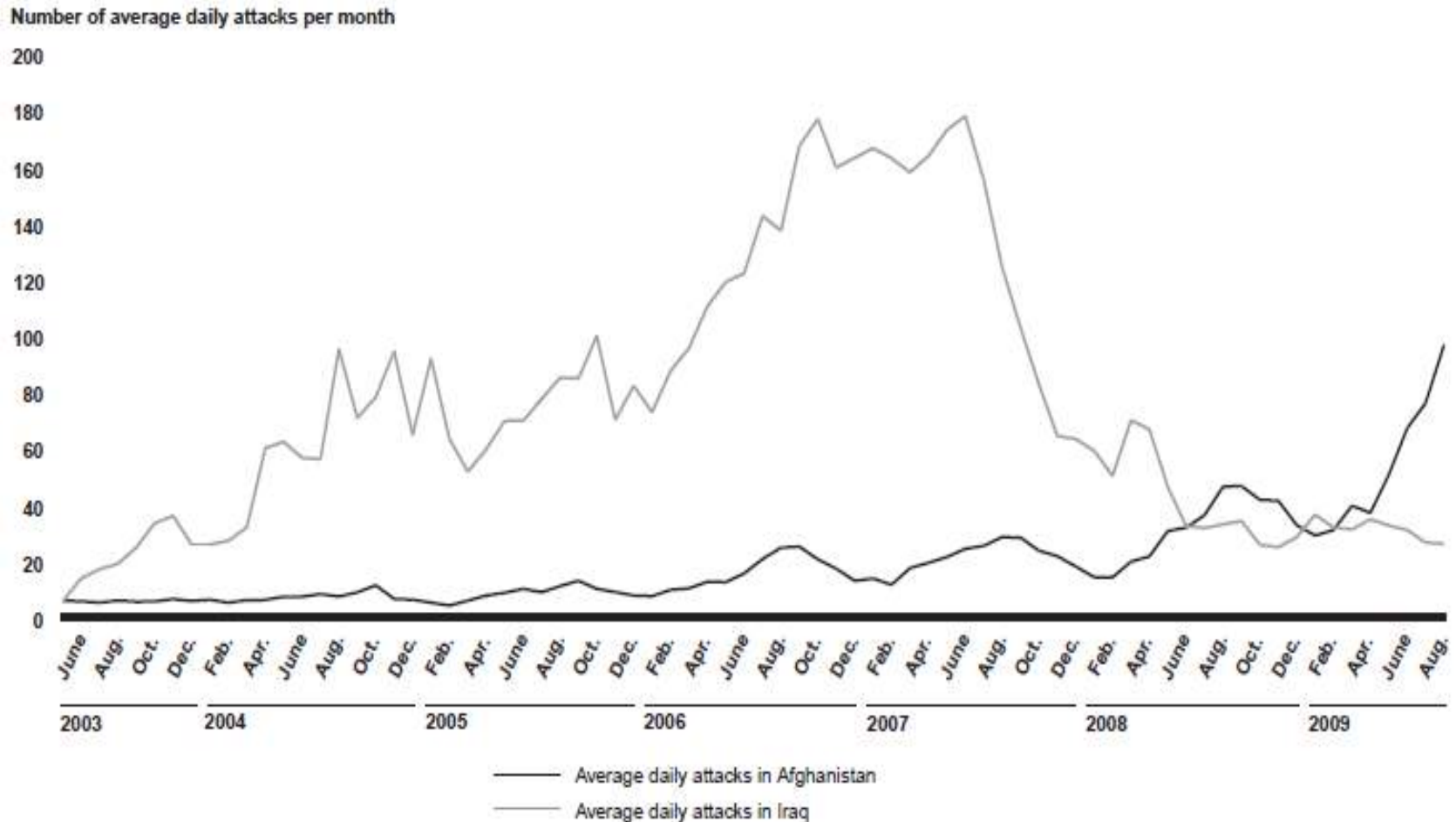


Source: Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, 1230, April 2010,, p. 23,

[https://books.google.com/books?id=5-BBKEPhm4QC&pg=PA23&lpg=PA23&dq=Figure+3+-+Insurgent+Areas+of+Operation+in+Afghanistan&source=bl&ots=J09HDVvupa&sig=zJ0JjezLHqIJQneZ\\_Zv\\_MMjYsAA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CB4Q6AEwAGovChMIqr3dooWcyAIVTgWOCh2b6gSE#v=onepage&q=Figure%203%20-%20Insurgent%20Areas%20of%20Operation%20in%20Afghanistan&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?id=5-BBKEPhm4QC&pg=PA23&lpg=PA23&dq=Figure+3+-+Insurgent+Areas+of+Operation+in+Afghanistan&source=bl&ots=J09HDVvupa&sig=zJ0JjezLHqIJQneZ_Zv_MMjYsAA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CB4Q6AEwAGovChMIqr3dooWcyAIVTgWOCh2b6gSE#v=onepage&q=Figure%203%20-%20Insurgent%20Areas%20of%20Operation%20in%20Afghanistan&f=false)

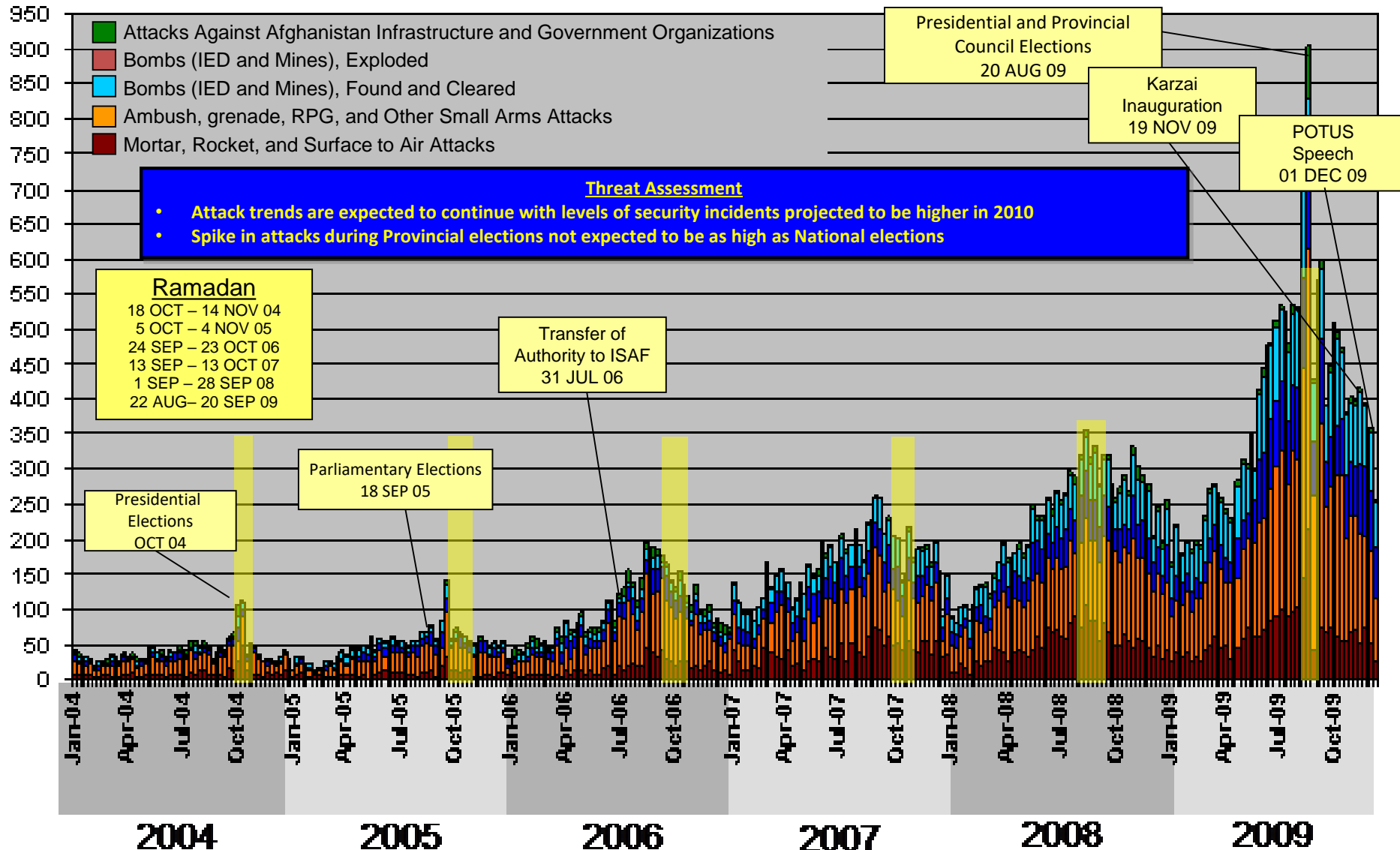
+Insurgent+Areas+of+Operation+in+Afghanistan&source=bl&ots=J09HDVvupa&sig=zJ0JjezLHqIJQneZ\_Zv\_MMjYsAA&hl=en&sa=X&ved=0CB4Q6AEwAGovChMIqr3dooWcyAIVTgWOCh2b6gSE#v=onepage&q=Figure%203%20-%20Insurgent%20Areas%20of%20Operation%20in%20Afghanistan&f=false,

# Using a Deceptive Metric: Taliban Willingness to Directly Challenge Superior US and Allied Forces (Enemy Initiated Attacks in Afghanistan vs. Iraq: May 2003 to August 2009)





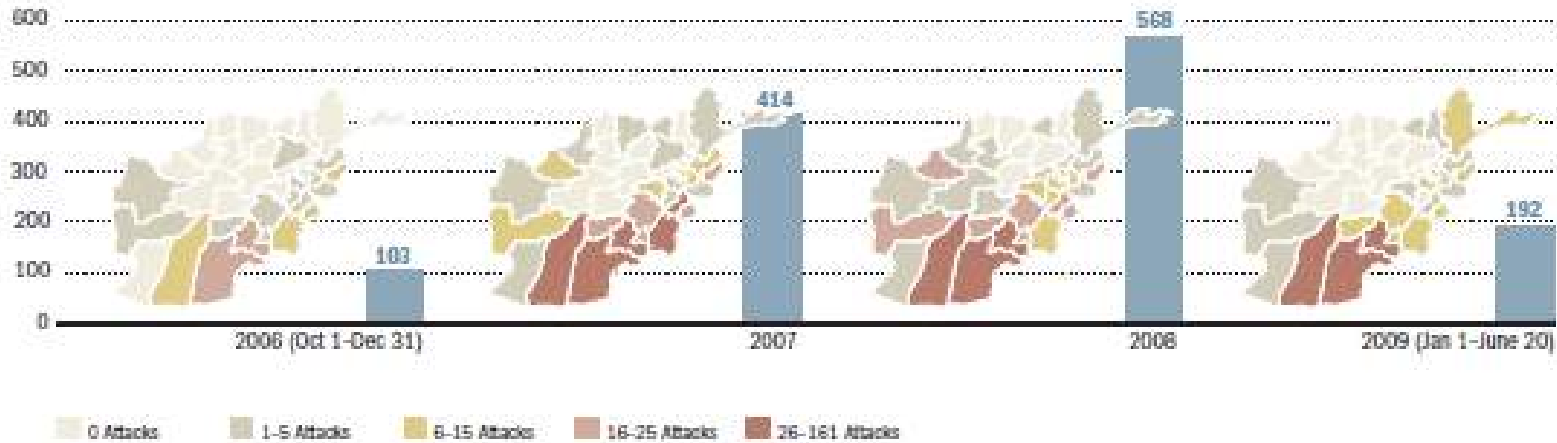
# The War Escalates: 2004-2009



# Growing Threat to ANA and ANP: 2006-Mid 2009

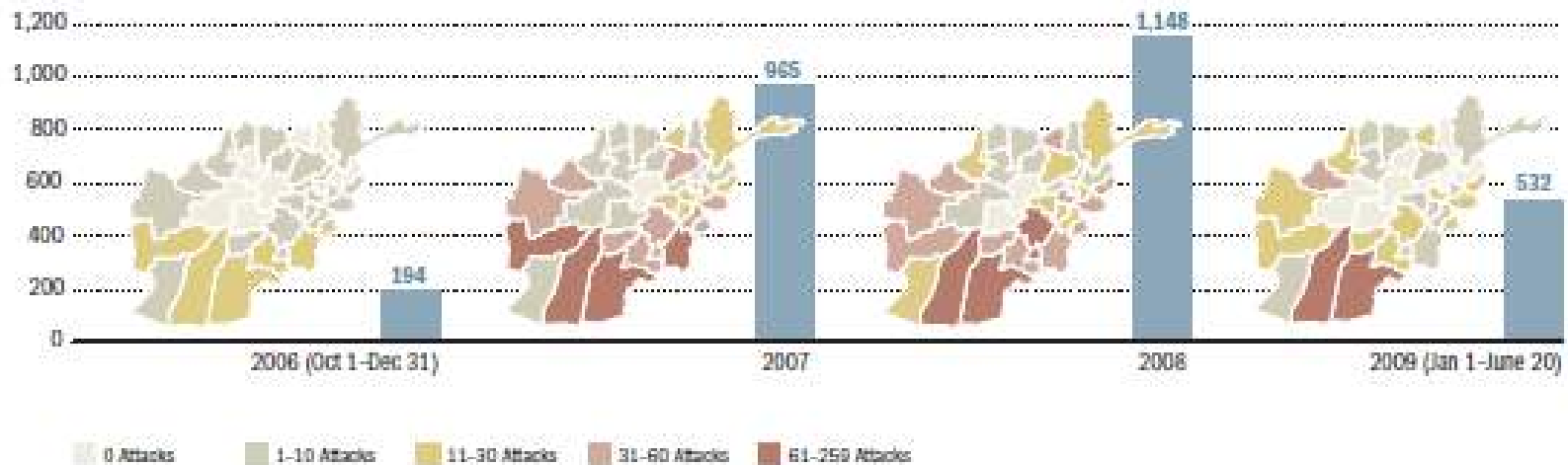
## Attacks on ANA

Total Attacks: 1,277



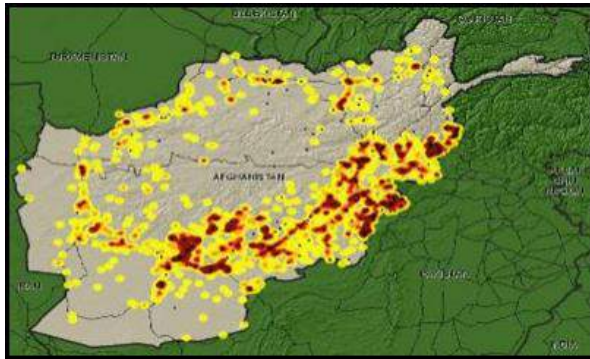
## Attacks on ANP

Total Attacks: 2,839

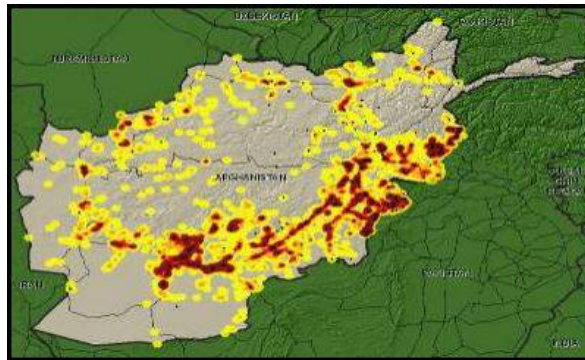


# Accepting the Threat's Resurgence: Threat in 2007-2009

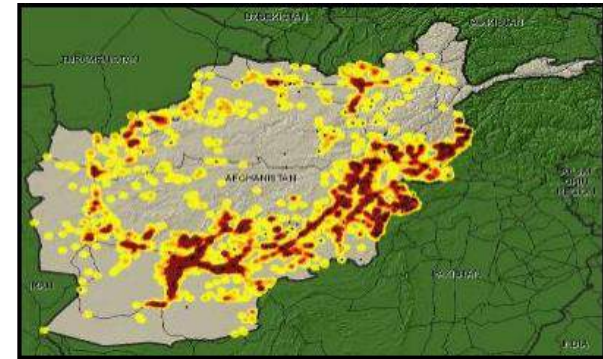
*The insurgency in Afghanistan has expanded geographically*



Security Incidents 2007



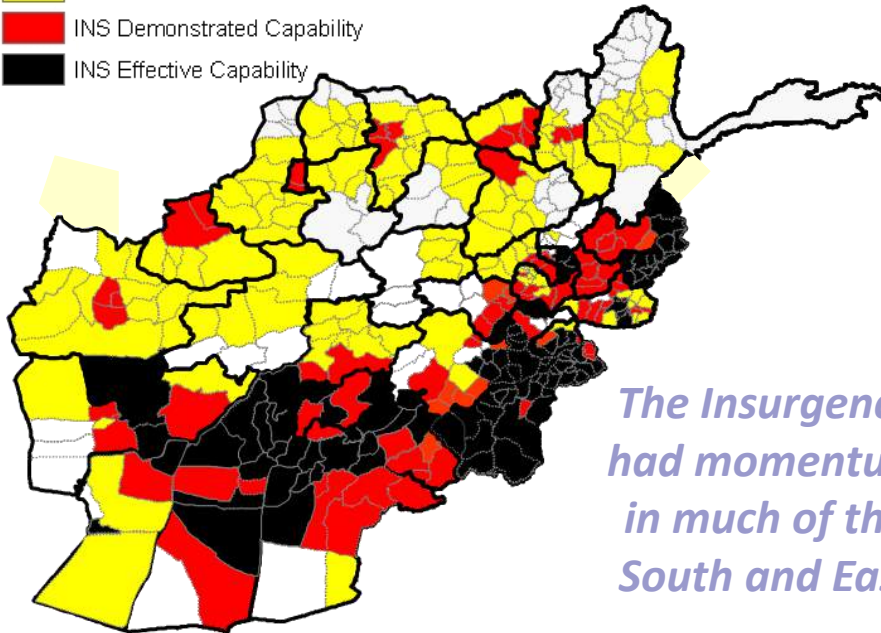
Security Incidents 2008



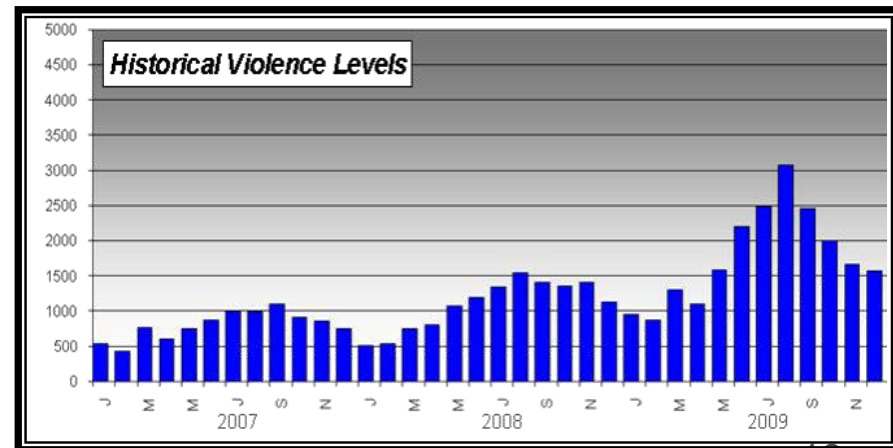
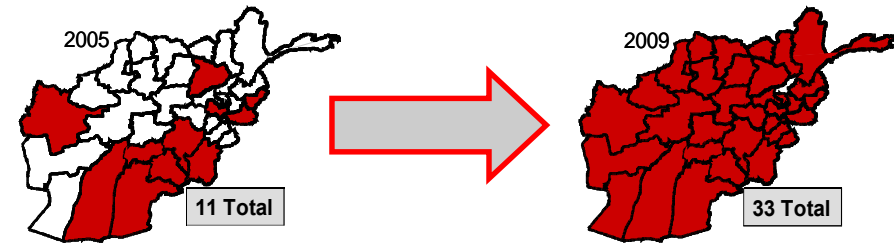
Security Incidents 2009

## Insurgent Influence and Capability

- Not Assessed
- INS Limited Capability
- INS Demonstrated Capability
- INS Effective Capability

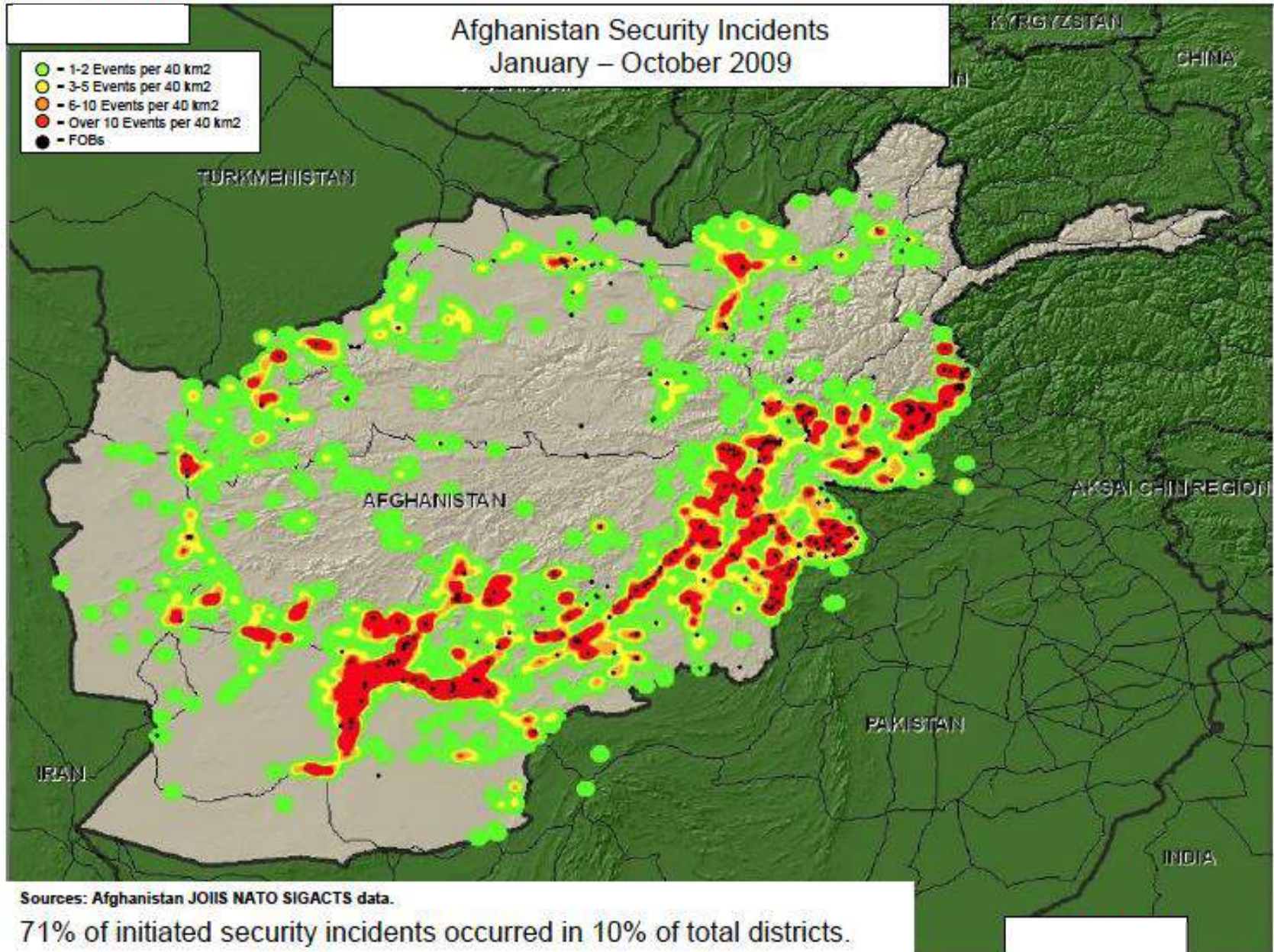


*The Insurgency had momentum in much of the South and East*







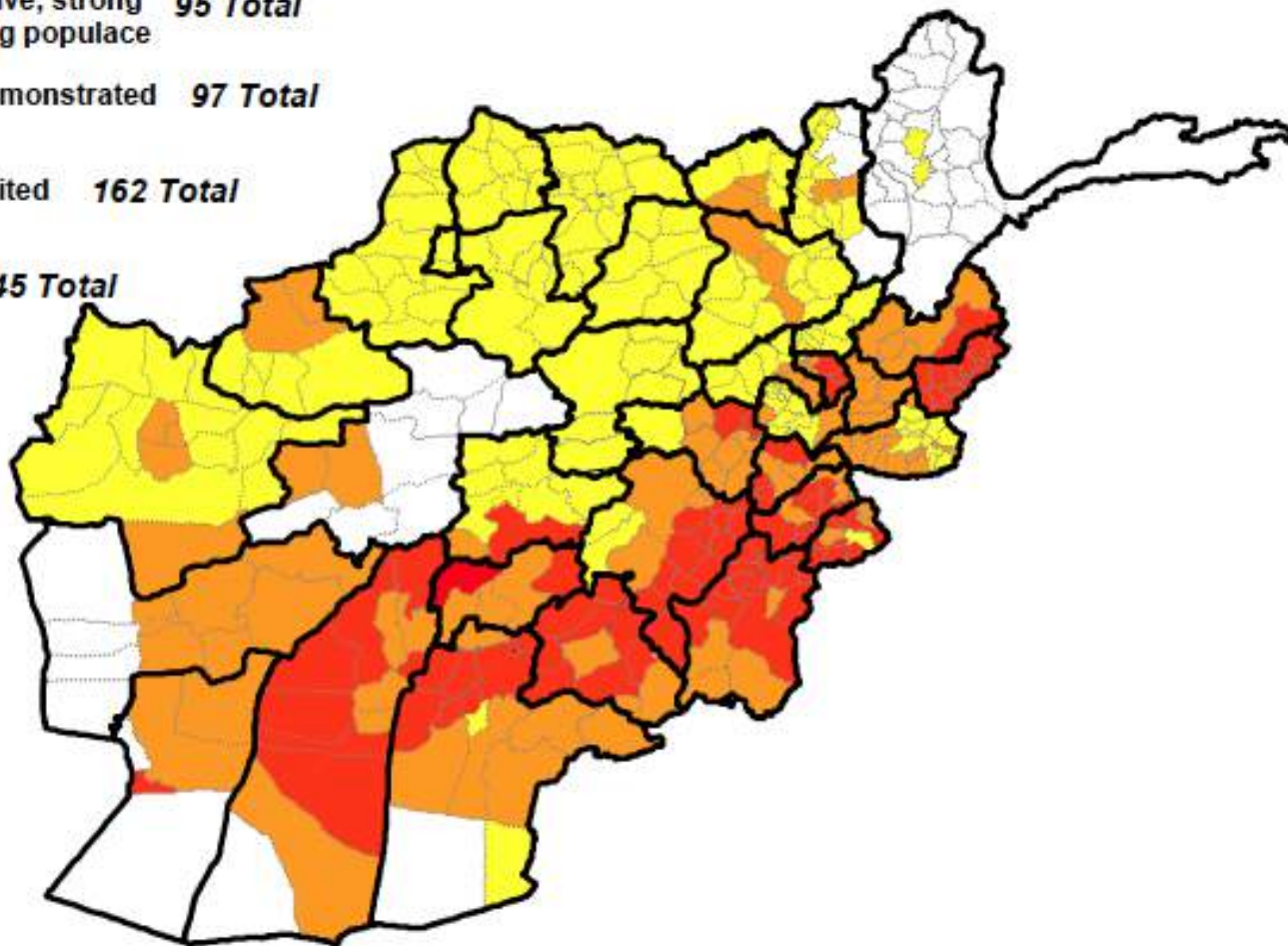


# Where the Fighting Was: 1/2009-10/2009



## But the Fighting Was Only Part of the Story: Insurgent Influence & Capability by District: End-2009

-  **RED:** Insurgents are effective, strong capability and influence among populace **95 Total**
-  **Orange:** Insurgents have demonstrated capability **97 Total**
-  **Yellow:** Insurgents have limited capability **162 Total**
-  **White:** Not able to assess **45 Total**

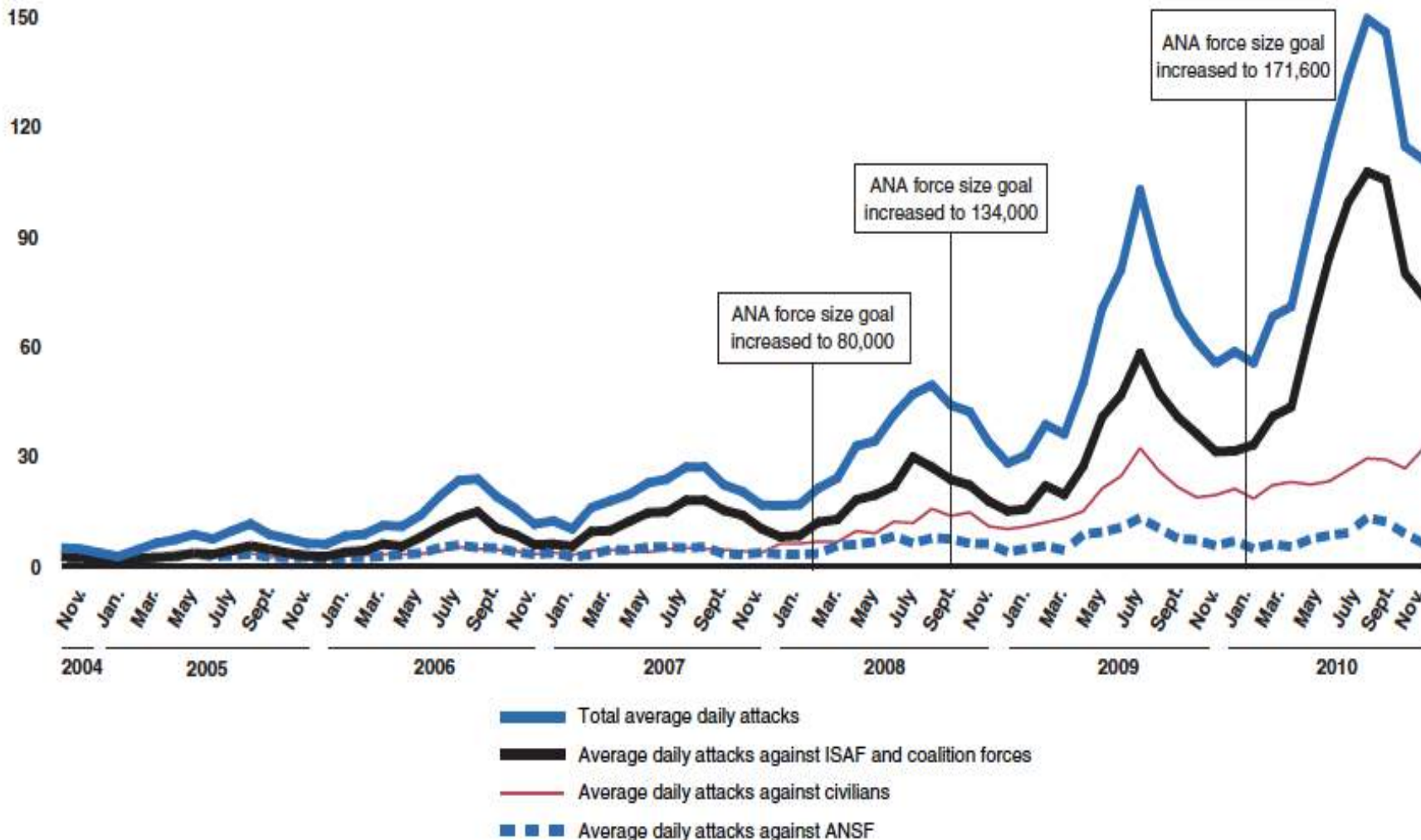


Sources: Afghanistan JOIIS NATO SIGACTS data through 30 Sep 09.



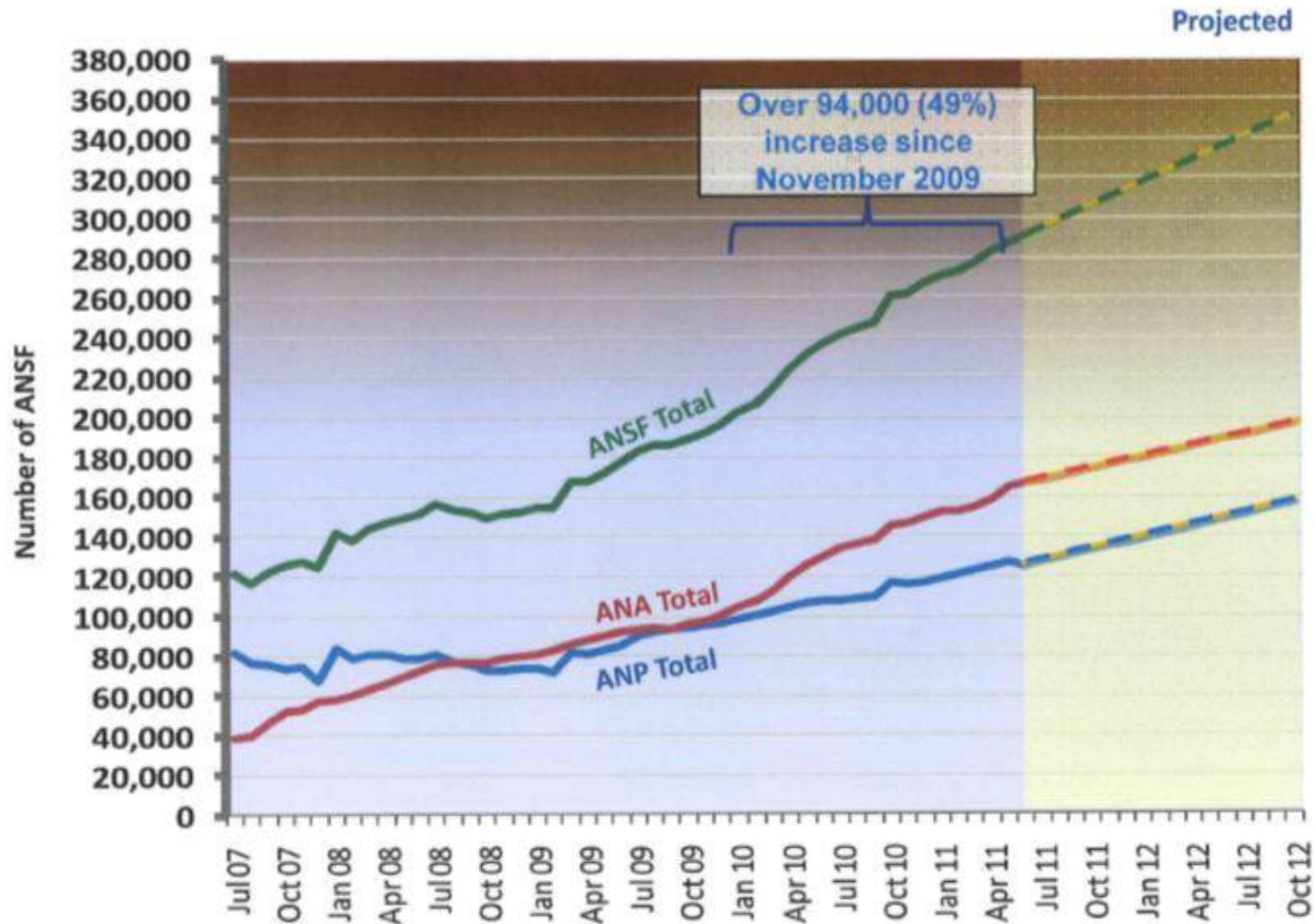
# Rising Threat Triggers New Goals for Afghan Forces: 2004-2010

Number of average daily attacks per month



Source: GAO analysis of DOD data.

# Rushing Force Development: 2007-2012



As of 7 May 2011

UNCLASSIFIED

28

Source: ISAF, June 2011.

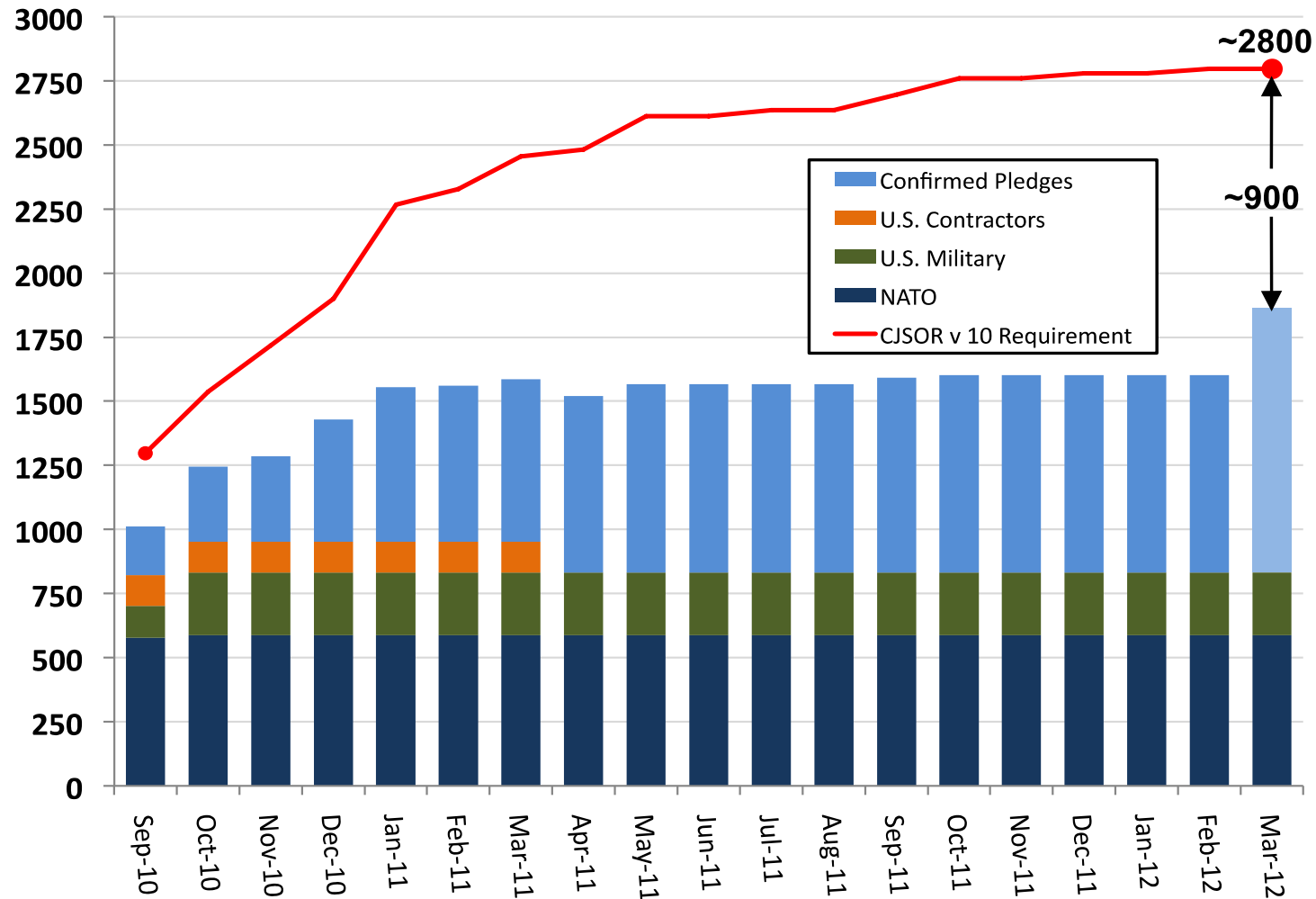
20

## **Continuing NTM-A Warnings About Trainers: 24/4/11**

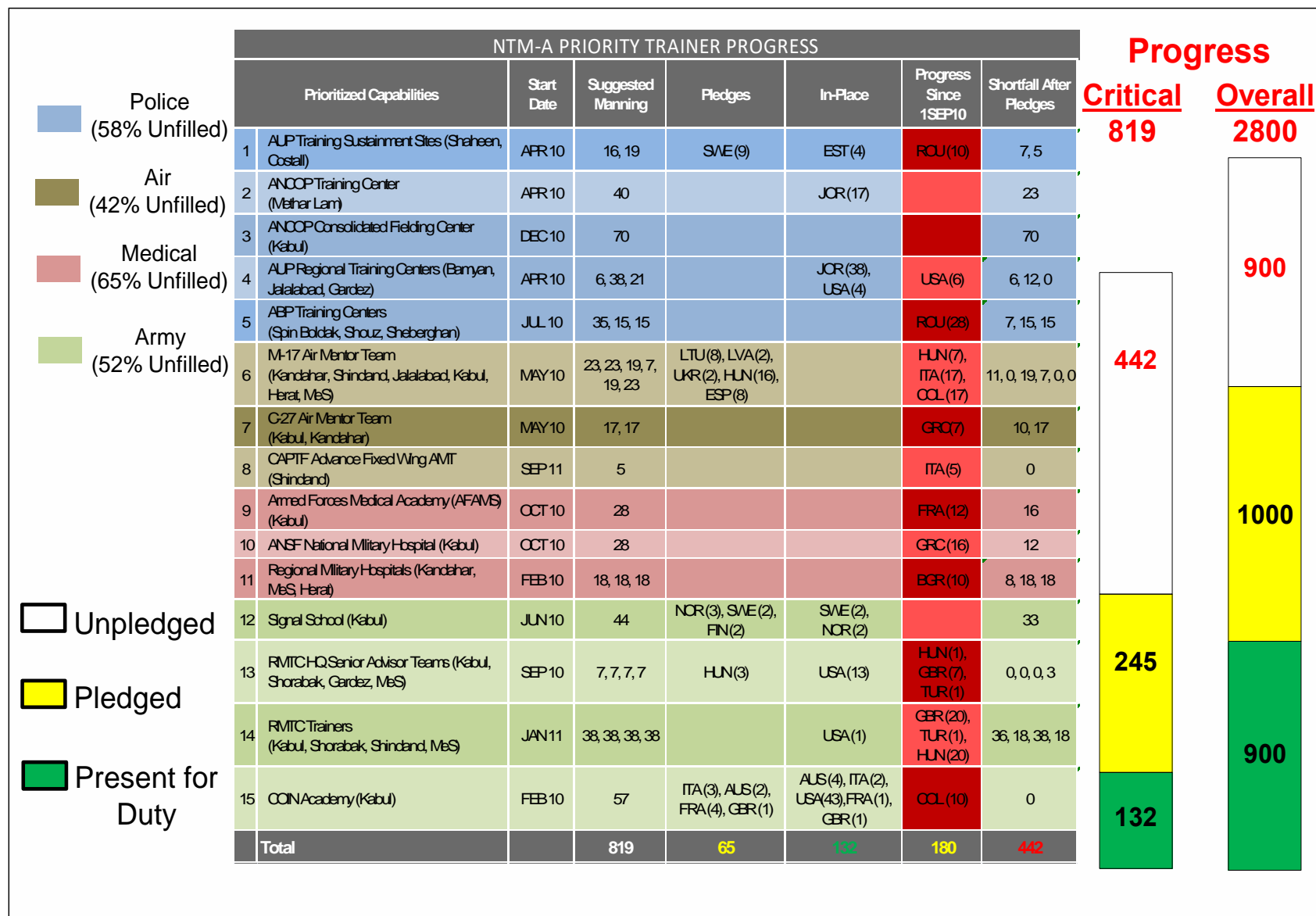
- **“We passed a significant milestone this week - we are now at 50% of our authorized number of Coalition trainers, the highest we've been since NTM-A was activated in November 2009.**
- **However, the lack of the other 50% of Coalition trainers/advisors with key skills (critical gaps, in medical, logistics and engineers) threatens to slow progress in ASNF development at the time when we need to be accelerating.**
- **We continue to make significant progress growing the fielded forces, yet the development of their supporting logistics system is lagging.**
- **The absence of these skilled trainers and advisors is slowing the development of functional sustainment systems - at echelon above Corps, Army and Police supply depots and training centers--and the indigenous capacity necessary to effectively manage them.**
- **We continue to maximize contractors where we can but at a significant financial cost. Only by filling our critical shortfalls with the right grades and skills from the coalition can we properly develop a professional, sustainable and enduring logistics system for the ANSF.**
- **These trainers and advisors are also central to our anti-corruption efforts and providing the necessary safeguards and oversight to ensure stewardship of our investment.”**

# A Massive Gap Between Trainer Needs and Actual Trainers: 2010-2012

## NTM-A Institutional Trainer Sourcing Progress



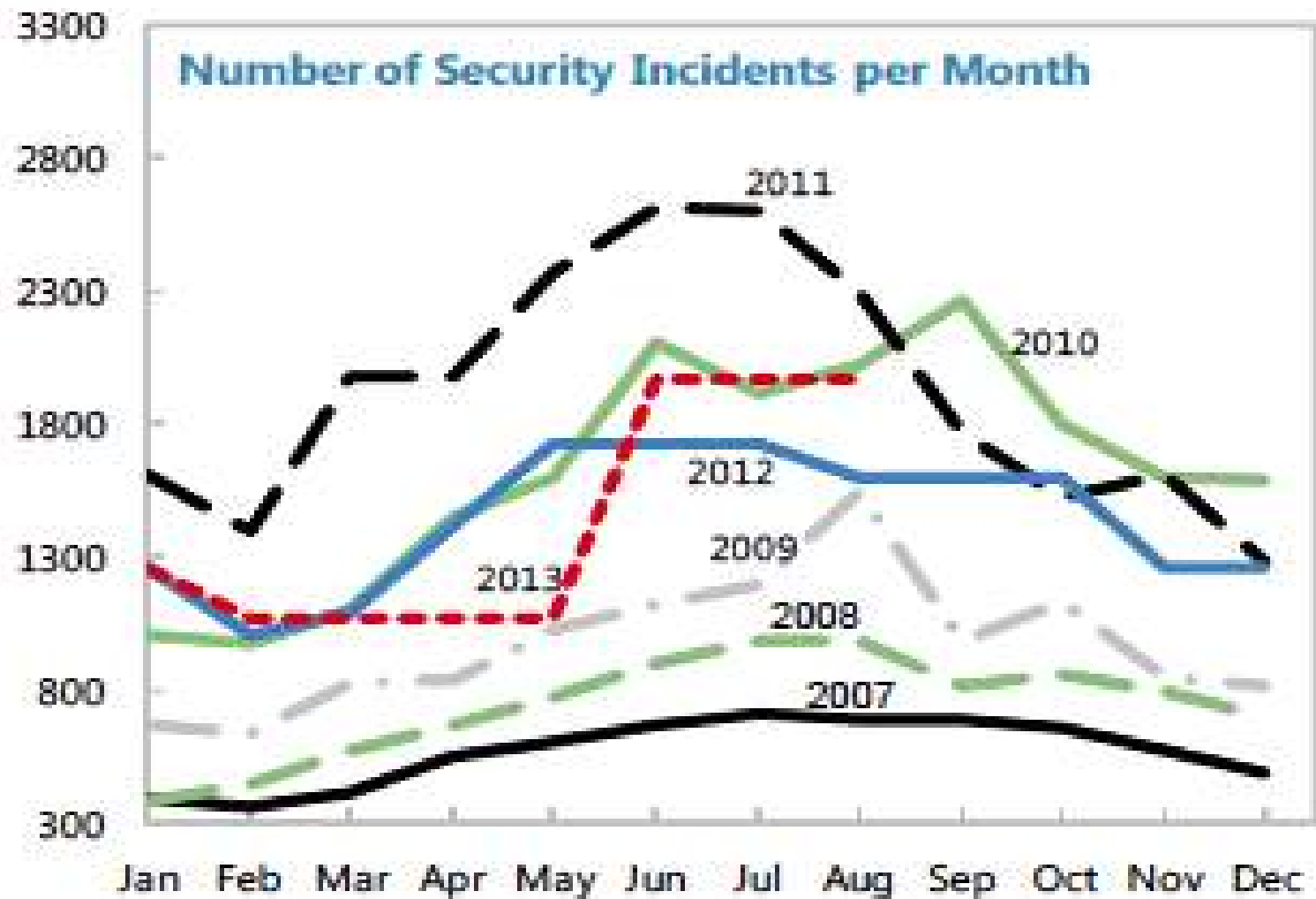
## And, in Key Trainer Skills



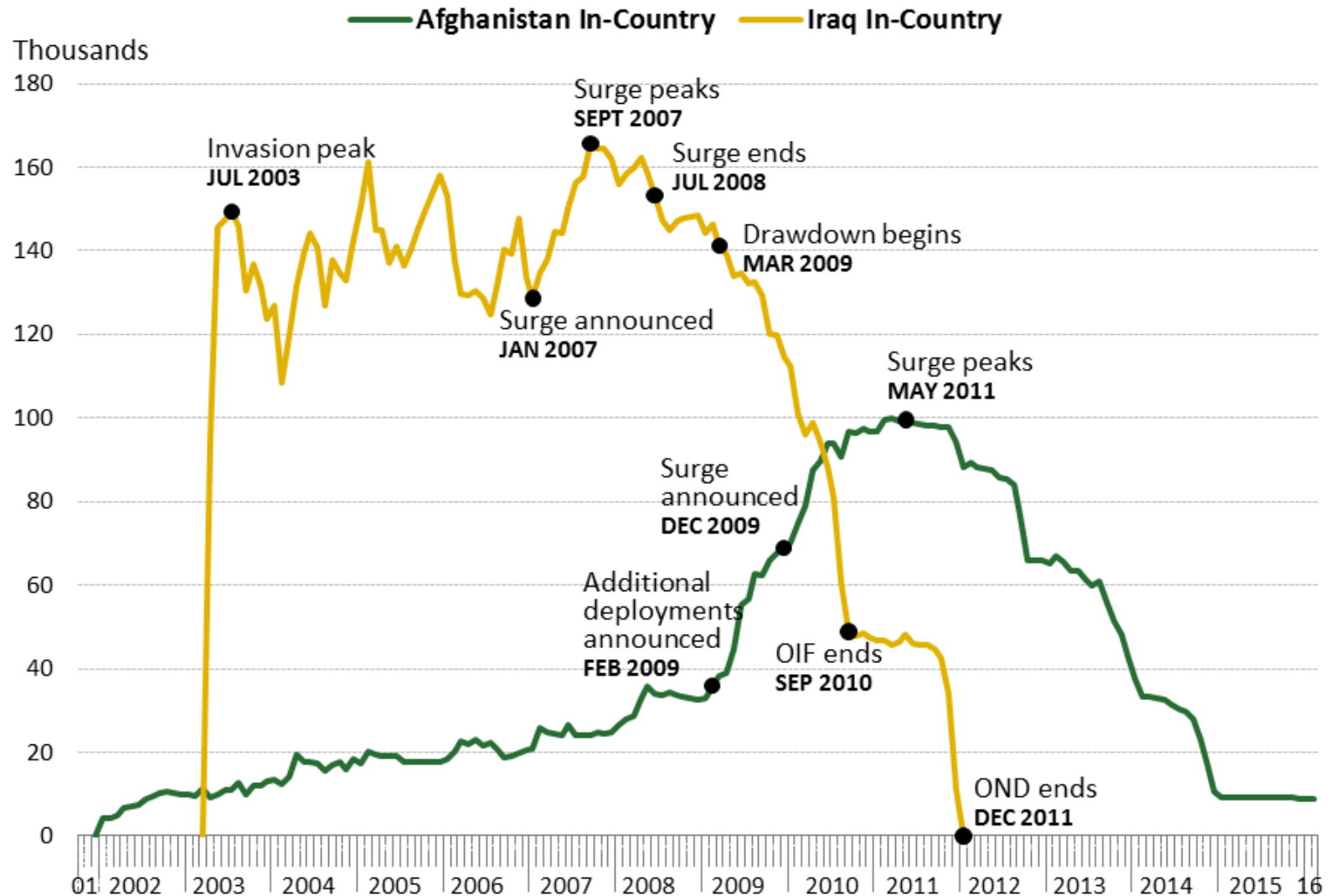


# **Failed Surge and Planned Withdrawal: Trends and Indicators: 2011-2014**

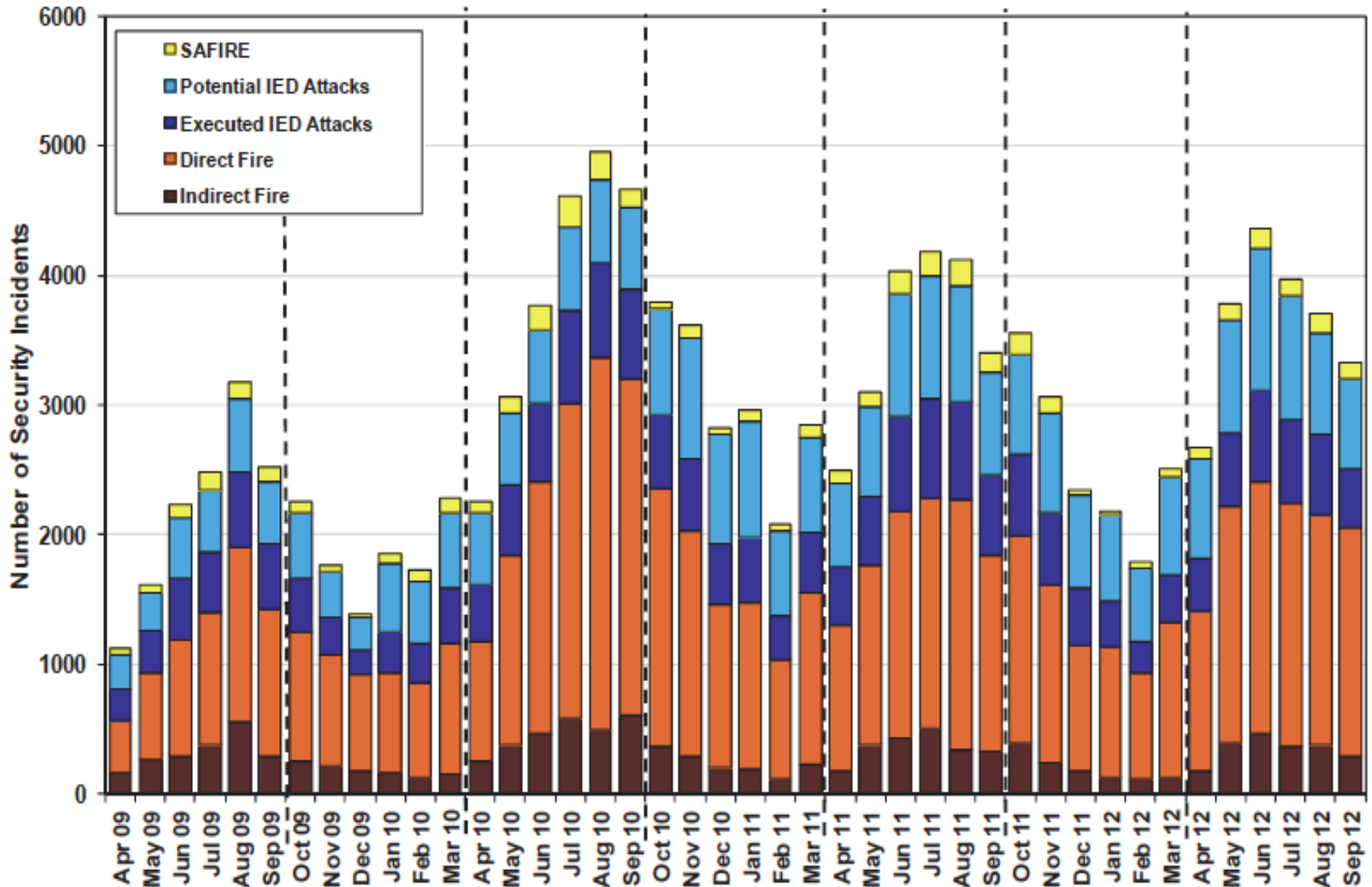
# United Nations Department of Safety and Security Estimate of Security Incidents Per Month



# US Boots on the Ground in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria: Original Plan

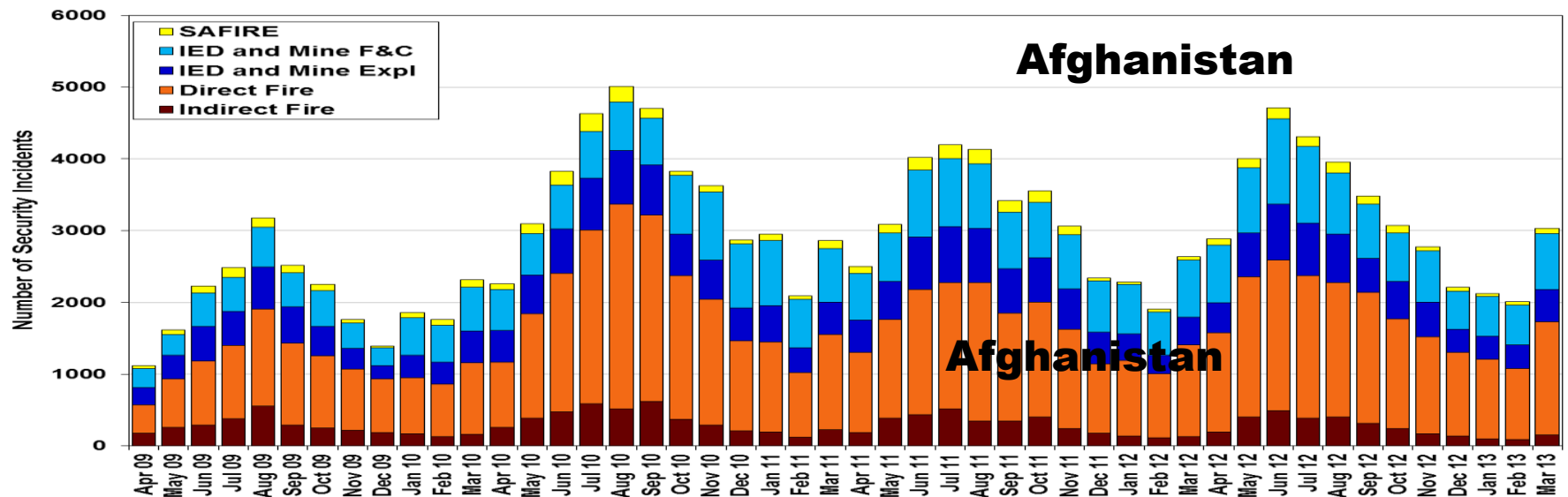
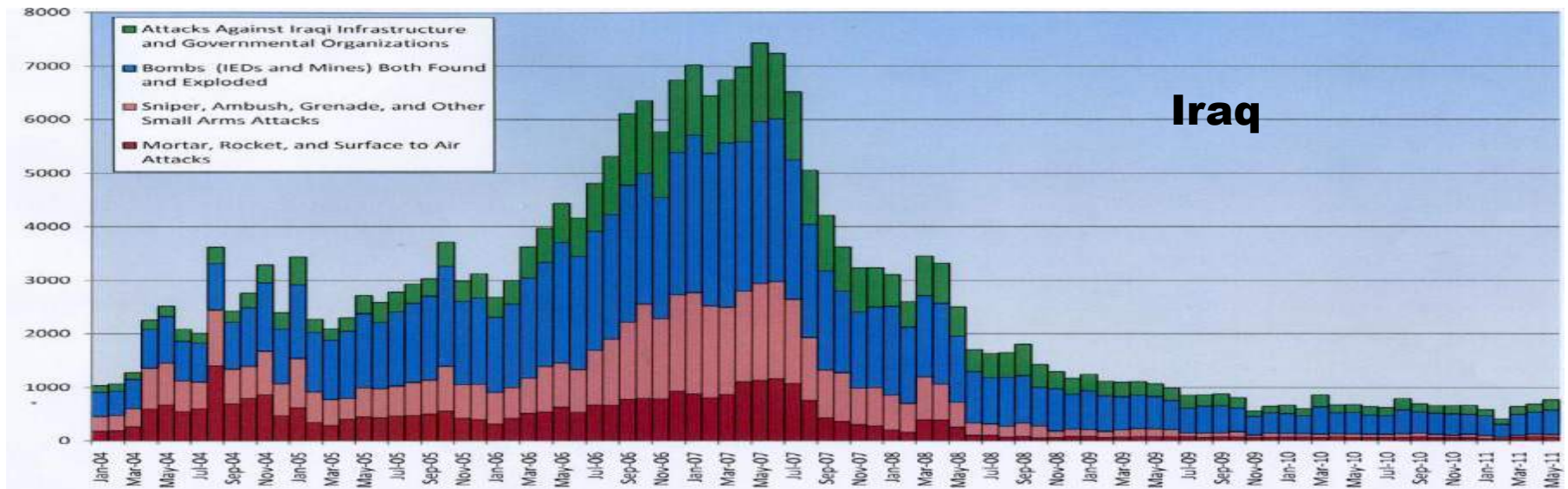


# The Surge Did Not Create the Basis for Transition and Eliminating ISAF Combat Forces



Source: "Victory" in Afghanistan: OSD Assessment of Monthly Nationwide Security Incidents in Iraq (April 2009 – September 2012)

# Failed Surge in Afghanistan vs. Surge in Iraq





# Shift from Tactical clashes to High Profile Attacks in 2012-2014

April 1 – September 15, 2012 vs. April 1 – Sept 15, 2013.

Metric	EIAs	HPA	Direct Fire	IED Events	IED/Mine Explosions	Complex/ Coordinated Attack	IDF
% YoY Change	-6%	1%	-1%	-22%	-5%	5%	-18%

October 1, 2012 – March 13, 2013 vs. October 1, 2013 – March 13, 2014.

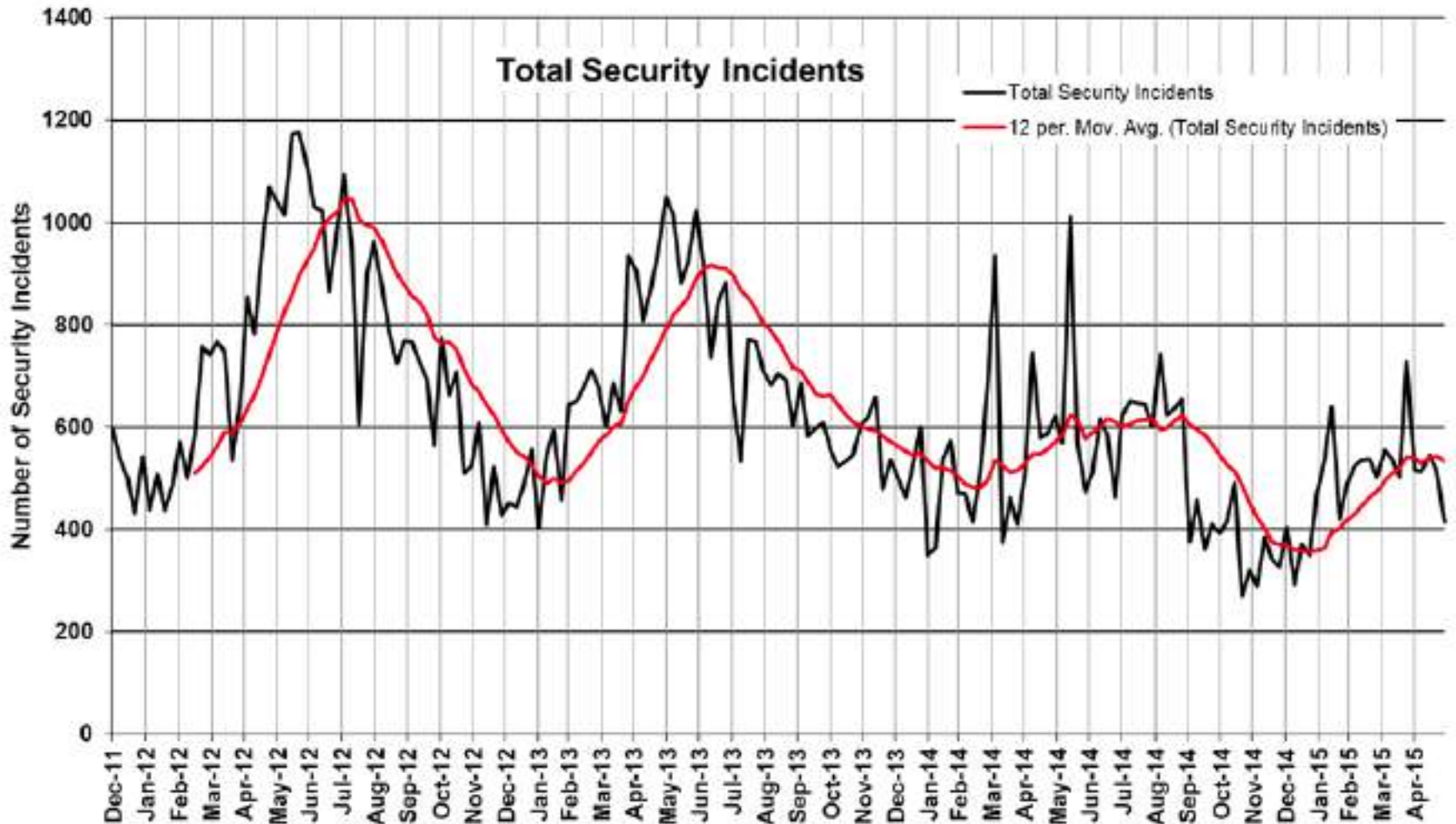
Metric	EIA	HPA	Direct Fire	IED Events	IED/Mine Explosions	Complex/ Coordinated Attack	IDF
% YoY Change	-2%	43%	5%	-24%	-11%	-8%	-15%

April 1, 2013 – August 31, 2014, compared to April 1 – August 31, 2014

Metric	Enemy Initiated Attacks	High Profile Attacks	Direct Fire	IED/ Mine Explosions	Complex/ Coordinated Attacks	Indirect Fire Attacks
Percentage Year Over Year Change	-27%	16%	-23%	-34%	-31%	-37%

Source: Department of Defense, Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, October 2013, p. 17.  
[http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October\\_1230\\_Report\\_Master\\_Nov7.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf); April 2014 report, p.11; October 2014Report, p. 15

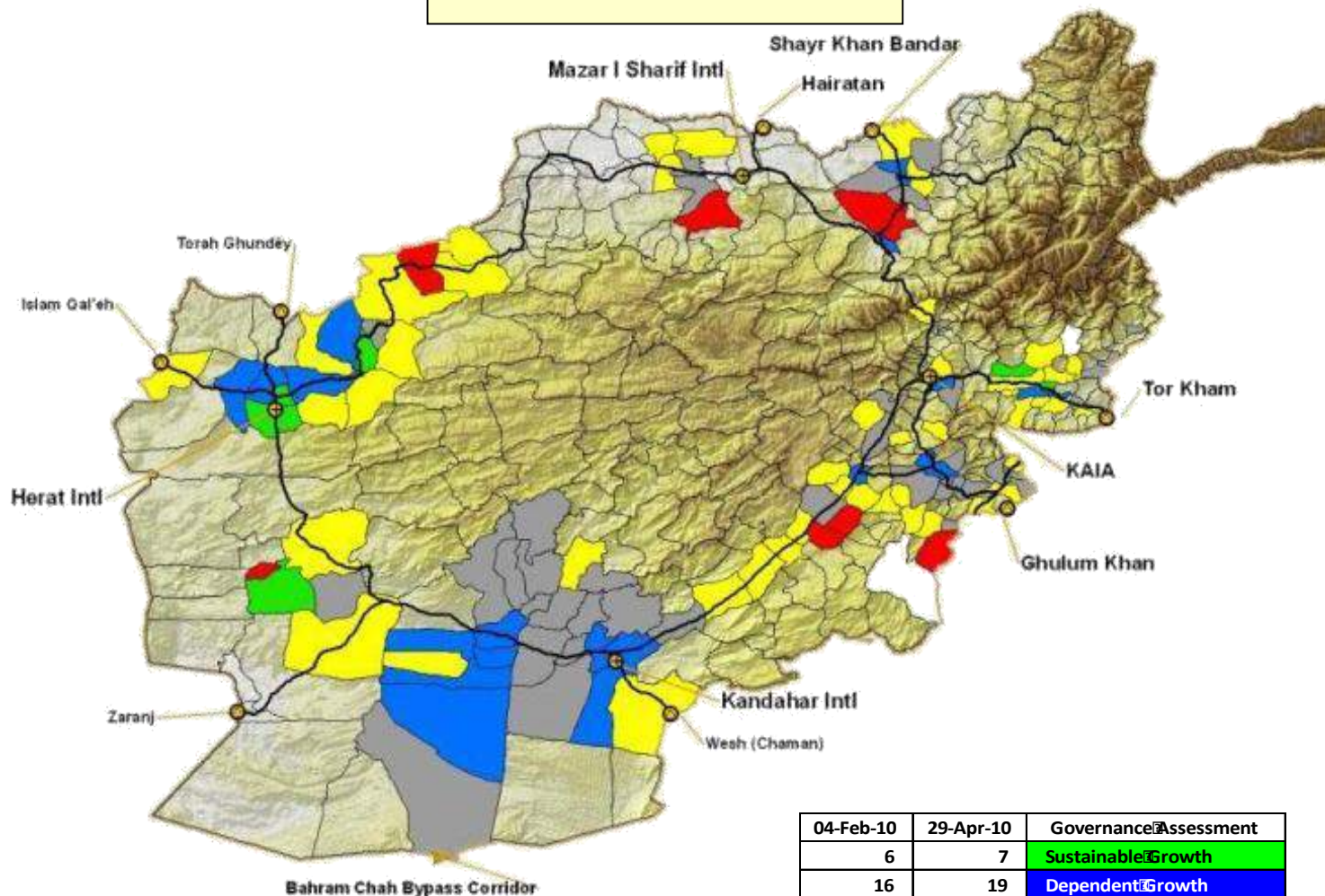
# Weekly Reported Security Incidents” : 12/2011-4/2015



\* Data as of June 8, 2015

# One Last Partial Assessment of Civil Progress Through April 2012

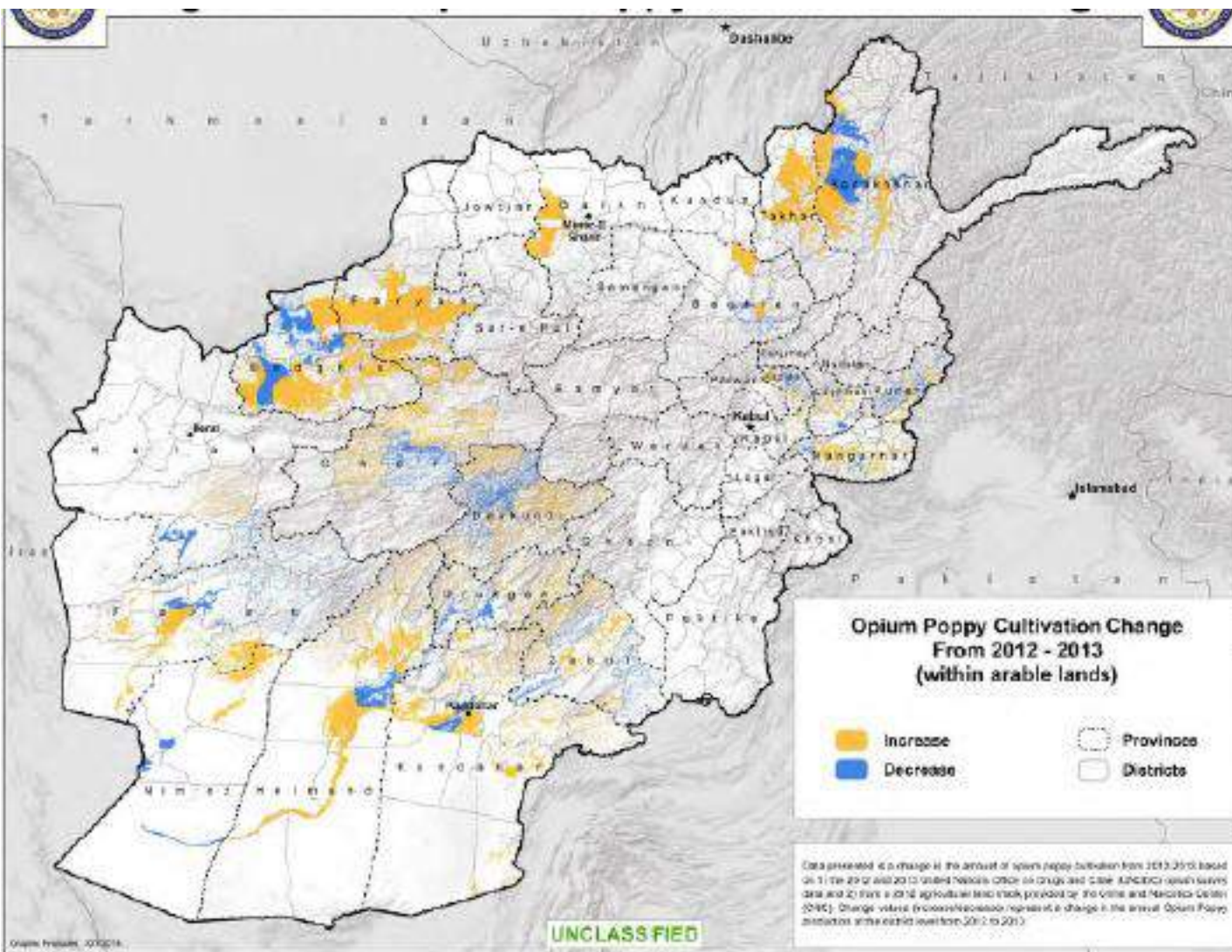
## Development



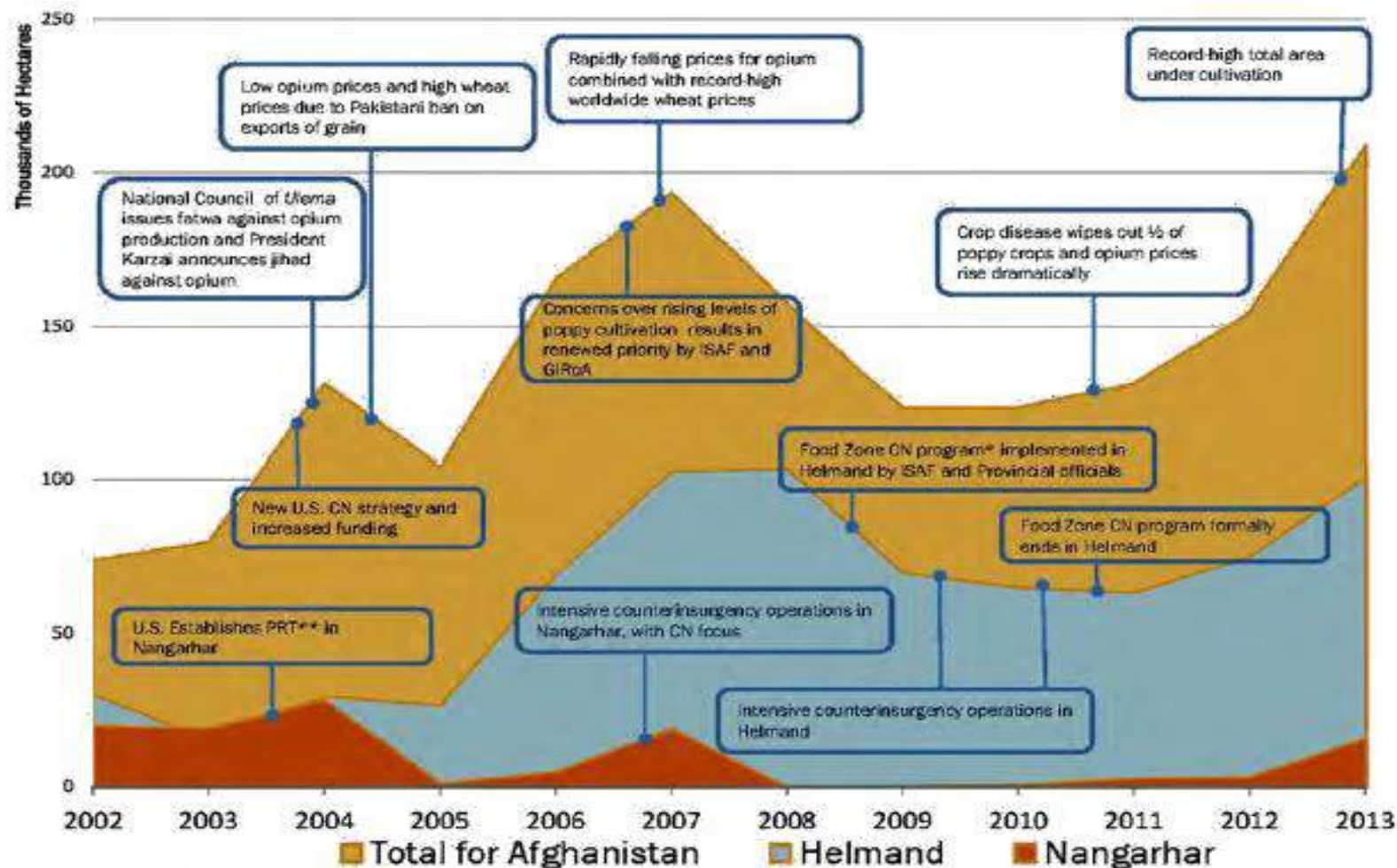
04-Feb-10	29-Apr-10	Governance Assessment
6	7	Sustainable Growth
16	19	Dependent Growth
47	46	Minimal Growth
40	41	Stalled Growth
10	7	Population at Risk
3	2	Not Assessed



# The Drug Outcome of the Surge: Change in Poppy Cultivation 2012-2013



# SIGAR Estimate Total Area Under Poppy Cultivation: 2002-2013



Source: UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2013, December 2013

\*The Food Zone Program was a concentrated alternative livelihood agricultural program implemented by the United States and the United Kingdom in coordination with Afghan provincial officials. The program cost \$56 million and paired alternative crop development with intensive poppy eradication efforts.

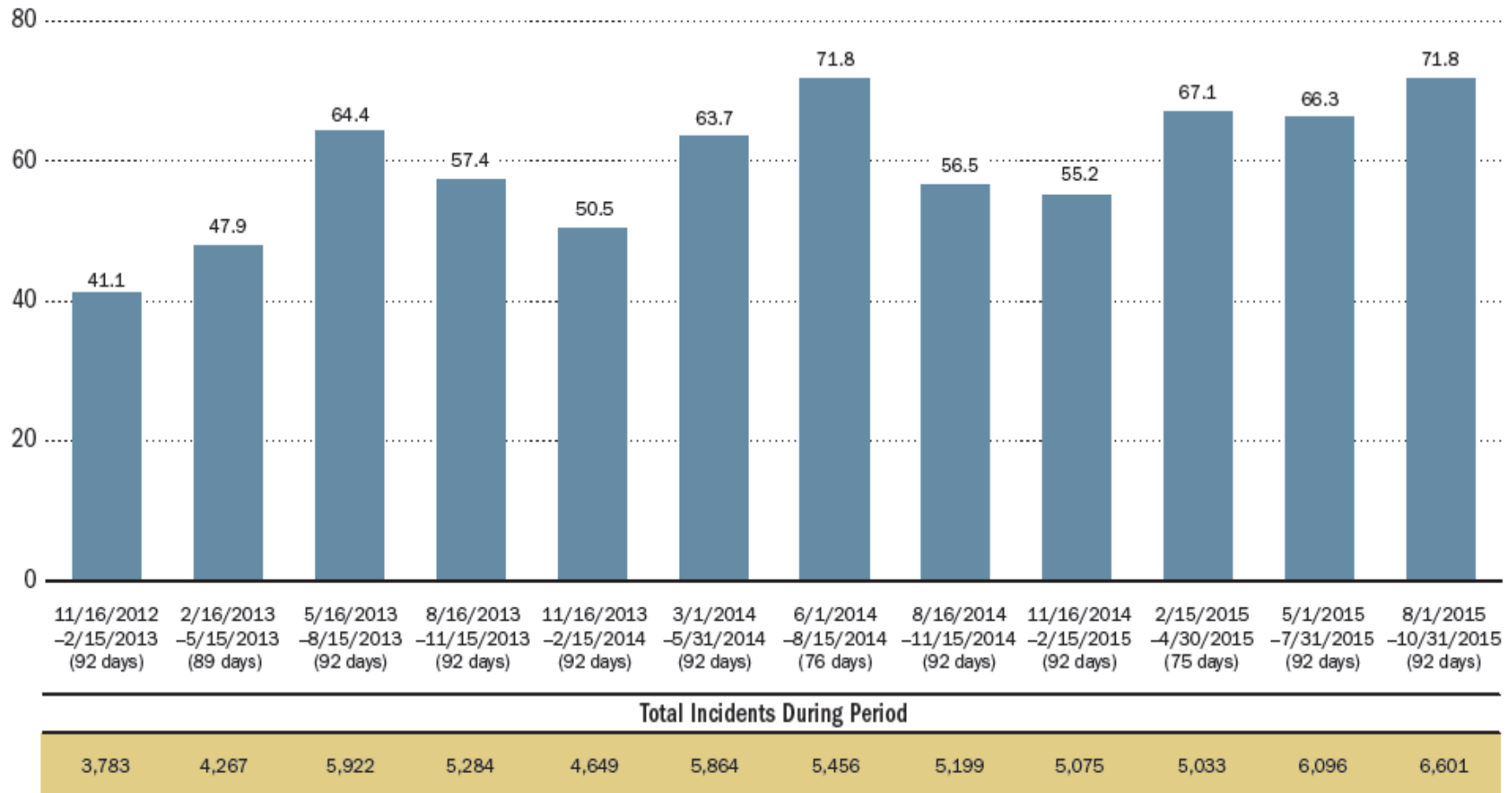
\*\*Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) are units consisting of military forces, diplomats, and economic development and reconstruction subject matter experts. PRTs are intended to improve stability in an area and build host nation legitimacy by providing security to citizens and delivering public services.

# **Reality Intervenes and Withdrawal Becomes Uncertain: Trends and Indicators: 2015**



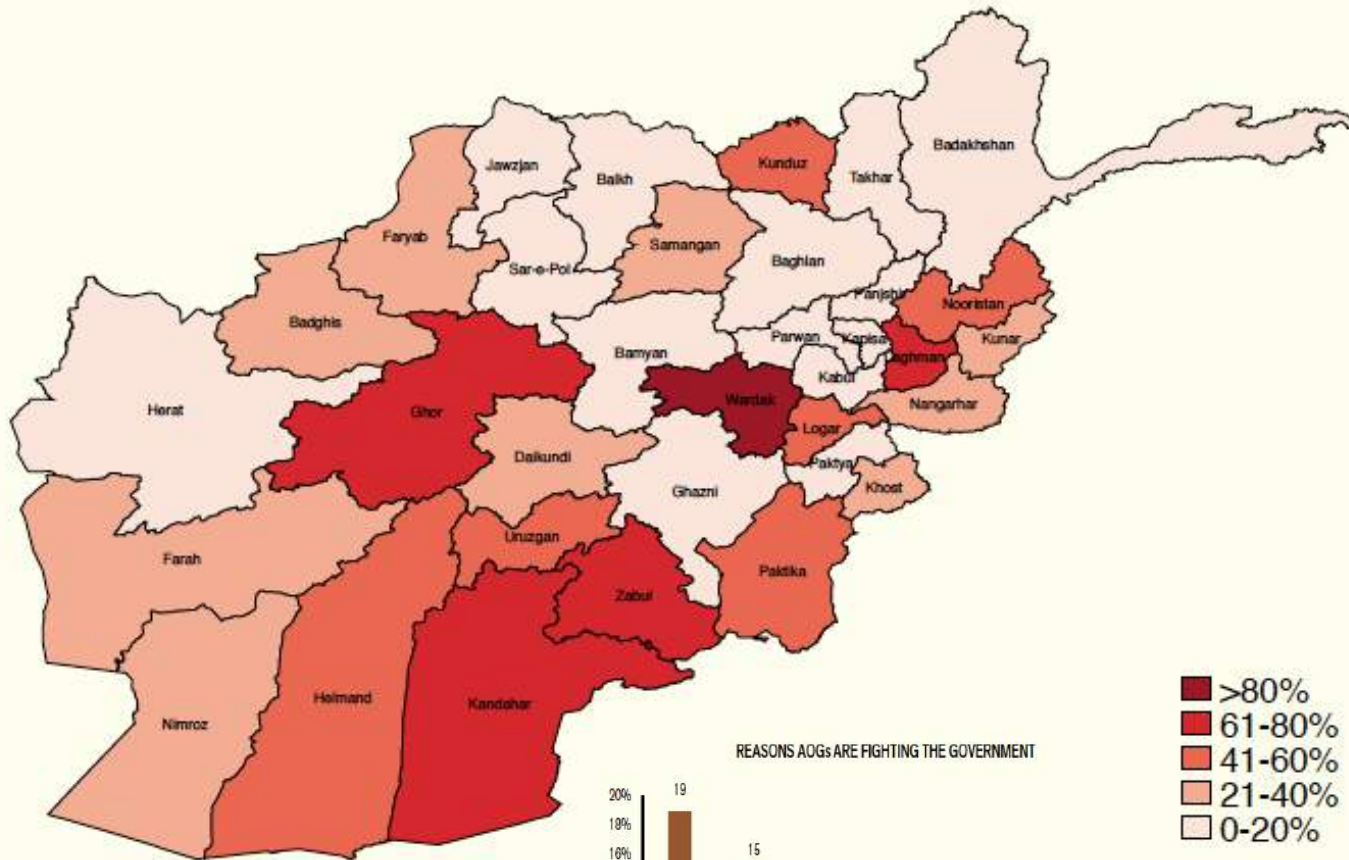
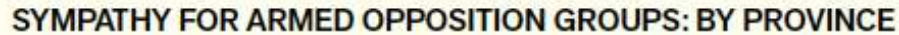
# Average Number of Security Incidents Per Day: 11/2012 - 10/2015

## AVERAGE NUMBER OF REPORTED SECURITY INCIDENTS PER DAY



Source: UN, reports of the Secretary-General, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for International peace and security*, 12/10/2015, p. 5; 9/1/2015, p. 4; 6/10/2015, p. 4; 2/27/2015, p. 4; 12/9/2014, p. 5; 9/9/2014, p. 6; 6/18/2014, p. 5; 3/7/2014, p. 5; 12/6/2013, p. 6; 9/6/2013, p. 6; 6/13/2013, p. 5; and 3/5/2013, p. 5.

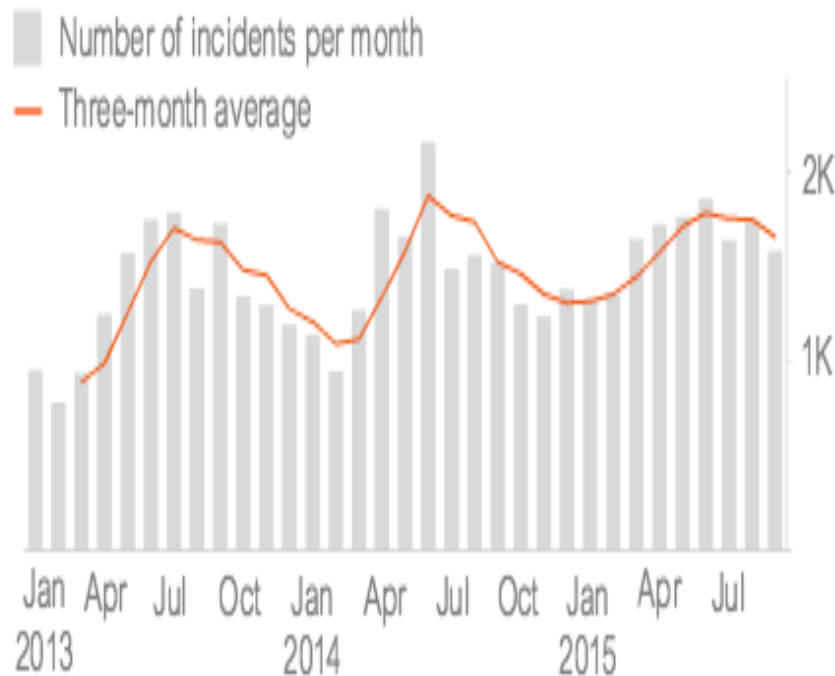
## Sympathy for Taliban and Armed Opposition Groups: 2015



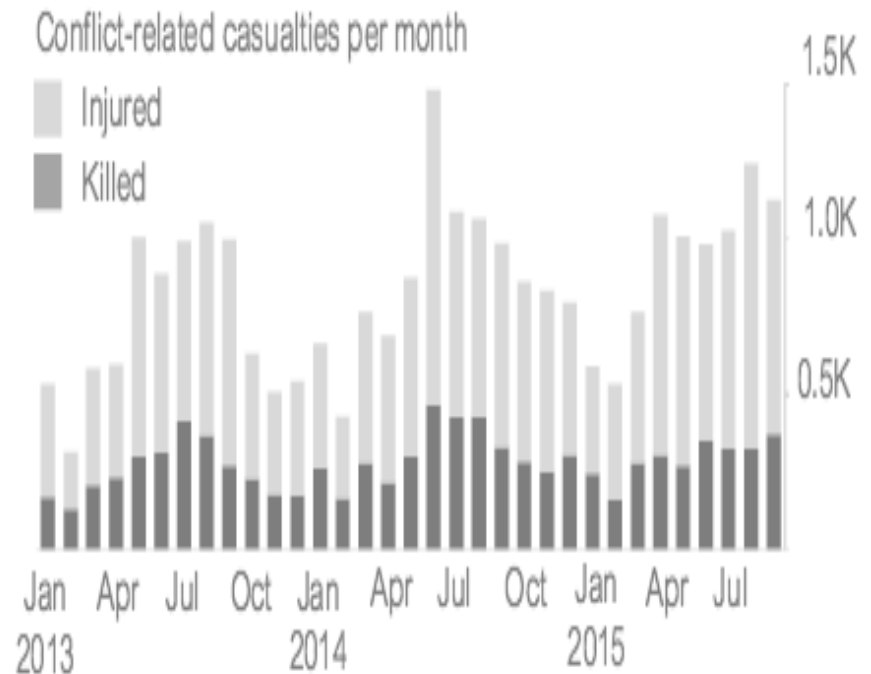
Zachary Warren and Nancy Hopkins,  
AFGHANISTAN IN 2015, A Survey of the Afghan  
People, Asia Foundation, 2015,  
<http://asiafoundation.org/publications/pdf/155>

**vs. Casualties: 1/2013-9/2015**

## CONFLICT INCIDENTS <sup>2</sup>

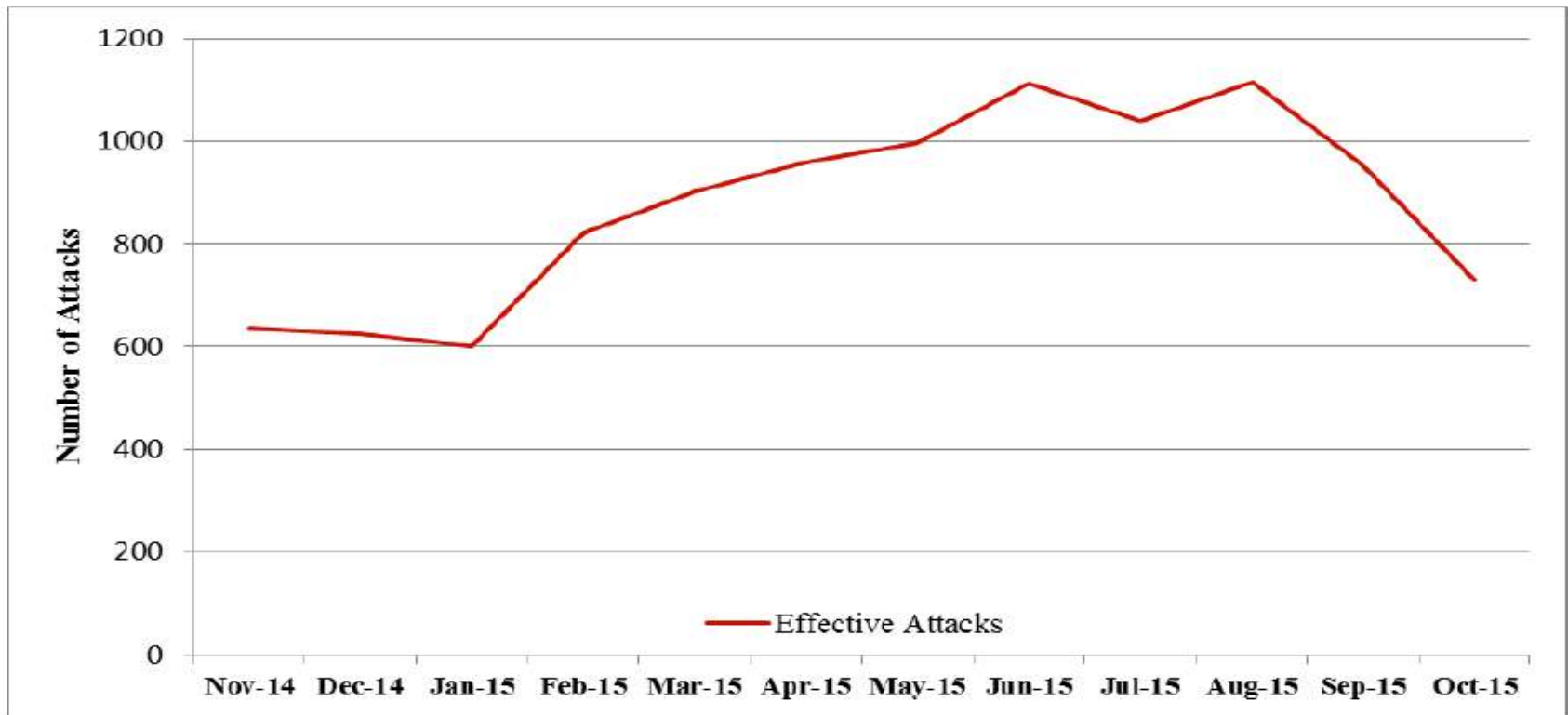


### CIVILIAN CASUALTIES <sup>3</sup>



Figures from July to September may change based on updated information

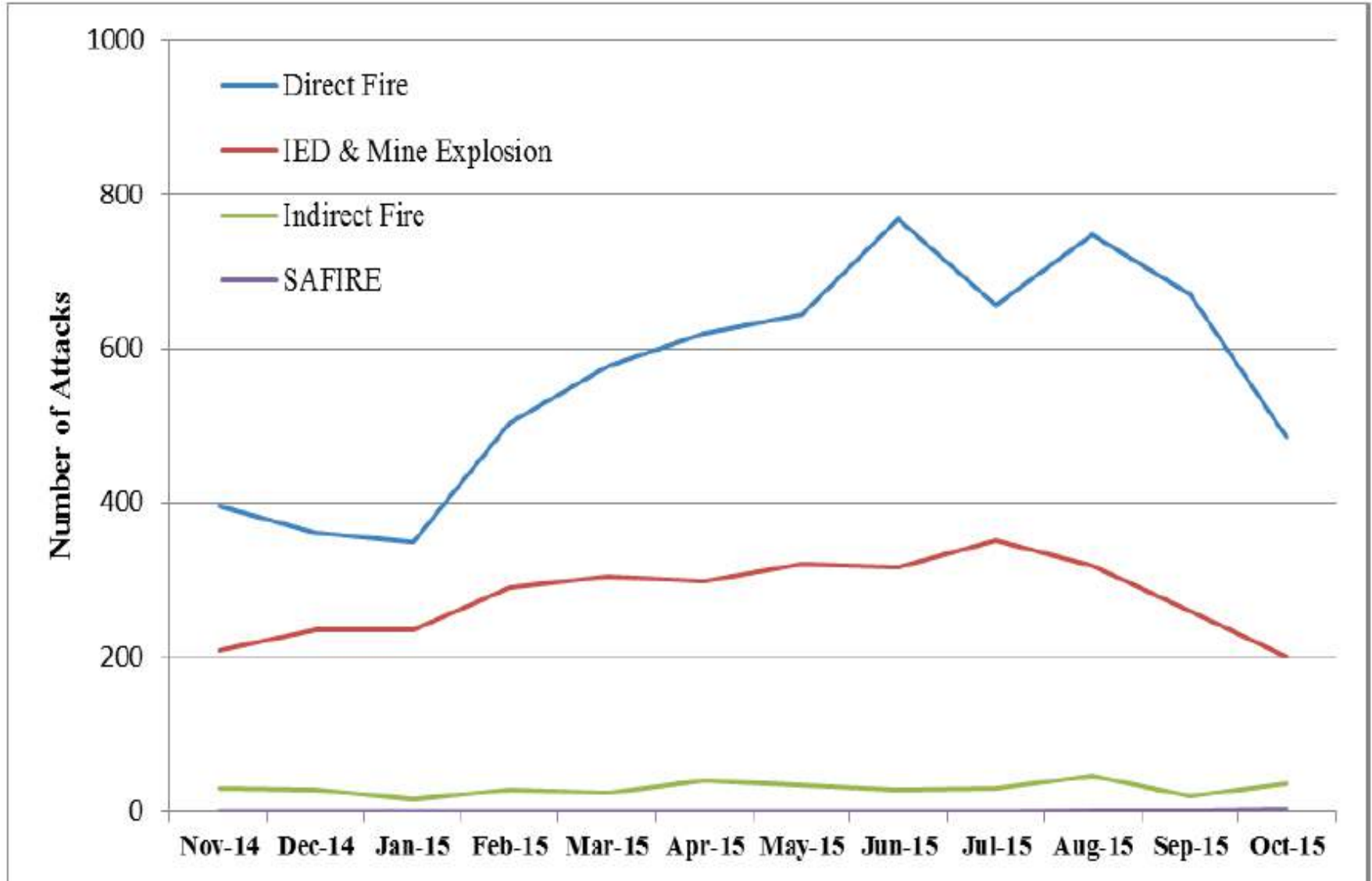
# Effective Enemy Initiated Attacks: 12/14 to 10/15



The number of effective enemy-initiated attacks<sup>10</sup> from January 1 to November 30, 2015 – that is, attacks that resulted in casualties – increased by approximately 4 percent when compared to the same period in 2014 (see Figure 4).<sup>11</sup> The total number of effective enemy-initiated attacks hovered around 1,000 per month during the reporting period before decreasing in September 2015. This increase in the number of effective enemy-initiated attacks is consistent with an increase in the number of ANDSF and civilian casualties over the reporting period, with an overall upward trend over the last two years.

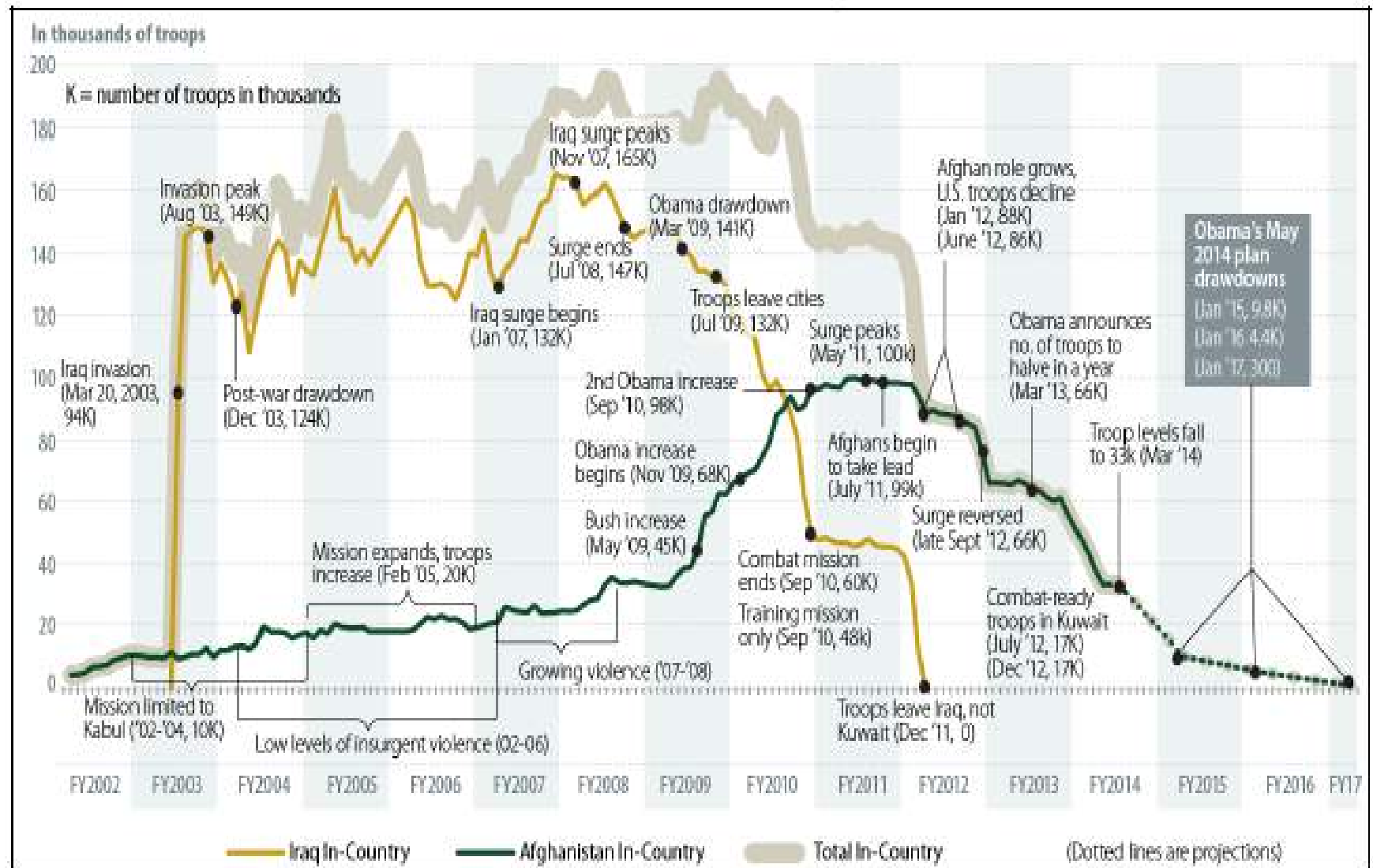
Direct fire remains the leading type of insurgent attack by a wide margin followed by IED and mine explosions (see Figure 5). Indirect fire such as mortars, rockets, and artillery and surface-to-air fire continue to be infrequently utilized insurgent tactics. Although IED and mine explosions are less than half of the number of total attacks, this tactic typically gains more media attention, particularly when conducted as a high-profile attack via either a person-borne or vehicle-borne IED in a population center. Consistent with the previous reporting period and the overall trend since the transition to the RS mission, very few effective enemy-initiated attacks involved coalition or U.S. forces.

# Enemy Initiated Attacks by Type: 12/14 to 11/15





# The Withdrawal Plan Fails: U.S. Forces in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria: FY2002-FY2017



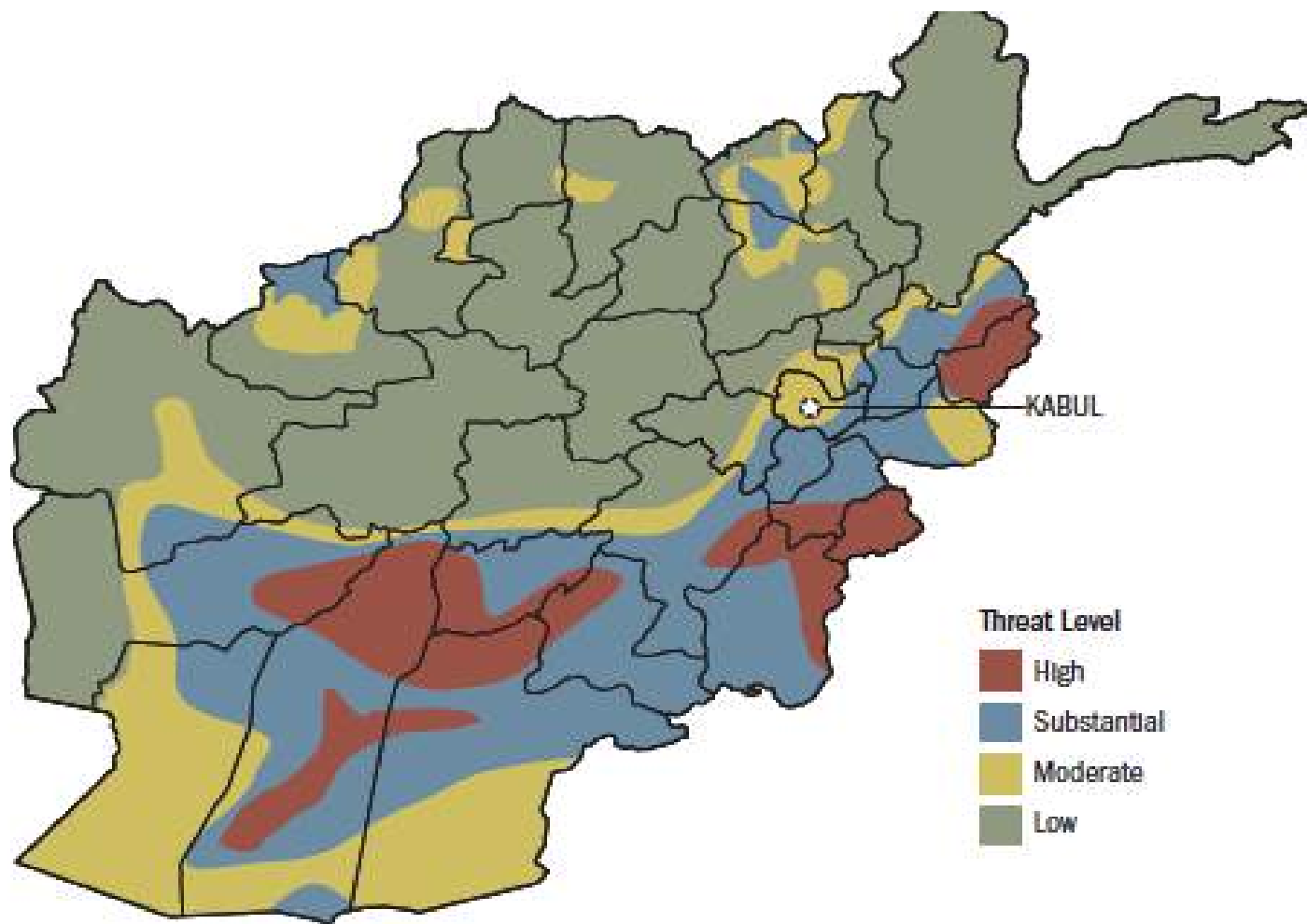
Notes: Reflects U.S. troops in-country; excludes troops providing in-theater support or conducting counter-terror operations outside the region. Amy Belasco, The Cost of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Other Global War on Terror Operations Since 9/11, **CRS RL33110, December 8, 2014**, p.9.

**A Focus on Tactical Outcomes  
Disguises a Lack of Meaningful  
Reporting on the Key Impact of  
the Insurgency: Growing  
Insurgent Influence and Control  
and Declining Support for the  
Government**

# **Radically Different assessment of Trends in Threat Control and Influence**

- Official U.S. and Afghan data seem to sharply understate the level of growing threat presence, influence, and control – perhaps because Districts are only counted as under threat control if the District capital is directly controlled and/or because growing threat influence is not measured.
- The estimates made in testimony by General Campbell for the end-2015 state of threat influence and control seem more spin than objective.
- The UN data that follow seem far more realistic in assessing trends, and are supported by the casualty trend data in the next section. They also note that the threat had enough influence or control to reduce civilian casualties in some areas.
- The failure of official reporting to assess corruption and power broker/official links, or agreements that give the Taliban influence and control in some areas casts, much of the public reporting into serious doubt.
- There has been no attempt to publically estimate the level of official control, and government rule of law by district for years.
- As a result, official unclassified data at best provide highly suspect analysis that focuses on tactical issues to the exclusion of the reality that insurgencies are essentially political warfare for control and/or influence.

## German Government Map of Threat Levels from Anti -Government Forces: 11/2014



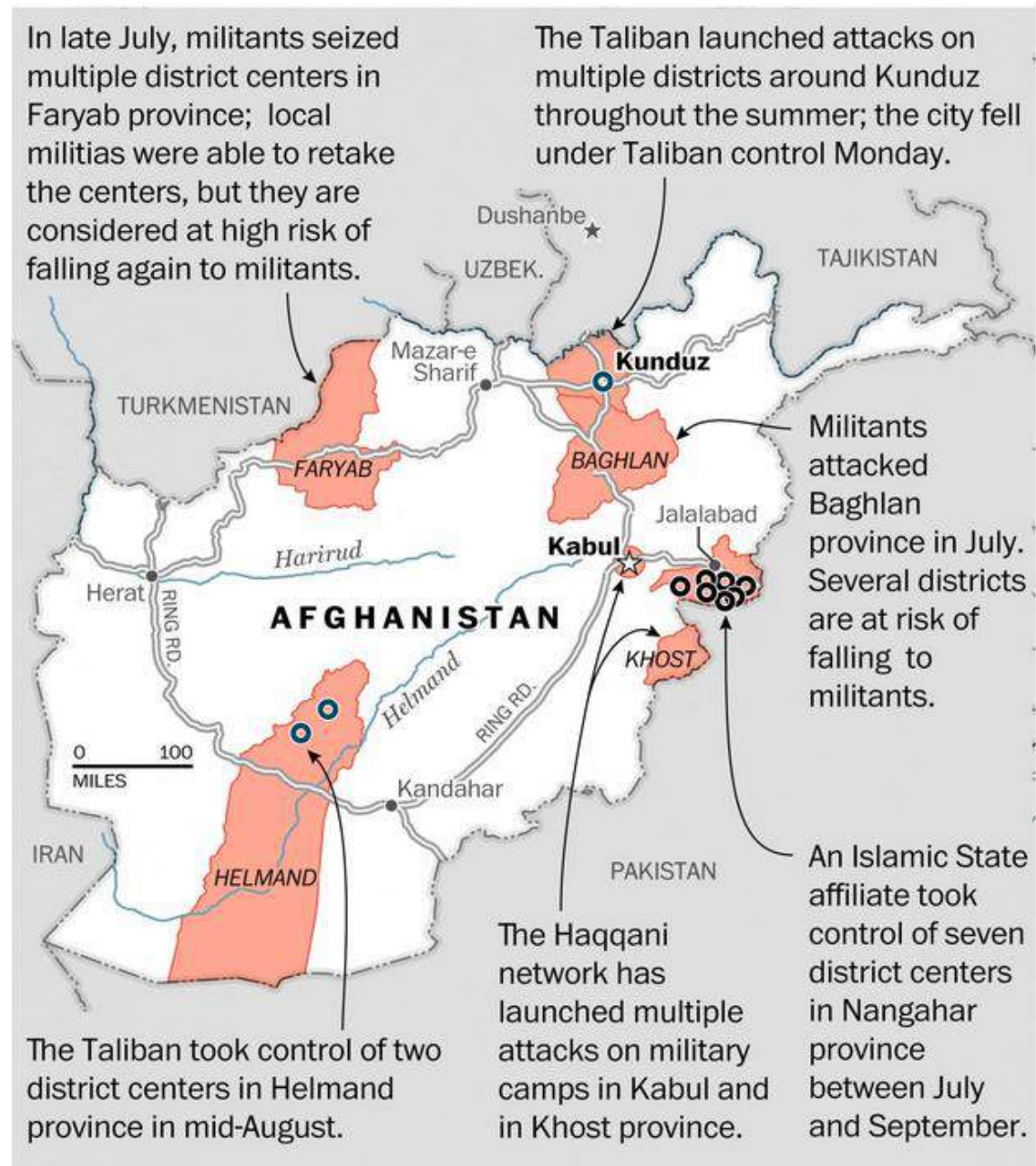
Source: Die Bundesregierung (German federal government), 2014 Progress Report on Afghanistan, 11/2014, p. 19.

Source: Die Bundesregierung (German federal government), 2014 Progress Report on Afghanistan, 11/2014, p. 19.; UN Security Council, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security* reports, 12/9/2014, p. 5; 9/9/2014, p. 6; 6/18/2014, p. 5; and 3/7/2014, p. 5.; and SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, January 30, 2015, p. 93.

# ISW/Washington Post Map of Insurgent Activity in 2015

9.29.2015

Source: Tim Craig, Sayed Salahuddin, "Taliban storms into northern Afghan city in major blow for security forces," Washington Post, September 29, 2015, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/taliban-overruns-half-of-northern-afghan-city/2015/09/28/53798568-65df-11e5-bdb6-6861f4521205\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/taliban-overruns-half-of-northern-afghan-city/2015/09/28/53798568-65df-11e5-bdb6-6861f4521205_story.html)

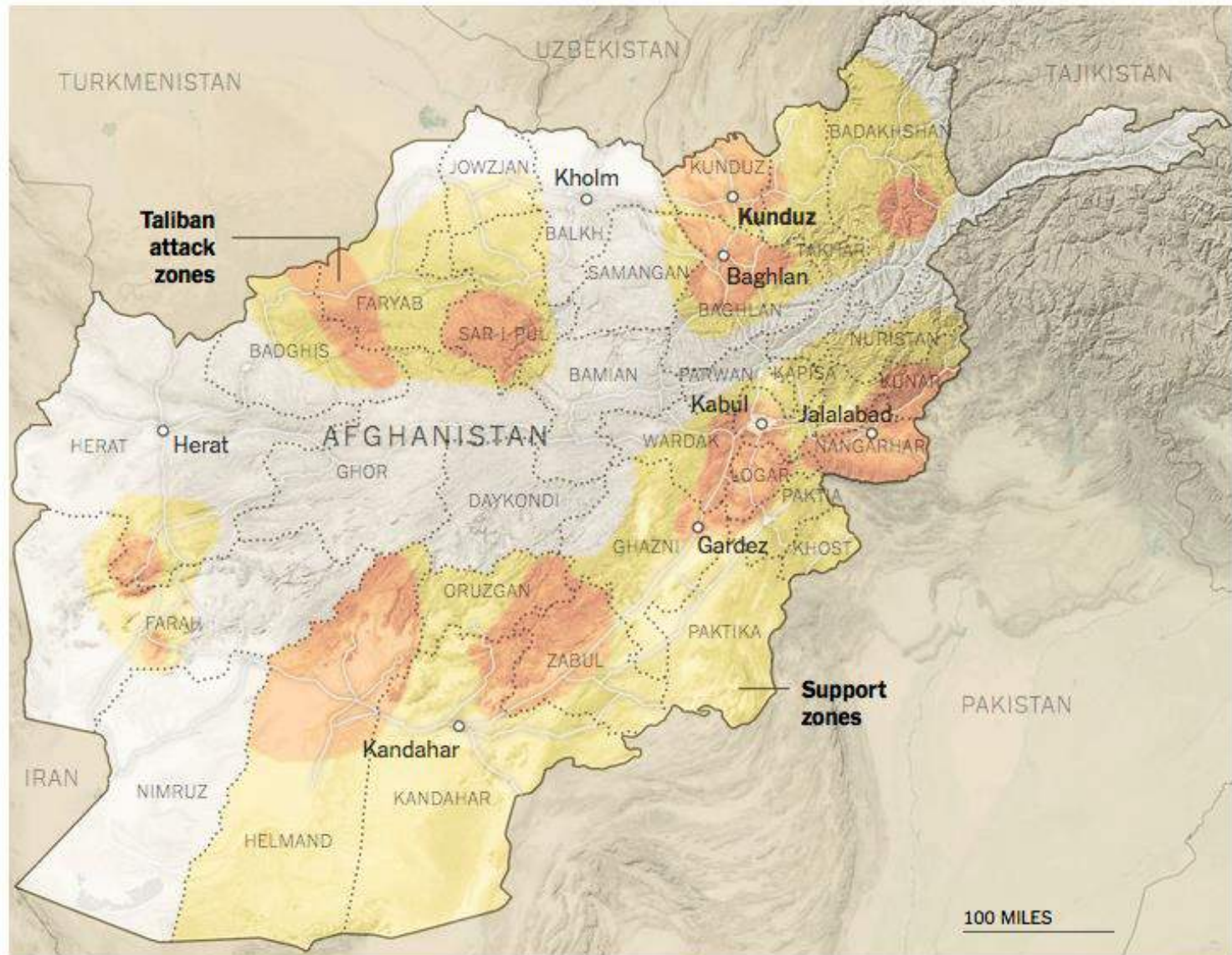




# Taliban Presence

New York  
Times:  
29/9/2015

Source:  
<http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/09/29/world/middleeast/taliban-support-attack-zone-map.html>.



Sources: Institute for the Study of War

# ISW

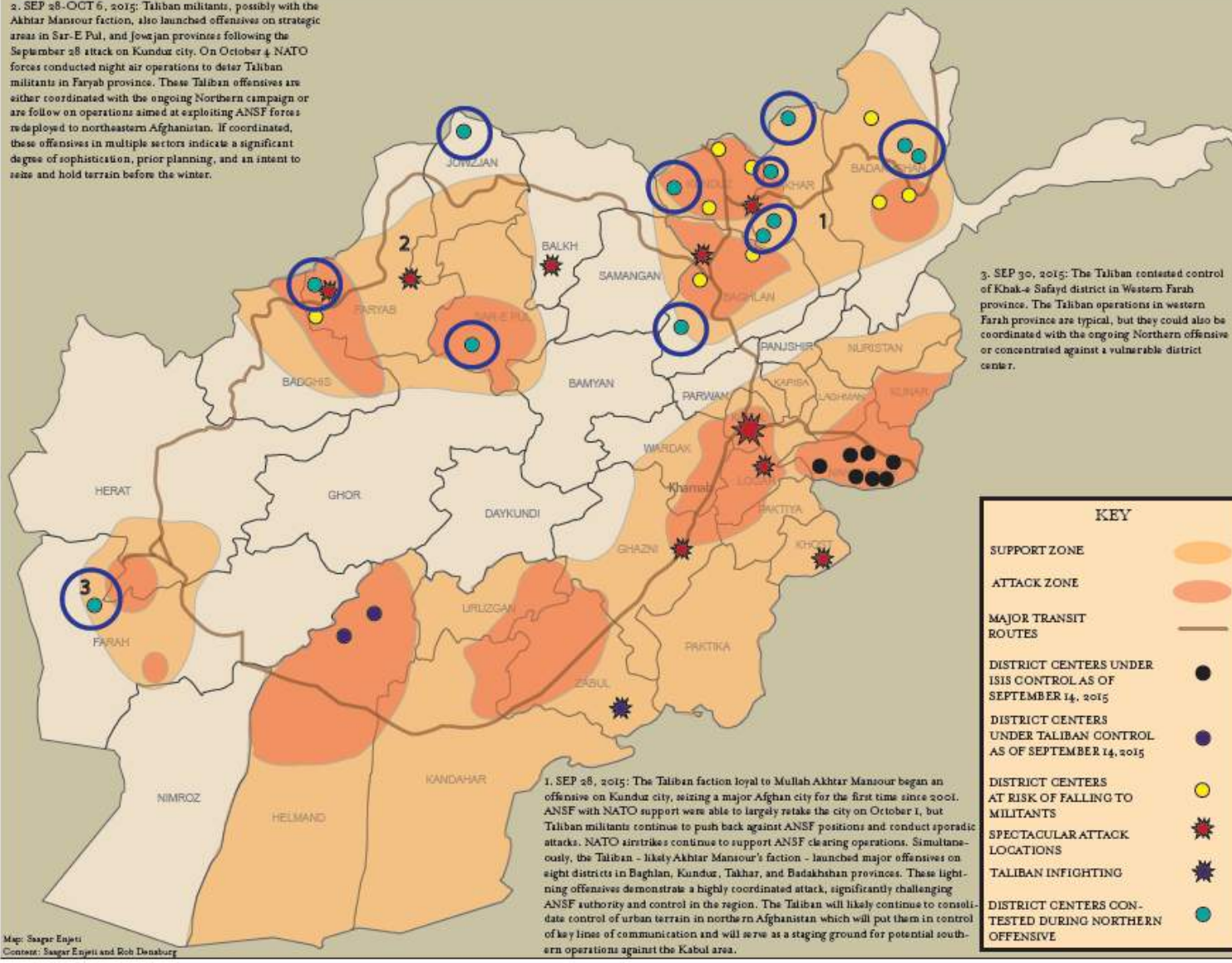
## Insurgent Activity : 4-19/2015

Source: Institute for the Study of War:  
[http://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/militant-attack-and-support-zones-afghanistan-april-october-6-2015?utm\\_source=Copy+of+Militant+Attack+and+Support+Zones+in+Afghanistan%3A+April-October+6%2C+2015&utm\\_campaign=Iraq+Situatio n+Report+July+28-30%2C+2015&utm\\_medium=email](http://understandingwar.org/backgrounder/militant-attack-and-support-zones-afghanistan-april-october-6-2015?utm_source=Copy+of+Militant+Attack+and+Support+Zones+in+Afghanistan%3A+April-October+6%2C+2015&utm_campaign=Iraq+Situatio n+Report+July+28-30%2C+2015&utm_medium=email)



# Militant Attack and Support Zones in Afghanistan: April - October 6, 2015

2. SEP 28-OCT 6, 2015: Taliban militants, possibly with the Akhtar Mansour faction, also launched offensives on strategic areas in Sar-e Pul, and Jowzjan provinces following the September 28 attack on Kunduz city. On October 4 NATO forces conducted night air operations to deter Taliban militants in Faryab province. These Taliban offensives are either coordinated with the ongoing Northern campaign or are follow on operations aimed at exploiting ANSF forces redeployed to northeastern Afghanistan. If coordinated, these offensives in multiple sectors indicate a significant degree of sophistication, prior planning, and an intent to seize and hold terrain before the winter.





# UN Estimate of Areas of Risk in Afghanistan: 9/2015 - I

- Districts with extreme threat levels either have no government presence at all, or a government presence reduced to only the district capital; there were 38 such districts scattered through 14 of the country's 34 provinces.
- In all, 27 of Afghanistan's 34 provinces had some districts where the threat level was rated high or extreme.
- In Oruzgan Province, in southern Afghanistan, four of its five districts were rated under extreme or high threat, with only the capital, Tarinkot, classified as under "substantial" threat. Many local officials predicted that the province might soon become the first to entirely fall to the Taliban.
- Similar concerns were raised by officials in two other Oruzgan districts, Dehrawad and Chora. They all reported increased activity by the Taliban in recent months.
- In Maimana, the capital of Faryab Province, American airstrikes, along with the arrival of pro-government militiamen, helped beat back the Taliban's effort to overrun the city last week, but the Taliban remain active in districts surrounding the provincial capital.
- United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan evacuates 4 of 13 provincial — the most it has ever done for security reasons — in October 2015.
- Rated threat level in about half of the country's administrative districts as either "high" or "extreme," more than at any time since 2001.
- In many districts that are nominally under government control, like Musa Qala in Helmand Province and Charchino in Oruzgan Province, government forces hold only the government buildings in the district center and are under constant siege by the insurgents.
- Tempo of the insurgency has increased in many parts of the country where there had been little Taliban presence in the past, including some areas in the north with scant Pashtun populations. The Taliban have been a largely Pashtun-based insurgency and have been historically strongest in Pashtun-majority areas in southern and eastern Afghanistan, with some pockets in the north, such as Kunduz.
- "We have had fighting in 13 provinces of Afghanistan over the past six months, simultaneously," President Ashraf Ghani said this month in response to criticism after the fall of Kunduz.

# UN OHCA Estimate of Afghan Aid Needs in 2015 as a Conflict Indicator

Third quarter report of financing and achievements (January to September)

## AFFECTED SO FAR IN 2015<sup>1</sup>



**231 thousand**  
actually displaced by conflict



**128 thousand**  
impacted by natural disasters



**83.5 thousand**  
vulnerable undocumented returns

## VULNERABLE UNDOCUMENTED RETURNEES



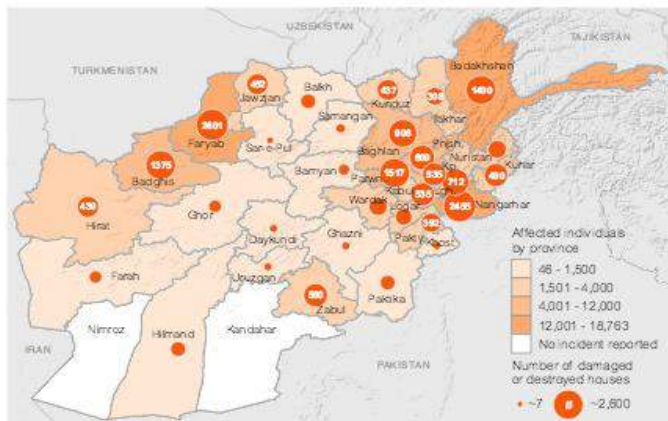
Spontaneous  
Undocumented  
Returns



**5 times  
higher  
in 2015**

2014 69 individuals per day | 2015 331 individuals per day

## NATURAL DISASTERS<sup>7</sup>



## FUNDING FOR 2015<sup>1</sup>

### Clusters



Emergency Shelter & NFIs

Requested

\$40m **\$5.1m**



7



Food Security & Agriculture

\$92m **\$49.5m**



Health

\$39m **\$18.9m**



Nutrition

\$63m\* **\$43.9m**



Protection

\$40m **\$19.8m**



Water, Sanitation & Hygiene

\$25m **\$18.5m**



Refugees and Returnees

\$89m\* **\$31m**



Aviation

\$17m **\$8.9m**



Coordination

\$11m **\$12.7m**



Total

\$417m\* **\$208m (received)**

## COMMON HUMANITARIAN FUND

### Donor Contributions

United Kingdom

**\$18.7m**

Sweden

**\$8.1m**

Australia

**\$6.1m**

Denmark

**\$3.1m**

Norway

**\$1.2m**

Total  
**\$37.2m**

### Allocations by Cluster

Health

**\$6.9m**

Nutrition

**\$5m**

Refugees

**\$5m**

WASH

**\$4.6m**

Total

**\$21.5m (allocated)**

\* Budgets have been updated to reflect the mid-year revision.

## BENEFICIARIES REACHED

### Clusters



Emergency Shelter & NFIs

Target

157,000

Reached

**197%**



63,938



65,025



181,042



Food Security & Agriculture

2.2 million

**68%**

335,198

328,435

841,535



Health

2.7 million

**47%**

427,124

479,578

368,740\*



Nutrition

2.0 million

**58%**

-

260,280

917,166\*



Protection

1.4 million

**36%**

110,823

112,848

287,099



Water, Sanitation & Hygiene

1.9 million

**38%**

156,811

155,920

404,461



Refugees and Returnees

637,430

**49%**

66,690

67,808

174,944

\*Includes only under 5 children

By strategic  
priority



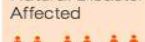
## BREAKDOWN OF PEOPLE IN NEED & ASSISTED

Conflict IDPs<sup>2</sup>



~ 60k

Natural Disaster Affected



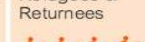
~ 50k

Malnourished Children



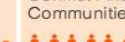
~ 50k

Refugees & Returnees



~ 80k

Conflict Affected Communities



~ 100k

Severely Food Insecure

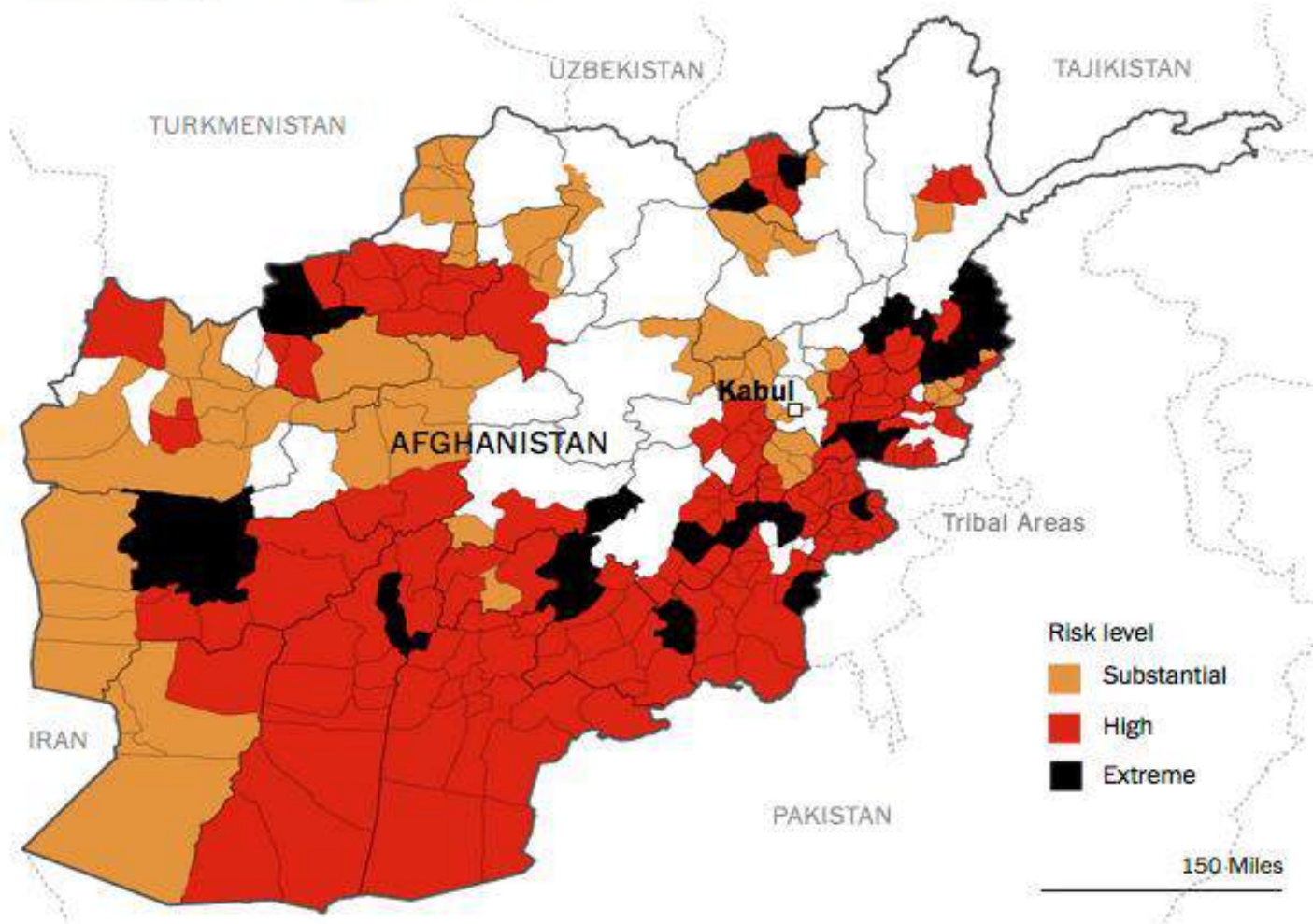


~ 100k



## UN OHCA Estimate of Areas of Risk in Afghanistan: 9/2015

More than half of the districts in Afghanistan are rated by the United Nations as having either a substantial, high or extreme level of risk.



Source: United Nations

By The New York Times

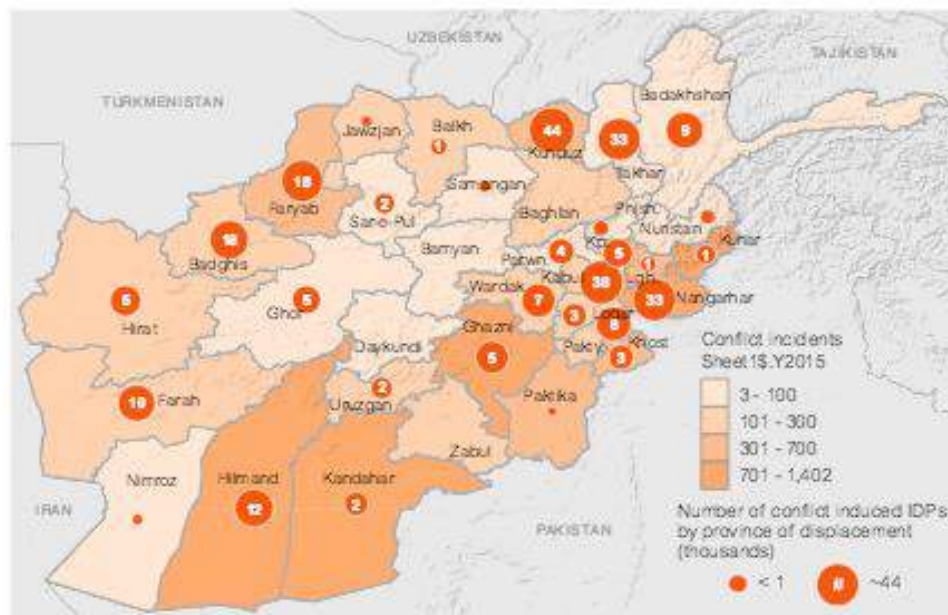
Source: New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/12/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-united-nations.html?smprod=nytcore-ipad&smid=nytcore-ipad-share>

# UN OHCA Estimate of IDPs As a Conflict Indicator: 9/2015

## CONFLICT-INDUCED DISPLACEMENT <sup>4</sup>



## CONFLICT AND DISPLACEMENTS <sup>6</sup>



The conflict in Afghanistan continues to intensify, with notable escalations in violence seen throughout the North, South and East Regions; Faryab, Helmand, Kunduz and Nangarhar experienced large-scale displacement within and to surrounding provinces.

During the quarter, approximately 63,500 individuals were recorded as conflict-displaced, with the total assessed number of forcibly displaced in 2015 reaching 197,000 by the end of September. One trauma care NGO reported a 19 per cent increase

in war-related admissions. The increasing violence culminated with the significant, yet temporary, siege of the provincial capital Kunduz by non-state armed groups (NSAG) at the end of September, which led to a month-long displacement crisis of nearly the entire city's population across the North and North East Regions.

As military operations in North Waziristan continued and expanded, refugees remain in the camp and urban areas of Khost and Paktika provinces; families do not expect to be able to return home in the foreseeable future, thus requiring a focus on more medium-term interventions while still meeting life-saving needs of the most vulnerable.

At the same time, the return of both documented and undocumented Afghans remains high, with nearly 54,000 registered refugees returning mainly from Pakistan in the first nine months of 2015, as compared to only 13,860 in Q3.

Undocumented returnees have also reached higher levels with nearly 440,000 people returning, 80,000 of which are considered particularly vulnerable; the number of vulnerable families and persons with specific needs is also increasing, all contributing to a worsening humanitarian situation in the country and limited capacity to respond.



# Lead US Inspector General Summary of Key Threats 12.2015

## TALIBAN

Since the July 2015 announcement that Taliban founder Mullah Muhammad Omar died in 2013, Mullah Akhtar Mansoor has largely consolidated his position as the new emir, though some dissenting factions have broken away. The Taliban has proven capable of taking rural areas, fighting for key terrain in Helmand province, and conducting high-visibility attacks in Kabul and Kunduz. However, the group has not been able to hold key terrain for extended periods of time and has suffered significant casualties. The Taliban has presence throughout Afghanistan, but most insurgent activity during the last half of 2015 was carried out in Kabul, Kunduz, Helmand, Kandahar, Nangarhar, Uruzgan, Parwan, Faryab, and Ghazni provinces.

## AL QAEDA

For most of 2015, al Qaeda was considered to be in a survival mode. U.S. counterterrorism efforts have targeted the terrorist group since 2001. Fewer than 100 core members were estimated to be cooperating with the Taliban, particularly in the provinces of Kunar and Nuristan. However, in October, U.S. forces found and destroyed a major training site in a remote part of Kandahar.

## HAQQANI NETWORK

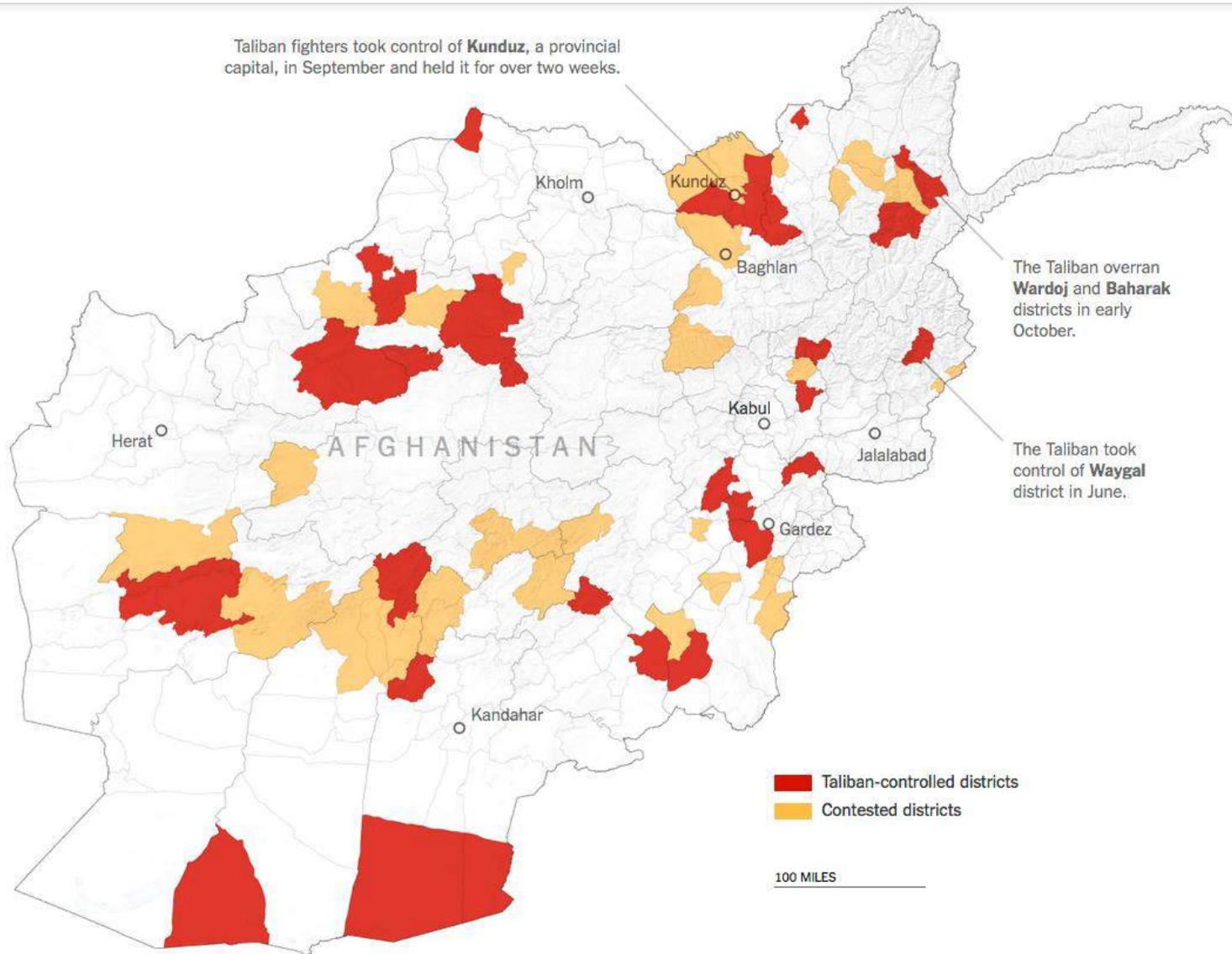
With links to the Taliban and al Qaeda, this extremist group is considered the greatest threat to U.S., coalition, and Afghan forces. Its involvement with the Taliban has increased, with the appointment of the network's leader, Siraj Haqqani, as deputy to Taliban leader Mullah Mansoor. The network leads the insurgency in Paktika and Khost provinces and uses those areas to launch attacks on Kabul.

## ISLAMIC STATE OF IRAQ AND LEVANT KHORASAN (ISIL-K)

The ISIL-K has been gaining membership from disaffected members of the Taliban and other extremist groups. ISIL-K has been battling the Taliban, and now the Afghan army, in a section of Nangarhar province by the Pakistan border. The group's name refers to an ancient area that included parts of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. The extremist Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan has pledged support to the ISIL-K, and there are reports of it operating in Zabul and Ghazni provinces, as well as in Kunduz province to the north.



# Taliban Areas of Control in Afghanistan: 15.10.15



The New York Times | Source: The Long War Journal



# UN OHCA Estimate of IDPs As A Conflict Indicator: 11/2015

## AFGHANISTAN: Conflict Induced Displacements - Snapshot (1 January - 31 October 2015)

IDP Task  
Force

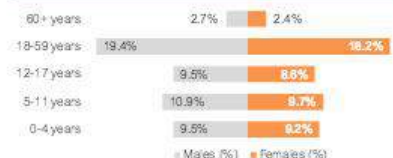


As of October over 270,000 people have fled their homes due to conflict - 102% increase on 2014. Twenty-nine of thirty four provinces had recorded some level of forced displacement in the summer of 2015. Constrained humanitarian access hinders assessments, thus preventing verification of the full extent of displacement and undermining the provision of assistance and services. Displacement affects all individuals differently with needs, vulnerabilities and protection risks evolving over time due to exhaustion of coping mechanisms and only basic emergency assistance provided following initial displacement. Inadequate shelter, food insecurity, insufficient access to sanitation and health facilities, as well as a lack of protection, often result in precarious living conditions that jeopardises the well-being and dignity of affected families.

### KEY FIGURES<sup>1</sup>



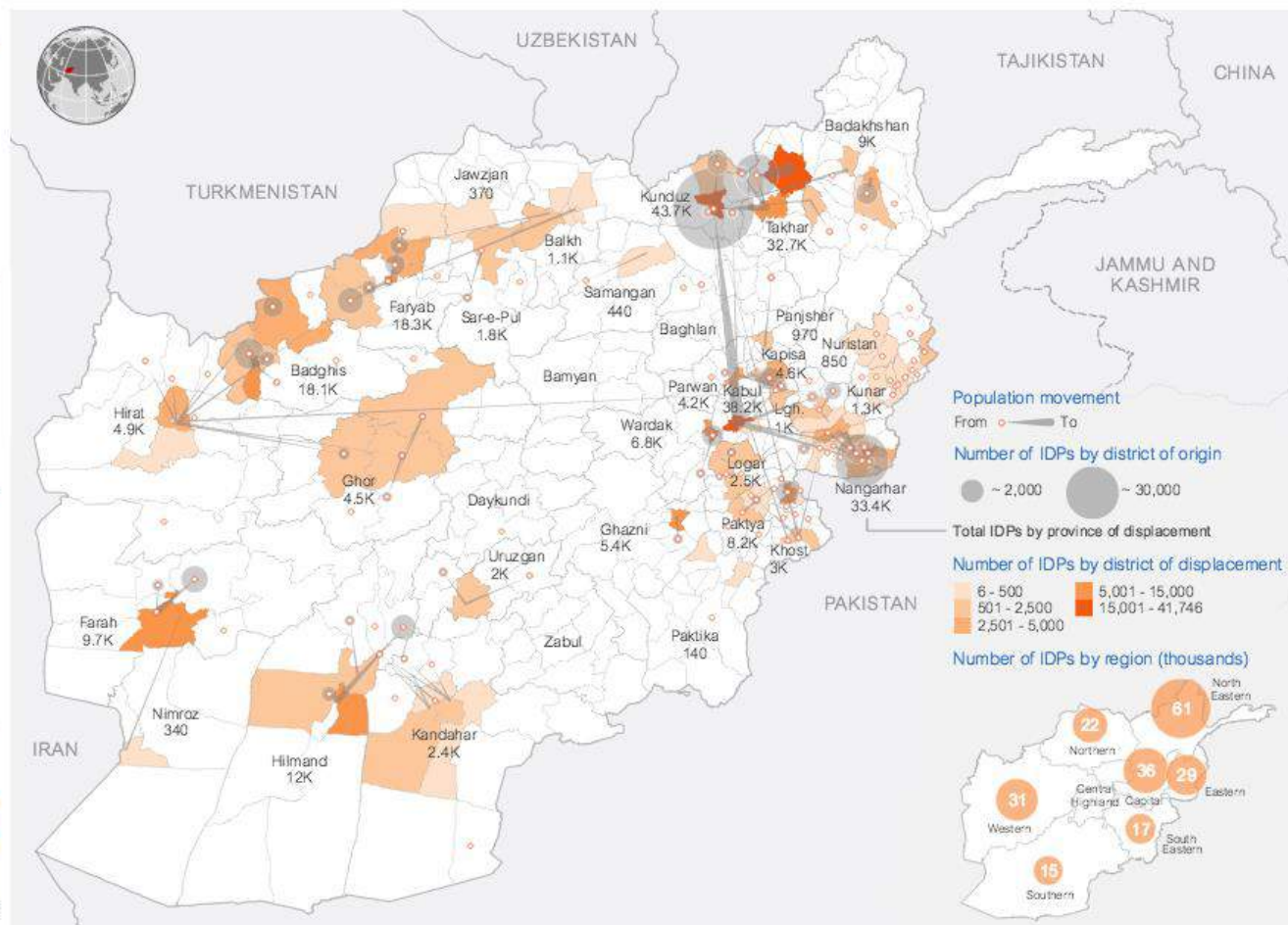
### AGE AND GENDER BREAKDOWN<sup>2</sup>



### MONTHLY TRENDS (2012 - 2015)<sup>3</sup>



### IDPS BY REGION (PAST YEAR)<sup>4</sup>



Notes: (1) Newly displaced populations due to conflict, 1 Jan - 31 Oct 2015, UNHCR Population Movement Tracking System (PMT). (2) Age and gender breakdown of IDPs, UNHCR monthly IDP update, Oct 2015. (3) Newly displaced individuals by month 2012 - 2015, UNHCR PMT, Oct 2015. (4) Conflict IDPs by region of displacement, Sep 2014 - Oct 2015, UNHCR PMT. Creation date: 9 Dec 2015. Doc Name: afg\_conflict\_idps\_2015\_jan\_oct\_snapshot\_20151209. Feedback: ocha-afg@un.org. Website: <http://www.unocha.org/afghanistan> <http://afg.humanitarianresponse.info>

Disclaimers: The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted line represents approximately the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir agreed upon by India and Pakistan. The final status of Jammu and Kashmir has not yet been agreed upon by the parties.



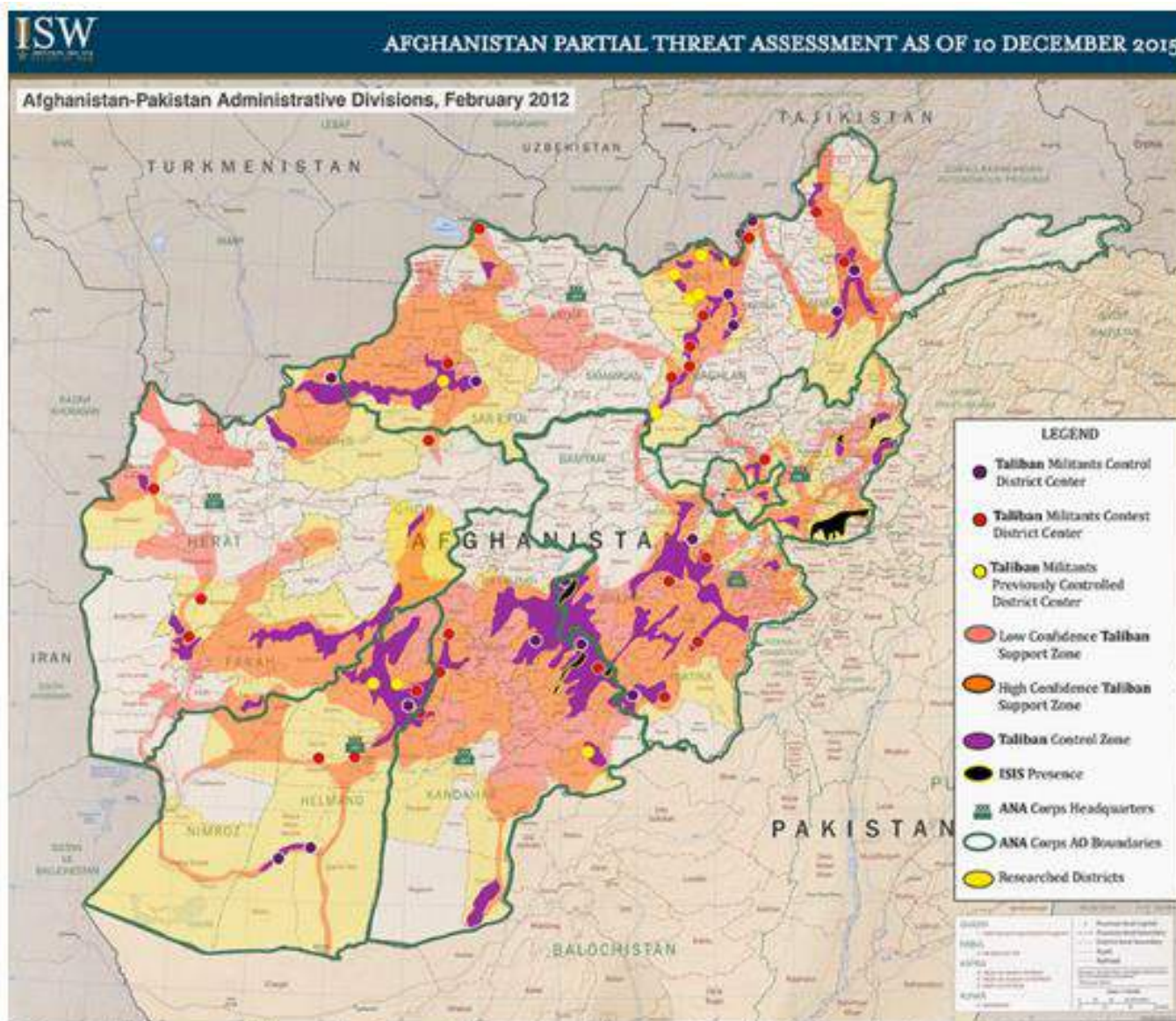
# ISW Threat Assessment

## 10/12/2015

Some support zones depicted on the map exceed the bounds of the districts explicitly researched as part of this project. These low-confidence support zone assessments are based upon historical, terrain, and demographic analysis. High-confidence support zones are depicted in districts that were fully researched as part of this project. ISW analysts have assessed conditions in 200 of 409 districts. Taliban militants captured the district center of Reg-e Khan Neshin district, Helmand province on December 9 after prolonged clashes with police and ANSF, the last district center capture portrayed on this map. Taliban militants loyal to Mullah Akhtar Mansour attacked the joint U.S.-Afghan Kandahar Airfield near Kandahar City on December 8. This attack is not represented on the map because it does not constitute an attempt by Taliban militants to control a district center.

Source:  
<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/map+/151a7e17269d3cb>

6/22/2018



This map partially depicts areas of Taliban control and support and ISIS presence across Afghanistan as of December 10, 2015 as well as the status of district centers that have been attacked by Taliban militants in 2015. Some support zones depicted on the map exceed the bounds of the districts explicitly researched as part of this project. These low-confidence support zone assessments are based upon historical, terrain, and demographic analysis. High-confidence support zones are depicted in districts that were fully researched as part of this project. ISW analysts have assessed conditions in 200 of 409 districts. Taliban militants captured the district center of Reg-e Khan Neshin district, Helmand province on December 9 after prolonged clashes with police and ANSF, the last district center capture portrayed on this map. Taliban militants loyal to Mullah Akhtar Mansour attacked the joint U.S.-Afghan Kandahar Airfield near Kandahar City on December 8. This attack is not represented on the map because it does not constitute an attempt by Taliban militants to control a district center. ISW will update this map as ground conditions change and as analysts continue to assess support zones.

# Lead US Inspector General: Key Insurgent Leaders: 12.2015

The National Counterterrorism Center, DoD and media reports have identified the following leaders of terrorist and insurgent groups: Leaders of Terror and Insurgent Groups in Afghanistan

**Ayman al-Zawahiri, al Qaeda.** Al-Zawahiri became radicalized during his university years in Cairo in the 1970s. After receiving his degree in general surgery in 1978, he became increasingly involved with Islamist groups opposed to the government of Anwar al-Sadat. Following the 1981 assassination of President Sadat, al-Zawahiri was arrested along with other Islamists and received a 3-year prison sentence. He later met Osama bin Laden in Afghanistan while both men were supporting anti-Soviet insurgents. He was sentenced in Egypt to death *in absentia* in 1997 for a terrorist attack on foreign tourists. One year later, he merged his group, the Egyptian Islamic Jihad, with al Qaeda. After bin Laden's death, al-Zawahiri became the acknowledged leader of al Qaeda.

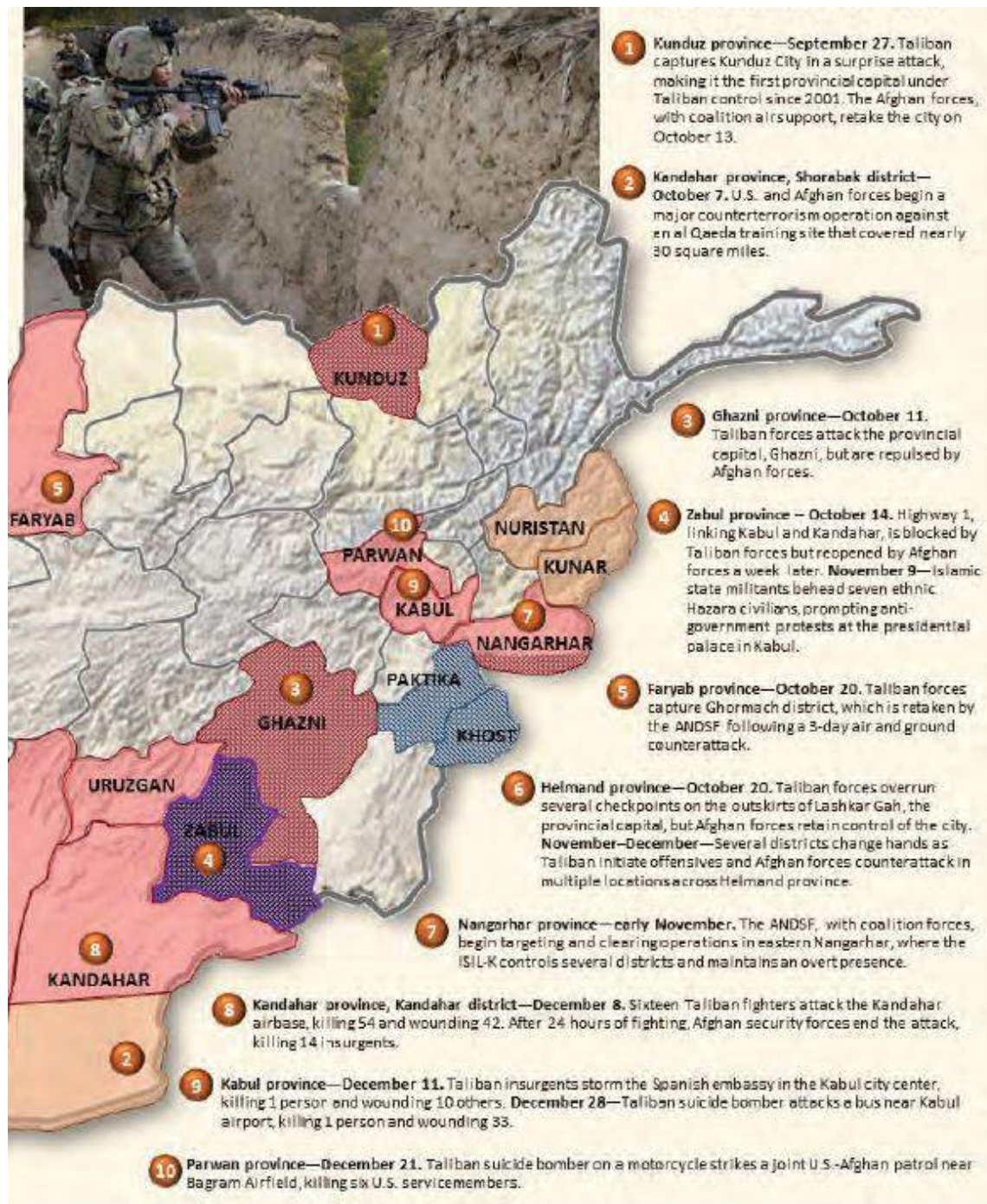
**Mullah Akhtar Mansoor, Taliban.** There is a dearth of reliable information on Mullah Mansoor's background. Another veteran of the fight against the Soviet Union, he is alleged to have been born near Kandahar, studied at a radical Pakistani madrassa, and been an integral part of the inner councils of his now-deceased predecessor, Mullah Omar. During the 1996-2001 Taliban regime in Afghanistan, Mullah Mansoor controlled the nation's civil aviation authority. After the announcement of Mullah Omar's death in 2015, Mullah Mansoor quickly took control of the Taliban. But this was met with opposition from several Taliban leaders. His followers have been involved in several clashes with forces aligned with ISIL-K.

**Sirajuddin Haqqani, Haqqani Network.** According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Haqqani was born in either Afghanistan or Pakistan in the 1970s. He emerged as the network's leader in 2014, after the reported death of his father Jalaluddin Haqqani, who was one of the most powerful leaders of the anti-Soviet insurgency and a sometime ally of the United States. While drone strikes have taken a severe toll on the terrorist network, eliminating many senior figures based in eastern Afghanistan and North Waziristan, Pakistan, the network remains capable of conducting significant attacks.

**Hafez Saeed Khan, ISIL-K.** Born in Pakistan in the early 1970s, Saeed is reported to have travelled to Kabul after September 11, 2001, to fight alongside the Taliban. He was a member of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, but pledged his allegiance to ISIL after that group splintered in 2014. In January 2015, an ISIL spokesman released a video confirming his leadership of ISIL-K. According to media reports claiming to be based on information obtained by the Afghan National Directorate for Intelligence, Saeed was killed in a July 2015 U.S. drone strike in eastern Afghanistan along with 30 other insurgents. However, ISIL-K denied those reports and neither the U.S. nor Afghan governments confirmed the death.



## Lead US Inspector General Summary of High Visibility Activity: 12.2015



Source: Lead Inspector General for Overseas Contingency Operations  
OPERATION FREEDOM'S SENTINEL  
Quarterly Report to the United  
States Congress  
October 1, 2015–December 31,  
2015, p. 5,  
<https://oig.state.gov/lig-oco>.

# **Taliban and Other Threat Forces: 12.15**

- **Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan: Afghan Taliban led by Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour**
- **High Council of Afghanistan Islamic Emirate: Taliban splinter group led Mullah Muhammad Rasool**
- **Hizb-e Islami (HIG) or Islamic Party: a comparatively minor Afghan insurgent group led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar**
- **Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP): Pakistani Taliban**
- **Islamic State (IS): challenges the Taliban's legitimacy and supremacy**
- **Al-Qaeda: supports the Afghan Taliban and has renewed its allegiance to the Taliban leader, Mullah Mansour**
- **Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT): Pakistani militant group traditionally focused on India**
- **Lashkar-e-Jhangvi (LeJ): Pakistani sectarian militant group targeting Shias**
- **Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU): linked to IS since August 2015**
- **Islamic Jihad Union (IJU): a splinter faction of IMU now loyal to Afghan Taliban**
- **East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM): China-focused Uighur separatist group**

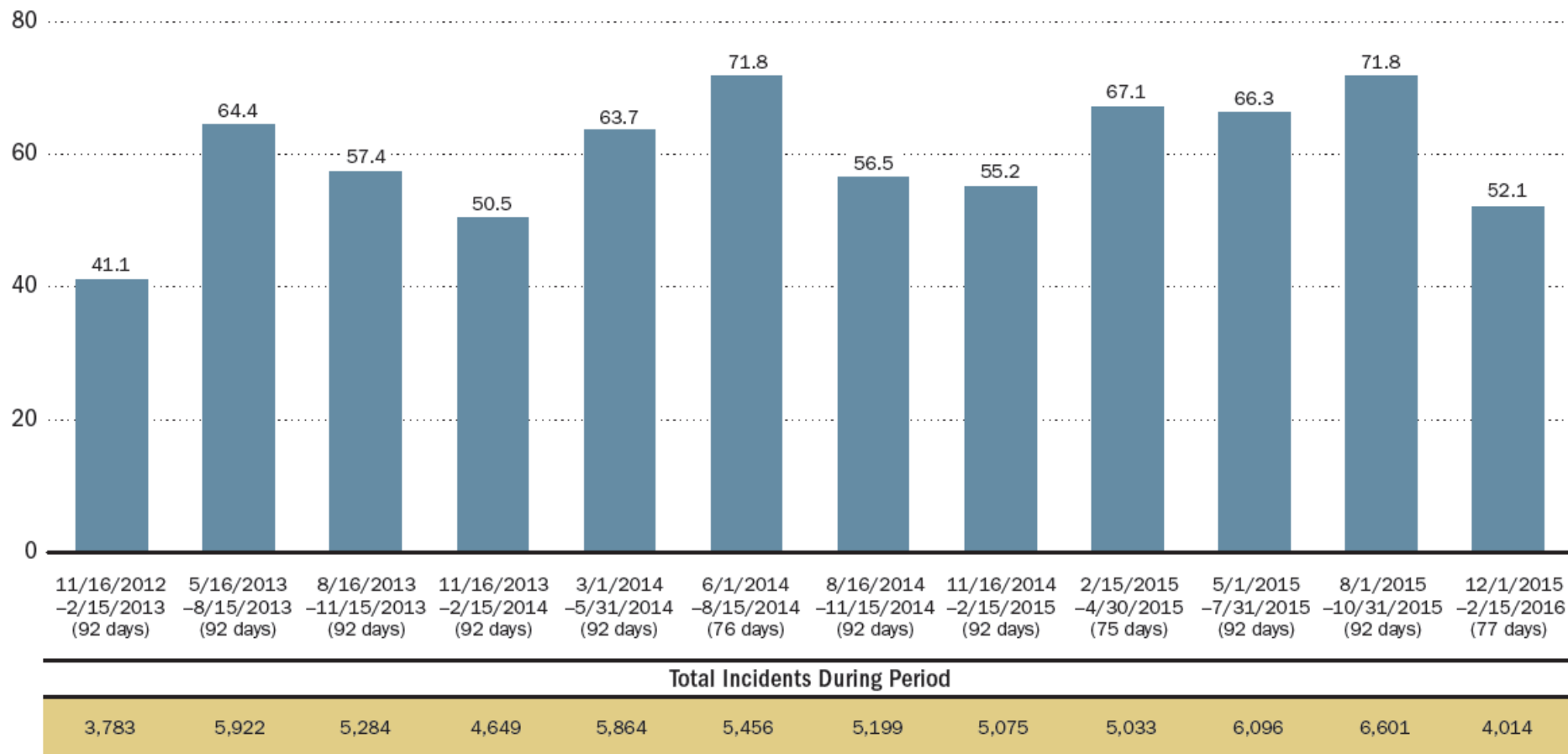
# Key Developments: End 2015

- Taliban holds roughly 30 percent of districts across the nation, according to Western and Afghan officials,
- Taliban now holds more territory than in any year since 2001, when the puritanical Islamists were ousted from power after the 9/11 attacks.
- Top American and Afghan priority is [preventing Helmand](#), largely secured by U.S. Marines and British forces in 2012, from again falling to the insurgency. Gen. John F. Campbell, the commander of U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan, told his Afghan counterparts that he was as guilty as they were of “just putting our finger in the dike in Helmand.”
- As of last November, about 7,000 members of the Afghan security forces had been killed this year, with 12,000 injured, a 26 percent increase over the total number of dead and wounded in all of 2014.
- Number of ANSF killed increased 27%
- Attrition rates and Deserters soaring. injured Afghan soldiers say they are fighting a more sophisticated and well-armed insurgency than they have seen in years.
- U.S. Special Operations troops increasingly being deployed into harm’s way to assist their Afghan counterparts.



# Security Incidents: 2012-2/2016

## AVERAGE NUMBER OF REPORTED SECURITY INCIDENTS PER DAY



Note: Security incidents were not reported for the month of November 2015 or February 15–May 15, 2013.

Source: UN, report of the Secretary-General, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security reports*, 3/7/2016, p. 6; 12/10/2015, p. 5; 9/1/2015, p. 4; 6/10/2015, p. 4; 2/27/2015, p. 4; 12/9/2014, p. 5; 9/9/2014, p. 6; 6/18/2014, p. 5; 3/7/2014, p. 5; 12/6/2013, p. 6; 9/6/2013, p.6; and 3/5/2013, p. 5.

# **SIGAR Summary of Security at End–2015 - I**

**USFOR-A reports that approximately 71.7% of the country's districts are under Afghan government control or influence as of November 27, 2015. Of the 407 districts within the 34 provinces, 292 districts are under government control or influence, 27 districts (6.6%) within 11 provinces are under insurgent control or influence, and 88 districts (21.6%) are at risk.**

**In a report issued in December, DOD stated that the security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated. There are more effective insurgent attacks and more ANDSF and Taliban casualties. However, DOD remains optimistic that the AND continues to improve its overall capability as the capabilities of the insurgent elements remain static.**

**The insurgency in Afghanistan has achieved some success this past year by modifying its tactics. The most notable example is the Taliban's brief capture of Kunduz in September. The insurgency is spreading the ANDSF thin, threatening rural districts in one area while carrying out ambitious attacks in more populated centers. The ANDSF has become reactive rather than proactive, DOD has reported**

**The UN reported the overall level of security incidents increased and intensified from August 2015 through the end of October, with 6,601 incidents as compared to 5,516 incidents (19% increase) during the same period in 2014. The 6,601 security incidents reported were the most since SIGAR began reporting in November 2012, and the average daily number of incidents that occurred equaled the number in the summer of 2014.**

**The Taliban temporarily seized Kunduz City, a provincial capital, as well as 16 district centers, primarily across the north during the period. While the ANDSF were able to regain control of Kunduz City and 13 of the district centers, the UN reports approximately 25% of districts remained contested throughout the country at the end of October.**

**While the majority (62%) of security incidents were in the south, southeast, and east, the UN reported a notable intensification in the north and northeast with Sar-e Pul, Faryab, Jowzjan, Kunduz, and Takhar provinces being the most volatile.**

## **SIGAR Summary of Security at End–2015 - II**

**The UN reported the presence of the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), particularly in Nangarhar Province, and of unconfirmed reports of clashes between ISIL affiliates and the Taliban. The UN reported armed clashes and incidents involving improvised explosive devices continued to account for the majority (68%) of the security incidents, a 20% increase over the same period in 2014.**

**Among the incidents, 22 involved suicide attacks and 447 involved assassinations and abductions.<sup>110</sup> Seventy-four incidents involving attacks against humanitarian personnel, assets, and facilities were registered with the UN and resulted in 21 humanitarian workers killed and 48 injured. The U.S. forces' mistaken attack on the Doctors Without Borders hospital was the deadliest, killing at least 30 persons and injuring at least 37.**

**Between August 1 and October 31, 2015, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan documented 3,693 civilian casualties (1,138 persons killed and 2,555 injured), a 26% increase over the same period in 2014.<sup>112</sup> Between January and September 2015, some 235,000 individuals were displaced, excluding the 17,000 families temporarily displaced during the Kunduz crisis, an increase of nearly 70% compared to the same period in 2014. The UN believes 2015 may have been the worst year for conflict-induced displacement in Afghanistan since 2002.**

**The UN reported the breakdown in the rule of law in Kunduz during the insurgent attack. Their occupation created an environment in which arbitrary killings, violence, and criminality occurred with impunity. The fear of violence was a key factor in the mass displacement of women from Kunduz City and the temporary suspension of services protecting women in several adjacent provinces. Attacks on schools decreased from 41 in the prior period to 22. The offensive in Kunduz led to the temporary closure of all 497 schools. In addition, the UN reported the forced closure of six schools in Nangarhar and the departure of education personnel after receiving threats and intimidation.**

**Due to the increased risks posed by the conflict, particularly in urban areas, the UN and other civilian actors curtailed program activities and temporarily relocated staff from Kunduz, Baghlan, Badakhshan, and Faryab Provinces.**

# The Kind of Influence Map that Was Never Made Public

CATEGORIES USED BY RESOLUTE SUPPORT TO DETERMINE LEVEL OF DISTRICT STABILITY					
Stability Factor	INS Control 1	INS Influence 2	Neutral 3	GIROA Influence 4	GIROA Control 5
Governance	No DG or meaningful GIROA presence. INS responsible for governance.	No DG and limited GIROA governance. INS active and well supported.	NO DG present and limited GIROA governance.	DG present and GIROA governance active. INS active but have limited influence.	DG and GIROA control all aspects of governance. Limited INS presence.
Security	INS dominate area. No meaningful ANDSF presence.	ANDSF activities limited. Collapse of district is expected.	ANDSF and INS both present in strength. Neither is able to dominate the area.	ANDSF dominate although INS attacks are common.	ANDSF dominant. INS attacks are rare and ineffective.
Infrastructure	INS control all key infrastructure within the district.	INS control most of the key infrastructure but some GIROA control remains.	Control of key infrastructure routinely passes between GIROA and INS.	GIROA control most of the key infrastructure. INS seek to gain control but are largely ineffective.	GIROA control all key infrastructure. INS unable to compete for control.
Economy	INS control the local economy. No effective GIROA taxation or wages paid. GIROA supply routes are closed.	INS taxation is dominant. Some effective GIROA taxation and wages paid in places.	Effective GIROA taxation and wages are paid but a shadow (and effective) system of INS taxation is also commonplace.	Effective GIROA taxation and wages are paid. A shadow system of INS taxation is present in some areas.	GIROA oversees a function in local economy with taxes collected and wages are paid. Minimal INS interference.
Communications	INS messaging is dominant across the area. GIROA messaging ineffective	INS messaging dominant but GIROA messaging is reaching the people.	Neither GIROA or INS dominate messaging.	GIROA dominate messaging but INS have an active IO campaign.	GIROA dominate. INS messaging is ineffective.
Final Score	< 1	Between 1–2	Between 2–3	Between 3–4	>4
Stability Level (RS Criteria)	Under INS Control	Under INS influence	At Risk	Under GIROA Influence	Under GIROA Control
Stability Level (IDLG Criteria)	Out of GIROA Control	High-Level Threat	Mid-Level Threat	Low-Level Treat	Totally Secure

Note: ANDSF = Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces, DG = District Governor, GIROA = Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, IDLG = Independent Directorate of Local Governance (Afghan), INS = insurgent, IO = Information Operation, RS = Resolute Support.

Source: USFOR A response to SIGAR data call 2/27/2016

# **Shifting Strategy: Trends and Indicators: 2016**



# Estimate of Government vs. Threat Control by General Campbell, CDRUSFOR-A

Excerpts from Opening Remarks to HASC Hearing on February 2, 2016 - I

- 2015 was fundamentally different than previous years of our campaign...First, Afghanistan's government and security forces have managed multiple transitions in 2015. Second, the US and coalition mission and force structure have significantly changed. And third, changing regional dynamics, including evolving threats, have presented both challenges and opportunities for our success.
- With that in mind, I would like to address the concerns over what many feel is an overall declining security situation in Afghanistan. The situation is more dynamic than a simple yes or no answer would adequately address.
  - In fact, as of last week, the units we have on the ground throughout the country report that of the 407 district centers, 8 (or 2%) are under insurgent control.
  - We assess that another 18 (or 4%) are under what we call insurgent influence. Often, these district centers are in remote and sparsely populated areas that security forces are not able to access very often in force.
  - Additionally, at any given time there may be up to 94 district centers (around 23%) that we view as "at risk."
- These figures make two clear points: 1) that approximately 70% of the inhabited parts of Afghanistan are either under government influence or government control; and 2) the importance of prioritizing Afghan resources to ensure key district centers do not fall into insurgent influence or control.
- *...Afghanistan is at an inflection point.* I believe if we do not make deliberate, measured adjustments, 2016 is at risk of being no better, and possibly worse, than 2015. To place this in context, I would like to emphasize the uniqueness of 2015 and some dynamics I think we should soberly consider as we assess our way forward.
- The enemy has also changed this year. Unlike previous years, the Taliban extended the fighting season, and has continued to conduct operations in Helmand, as called for by Taliban leadership.

# **Estimate of Government vs. Threat Control by General Campbell, CDRUSFOR-A**

**Excerpts from Opening Remarks to HASC Hearing on February 2, 2016 - II**

- **Even so, the Taliban recognize they have no lasting gains to consolidate from last year, and cannot afford to cede the limited ground that they do hold. They are also coming out of a year that saw fracturing of their organization, loss of legitimacy competition from other insurgent groups, and high casualty rates—probably their highest in years.**
- **As I meet with Afghan soldiers and police, I remind them that the Taliban are not 10 feet tall and bullet proof. They face significant challenges and they can be defeated. This fact is often forgotten in prominent media reports. The brief notoriety the Taliban gained in Kunduz and Helmand is still overshadowed by the significant cost of those efforts, which is compounded by the loss of credibility and unity as enemy infighting continues.**
- **The Taliban’s public narrative in Afghanistan is waning too. It is not lost on the people of Afghanistan that the Taliban are killing Afghans—security forces and innocent civilians alike. Recent public information campaigns have also been more forceful, stressing to the public that the Taliban, “...have no plan for the development of Afghanistan; they are here to kill you; they are against women; they are against education; they are against progress for the nation of Afghanistan.” As these messages resonate, the government must show that it is the only viable option for Afghanistan. At the city, district, provincial, and national levels, the people of Afghanistan see that the return of the Taliban represents a return to brutality, criminality, and oppression.**
- **The operating environment is also evolving for the Taliban due to the emergence of other insurgent and terrorist groups. One such group is Daesh in Afghanistan, or Islamic State-Khorasan Province (IS-KP). Daesh continues to conduct brutal attacks against civilians, and directly competes with the Taliban for resources to establish a foothold in the country. They have focused their efforts on establishing a presence in Nangarhar and recruiting in other areas. We recently gained the authority to strike Daesh. Since then, we have had considerable success in degrading their capabilities.**

# **Estimate of Government vs. Threat Control by General Campbell, CDRUSFOR-A**

## **Excerpts from Opening Remarks to HASC Hearing on February 2, 2016 - III**

- **The Taliban recognize they have no lasting gains to consolidate from last year, and cannot afford to cede the limited ground that they do hold. They are also coming out of a year that saw fracturing of their organization, loss of legitimacy competition from other insurgent groups, and high casualty rates—probably their highest in years.**
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# **Estimate of Government vs. Threat Control by General Campbell, CDRUSFOR-A**

## **Excerpts from Opening Remarks to HASC Hearing on February 2, 2016 - IV**

- **The rejection of Daesh by local elders, who are working with Afghan security forces, has also slowed the enemy's progress. The strikes have been effective in mitigating their growth. We must maintain constant pressure on Daesh and dedicate intelligence resources to prevent strategic surprise.**
- **The Taliban has had to adjust this year's strategy in order to counter the emergence of Daesh and other insurgent groups. This dynamic has served as a distraction to the Taliban, resulting in a shift of precious resources from fighting the ANDSF to countering opposition groups. More than just consuming resources, the in-fighting, and resultant inability to maintain cohesion has also severely damaged the credibility of the Taliban's core narrative of being a strong, united organization.**
- **Groups aligned with the Taliban such as al-Qa'eda and the Haqqani Network continue to threaten our national security interests. Al-Qa'eda has been significantly weakened, but as evidenced by the recent discovery of an al-Qa'eda camp on Afghanistan's southern border, they are certainly not extinct. The Haqqani Network remains the most capable threat to US and Coalition forces, planning and executing the most violent high profile attacks in Kabul.**
- **These are certainly not "residual threats" that would allow for peaceful transition across Afghanistan. Instead, they are persistent threats that are adapting to a changing operational environment. Ultimately, the threats Afghanistan faces require our sustained attention and forward presence.**



# Estimate of Government vs. Threat Control by UNAMA, February 14, 2016 - I

In 2015, Anti-Government Elements (Taliban and other armed opposition groups) focused on challenging Government control of territory, seizing more district administrative centers and holding them for longer than in previous years. They briefly captured Kunduz city, the first provincial capital since the fall of the Taliban regime in 2001.

Anti-Government Elements focused on population centers (cities, towns, and large villages) – simultaneously challenging Government control of such centers while carrying out regular, deadly suicide attacks in major cities, particularly Kabul. Taliban claimed responsibility for more than half of the suicide and complex attacks resulting in civilian casualties.

...The Government struggled to adequately secure and protect territory and populations as the country underwent simultaneous political, security and economic transitions. The convergence of the trends above combined with these transitions placed civilians increasingly at risk. In 2015, Taliban forces captured 24 district centers, compared to four in 2014, forcing Afghan security forces to fight on multiple fronts simultaneously.

Four of the 24 districts remained under Taliban control at the end of 2015. The losses of Afghan regular forces weakened their ability to protect the civilian population, leading to a loss in public confidence in the Government.

...Following record battlefield casualties of Afghan security forces (more than 12,000 casualties in 2015)<sup>18</sup>, branches of the Government began arming pro-Government armed groups and supporting “national uprising movements” while simultaneously pledging to disarm such groups, raising serious concerns for human rights protection in 2016 and beyond. 2015 also bore witness to the operational emergence of more extreme Anti-Government Elements groups, including Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) or *Daesh*, that brought with it a dangerous and new, though geographically limited, threat to the population.

...The increase in civilian casualties in 2015 was concentrated in two regions, northeastern and central Afghanistan. Although certain trends, such as the rise in targeted and deliberate killings of civilians and the

## Estimate of Government vs. Threat Control by UNAMA, February 14. 2016 - II

increase in civilian casualties from airstrikes proved consistent across the country, UNAMA documented decreased civilian casualties in all other regions. This included a six per cent decrease in the southern region, which nonetheless continued to suffer the highest number of civilian casualties followed by the northeastern and central regions.

In the northeast, civilian casualties doubled in 2015 compared with 2014, due to repeated fighting in and around Kunduz city. Following advances in April and June 2015, on 28 September, Taliban launched an attack on and captured Kunduz city, sparking more than two weeks of urban fighting that continued until 13 October, when they formally announced their withdrawal from the city and Afghan security forces regained control. The vast majority of civilian casualties resulted from ground fighting between Taliban fighters and Afghan security forces, although UNAMA documented civilian casualties from targeted or deliberate killings, parallel justice punishments and aerial operations, including the United States airstrike on the *Médecins Sans Frontières* (MSF) hospital on 3 October.

In the central region, notably in Kabul city, complex and suicide attacks caused an 18 per cent increase in civilian casualties. For example, two suicide attacks in Kabul city on 7 August caused 355 civilian casualties (43 deaths and 312 injured) - the highest number of civilians killed and injured in one day since UNAMA began systematically recording civilian casualties in 2009.

...In the second half of 2015, increased ground fighting across Afghanistan, and the Taliban offensive in Kunduz province in September-October 2015 in particular, drove a 60 per cent increase in civilian casualties from ground engagements, reversing the per cent decrease in casualties resulting from this tactic documented by UNAMA in the first half of the year.

...In 2015, fighting intensified in and around civilian populated areas, with Afghan national security forces conducting clearance operations to regain control of population centers and repelling offensives by Anti-Government Elements. Combined with continued use of explosive weapons in civilian-populated areas, this resulted in increasing civilian deaths and injuries attributed to Pro-Government Forces during ground engagements.

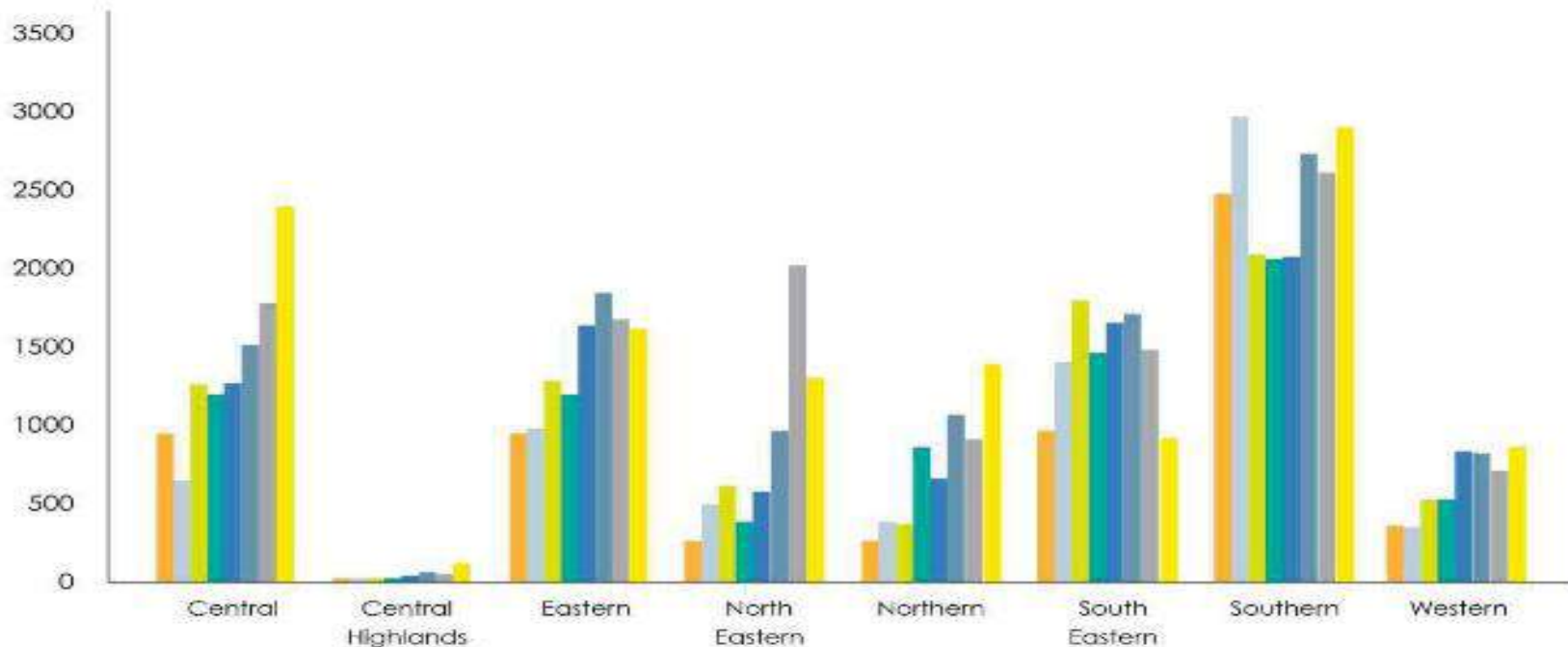
## **Estimate of Government vs. Threat Control by UNAMA, February 14. 2016 - III**

**...UNAMA attributed 1,256 civilian casualties (341 deaths and 915 injured) from ground engagements to Pro-Government Forces - a 40 per cent increase compared to 2014, accounting for 30 per cent of all civilian casualties caused by ground engagements.**

**...The increase in civilian casualties attributed to Pro-Government Forces resulted largely from their use of explosive weapons, including artillery, mortars, rockets, recoilless rifles and grenades in civilian populated areas. UNAMA observed that 85 per cent of all civilian casualties caused by Pro-Government Forces during ground engagements resulted from the use of indirect and explosive weapons during fighting. This amounted to a 60 per cent increase compared to 2014.**

**These findings underscore the critical need for the Government of Afghanistan to put in place robust, practical measures to reduce civilian casualties from the use of explosive weapons by Afghan security forces, and ensure accountability for those personnel responsible for negligent or intentional harm caused to civilians.**

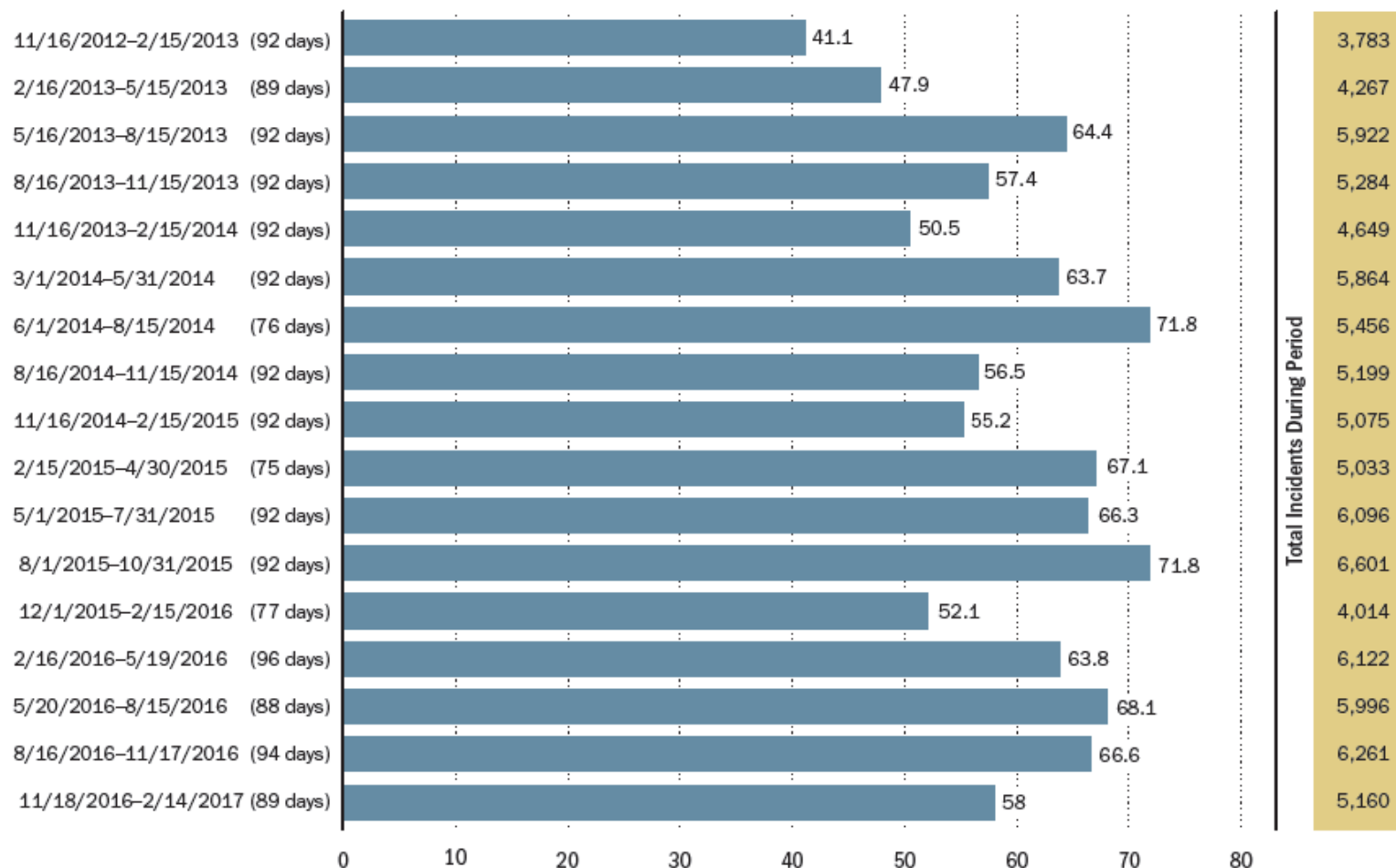
## Afghanistan: Shifts in the Threat: Civilian Deaths by Region – 2009-2016





# Afghanistan: UN Estimate of Security Incidents: 11.2012-2/2017

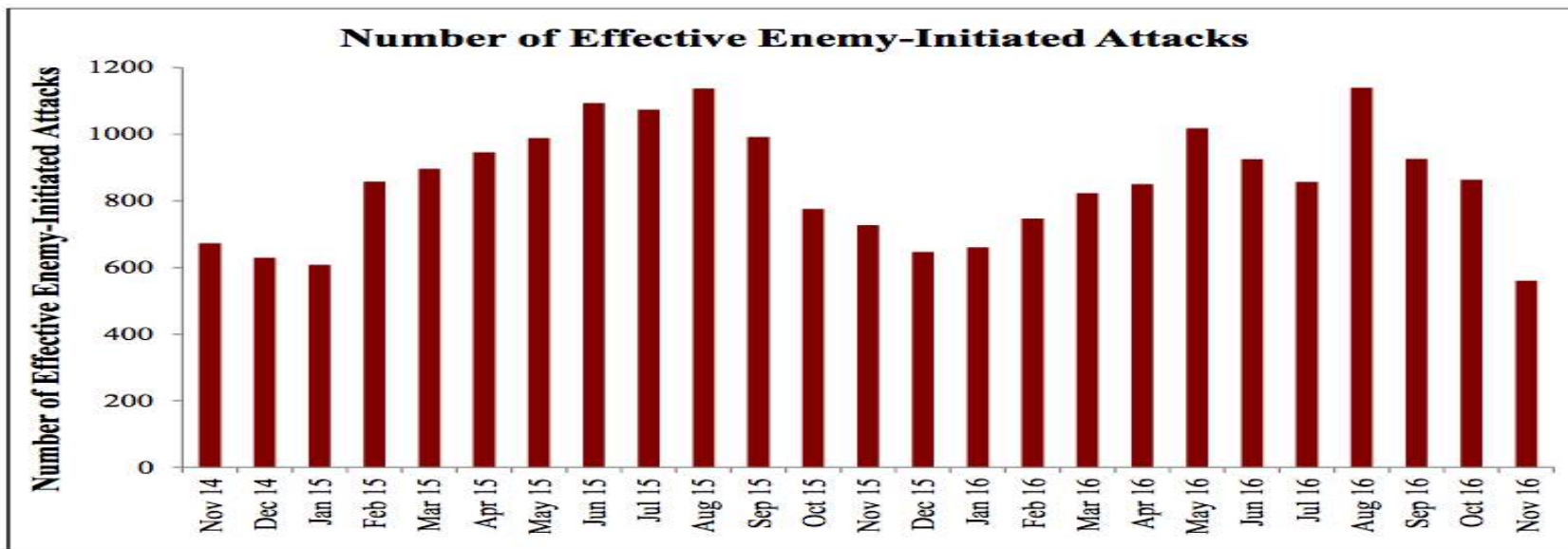
AVERAGE NUMBER OF REPORTED SECURITY INCIDENTS PER DAY



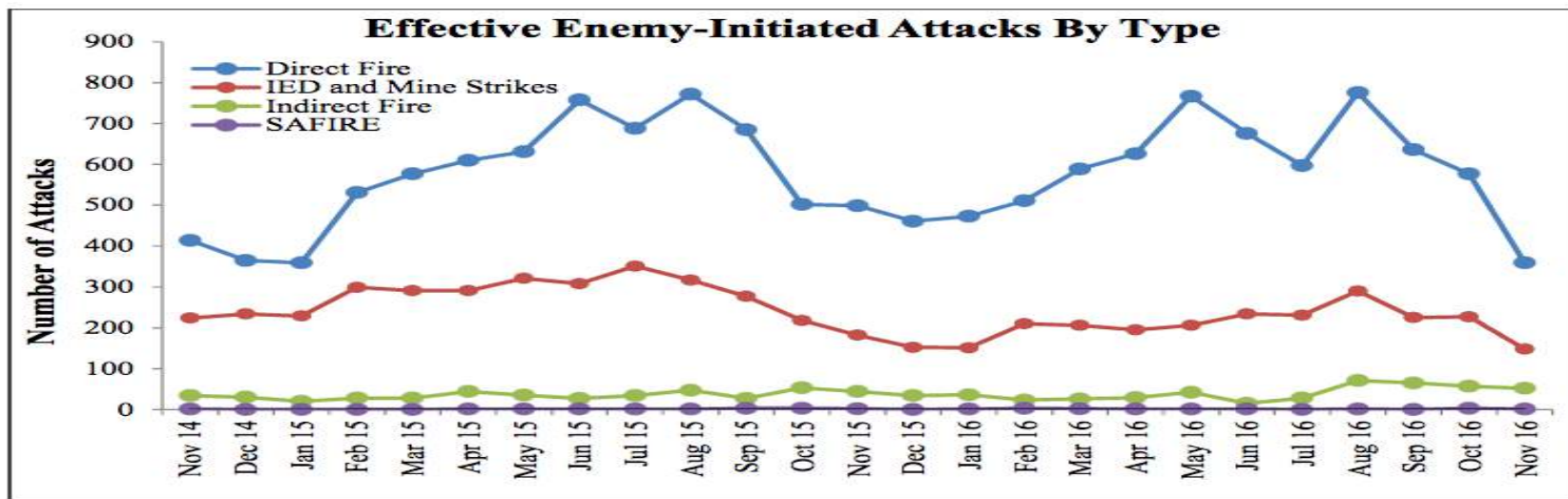
Note: Security Incidents were not reported for the month of November 2015.

Source: UN, Report of the Secretary-General, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, 9/7/2016, p. 5; 6/10/2016, p. 4; 3/7/2016, p. 6; 12/10/2015, p. 5; 9/1/2015, p. 4; 6/10/2015, p. 4; 2/27/2015, p. 4; 12/9/2014, p. 5; 9/9/2014, p. 6; 6/18/2014, p. 5; 3/7/2014, p. 5; 12/6/2013, p. 6; 9/6/2013, p. 6; 6/13/2013, p. 5; 3/5/2013, p. 5; 12/13/2016, p. 4; and 3/3/2017, p. 4.

# Afghanistan: DOD Estimate of Enemy Initiated Attacks: 11.2014-11.2016



<sup>19</sup> Effective enemy-initiated attacks are those enemy-initiated attacks that result in at least one non-insurgent casualty, either killed or wounded.



# ISW-Washington Post

## Threat Assessment

### End 2015-Early 2016

According to U.S. statistics, casualties among Afghan security forces increased by nearly 30 percent during the first 11 months of 2015.

"We have not met the people's expectations. We haven't delivered," Abdullah Abdullah, the country's chief executive, told the high-level gathering. "Our forces lack discipline. They lack rotation opportunities. We haven't taken care of our own policemen and soldiers. They continue to absorb enormous casualties."

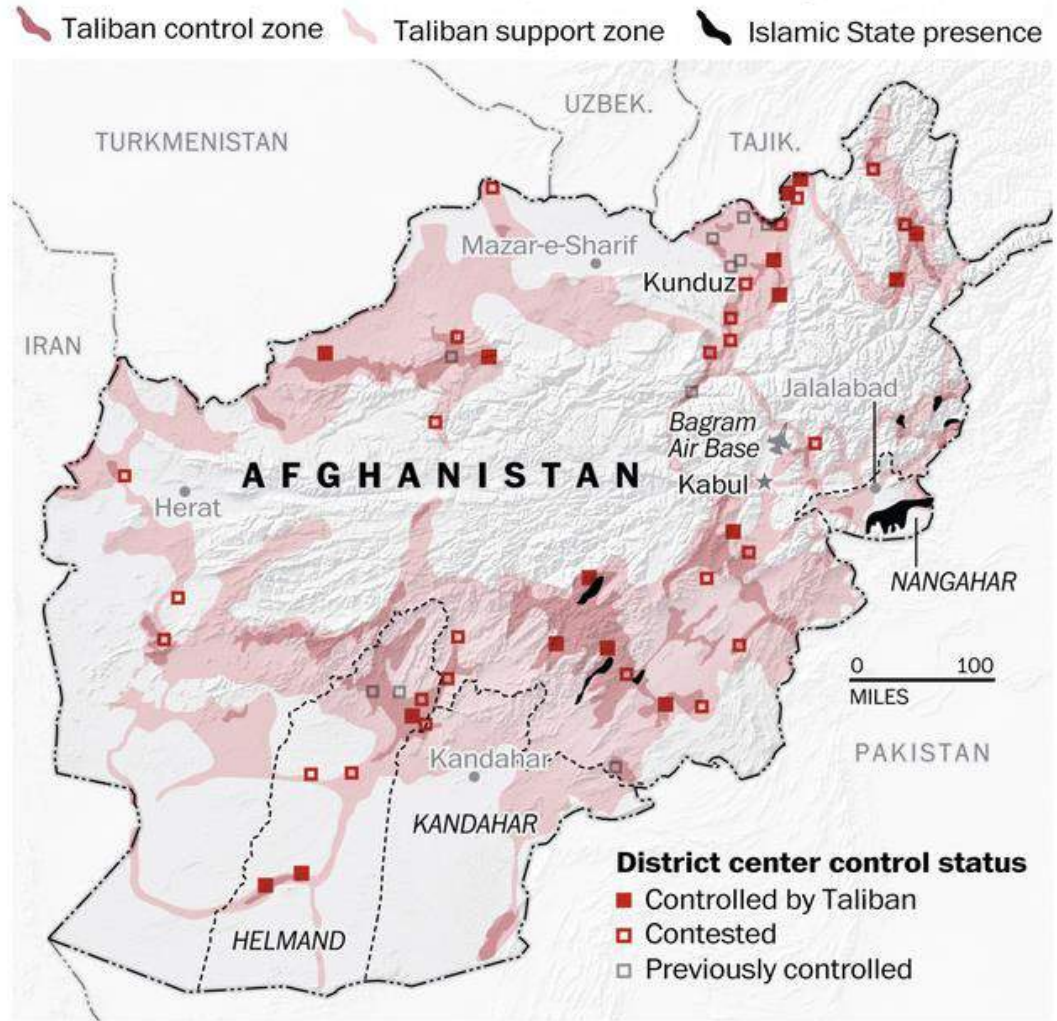
With control of — or a significant presence in — roughly 30 percent of districts across the nation, according to Western and Afghan officials, the Taliban now holds more territory than in any year since 2001, when the puritanical Islamists were ousted from power after the 9/11 attacks. For now, the top American and Afghan priority is [preventing Helmand](#), largely secured by U.S. Marines and British forces in 2012, from again falling to the insurgency.

As of last month, about 7,000 members of the Afghan security forces had been killed this year, with 12,000 injured, a 26 percent increase over the total number of dead and wounded in all of 2014, said a Western official with access to the most recent NATO statistics. Attrition rates are soaring. Deserters and injured Afghan soldiers say they are fighting a more sophisticated and well-armed insurgency than they have seen in years.

In the confidential October meeting, Gen. John F. Campbell, the commander of U.S. and allied forces in Afghanistan, told his Afghan counterparts that he was as guilty as they were of "just putting our finger in the dike in Helmand."

But he was highly critical of Afghan security officials for "not managing" their forces in a way that ensured they got enough training, and for allowing "breakdowns in discipline" in the ranks. "The Taliban are not 10 feet tall," he said. "You have much more equipment than they do. You're better trained. It's all about leadership and accountability."

## Taliban and Islamic State presence in Afghanistan



Source: Institute for the Study of War, December 2015

LARIS KARKLIS/THE WASHINGTON POST

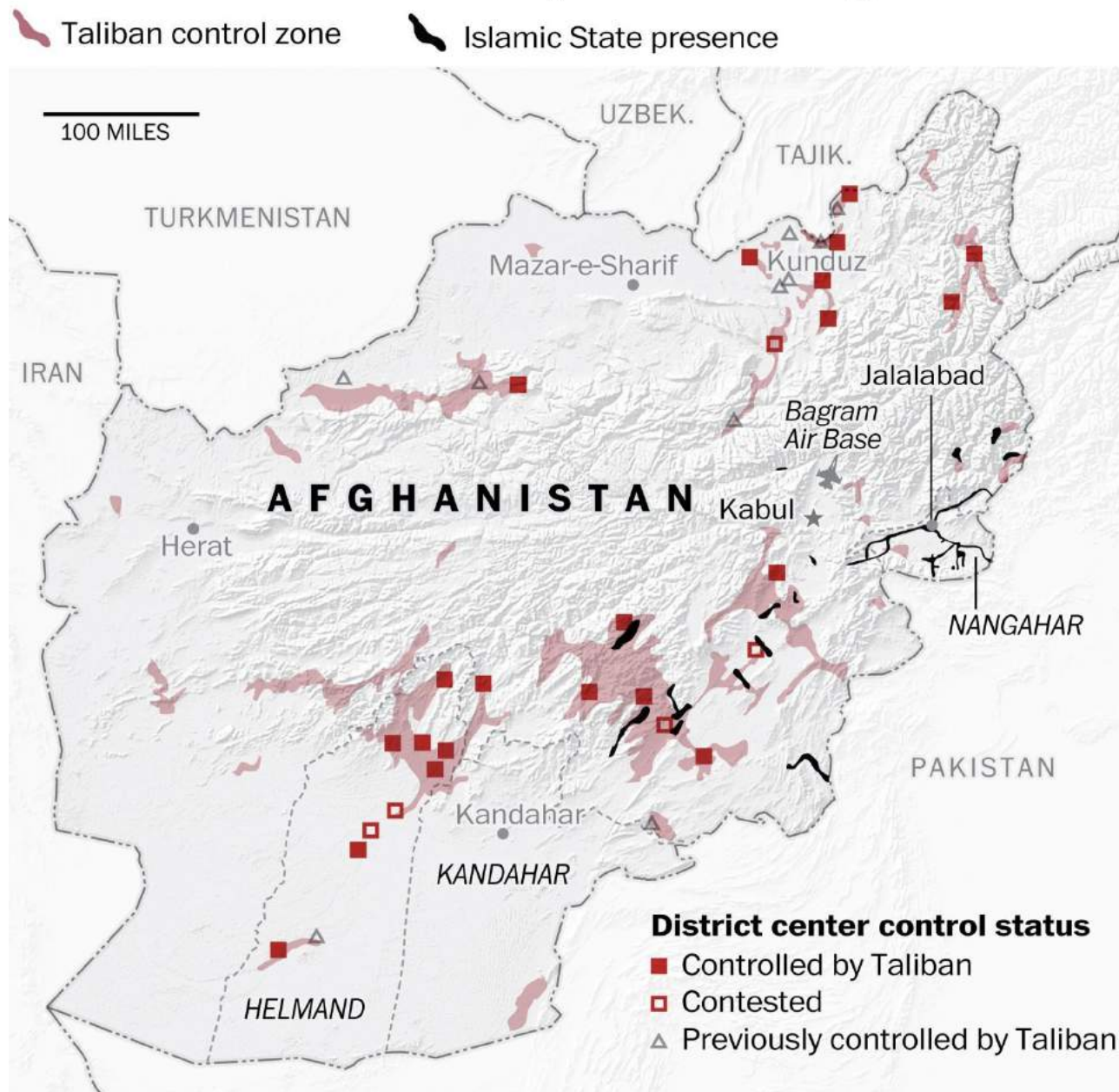


ISW/Washington Post  
Estimate of  
Taliban  
Focus: April  
2016

Tim Craig, "Taliban threatens to grind down Afghan forces in spring offensive," [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/as-taliban-prepares-for-spring-fight-afghan-forces-brace-for-test-of-strength/2016/04/12/c1a78152-009e-11e6-9203-7b8670959b88\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/as-taliban-prepares-for-spring-fight-afghan-forces-brace-for-test-of-strength/2016/04/12/c1a78152-009e-11e6-9203-7b8670959b88_story.html)

6/22/2018

## Taliban and Islamic State presence in Afghanistan



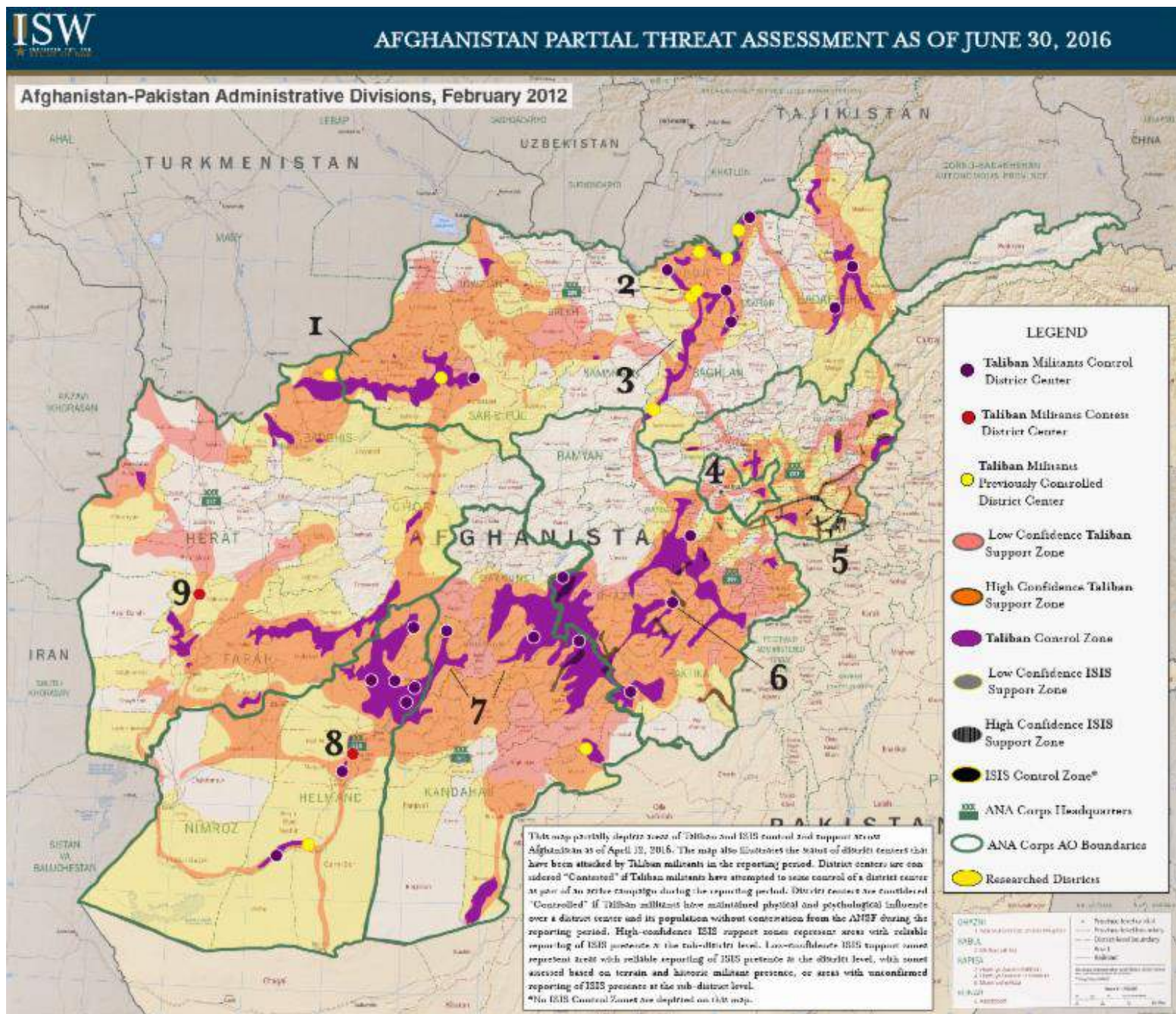
Source: Institute for the Study of War, As of April 12, 2016

LARIS KARKLIS/THE WASHINGTON POST



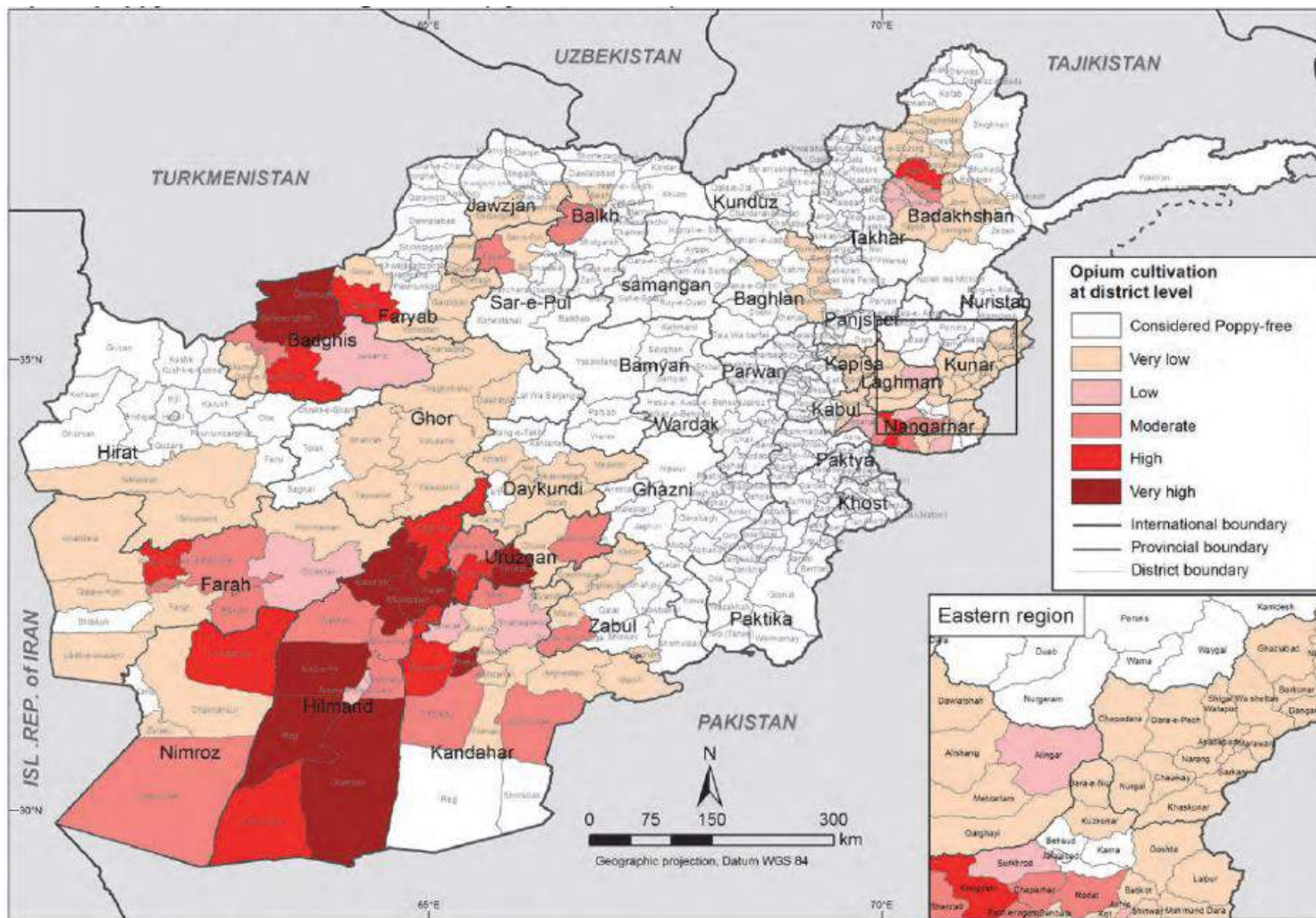
# ISW Estimate of Threat: June 30 2016

Caitlin Forrest,  
"Afghanistan Partial  
Threat Assessment:  
June 30, 2016,"  
ISW,  
<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#inbox/155ee713ea5a6083>





# Threat Financing: Opium Cultivation by District: 2016



# Afghanistan: US Forces Afghanistan Estimates of District Control of Taliban: November 26, 2016

TABLI

## DISTRICT CONTROL WITHIN THE 34 AFGHANISTAN PROVINCES AS OF NOVEMBER 26, 2016

Control Status	Districts		Population		Area	
	Number	%	In millions	%	Sq Km	%
GIROA			20.4	63.6%	367,638	57.1%
Control	83	20.4%				
Influence	150	36.9%				
CONTESTED	133	32.7%	9.2	28.7%	172,088	26.7%
INSURGENT			2.5	7.8%	104,063	16.2%
Control	9	2.2%				
Influence	32	7.9%				
<b>Total</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32.1</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>643,789</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: GIROA = Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, sq km = square kilometers.

Source: USFOR-A, response to SIGAR data call, 11/26/2016.

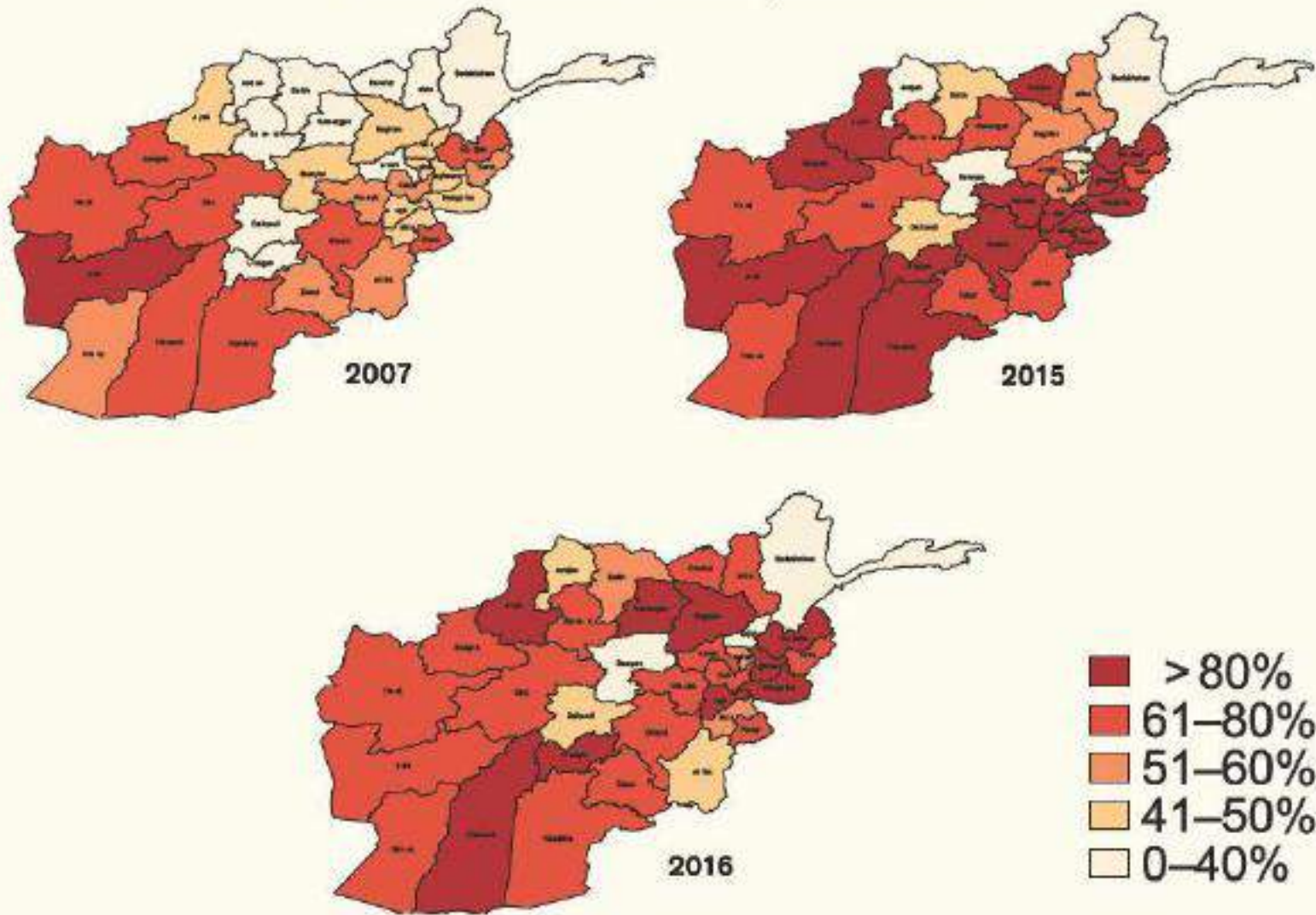
# **Conflicting Patterns of Threat Analysis: Afghan Perceptions, Civilian Casualties, and Terrorist Incidents**

**Three further sets of metrics raise serious issues regarding current official DoD reporting on the current size of the threat: Popular opinion, civilian casualties, and terrorist incidents**

- A 2016 poll by the Asia Foundation is reassuring in that it shows a steady decline in popular support for the Taliban and other threat forces – although the survey occurred largely in more secure areas under government control. It also showed that those surveyed felt threat forces were fighting for power and not for Islam or the Afghan people.**
- However, the same survey showed mixed regional perceptions of the increase or decrease in the threat during 2015-2016 by region. It also, however, showed a steady increase in fear for personal safety, and high overall levels of fear by region. At the same time, it showed far more fear of encountering the Taliban and Daesh than of encountering the ANA and ANP – although fear of encountering Western forces was surprisingly high.**
- UN civilian casualty estimates roughly doubled between 2009-2016, and ground engagements have become the primary cause of such casualties.**
- Threat forces dominate civilian casualties (61%), but pro-government forces are a rising cause (24%)**
- Civilian casualties have risen sharply in many regions since 2009 and have risen to re-surge levels in the southern region.**
- The number of terrorist incidents reported in the START data base used by the U.S. State Department increased by more than four times between 2011 and the end of 2015.**



## FEAR FOR PERSONAL SAFETY, BY PROVINCE



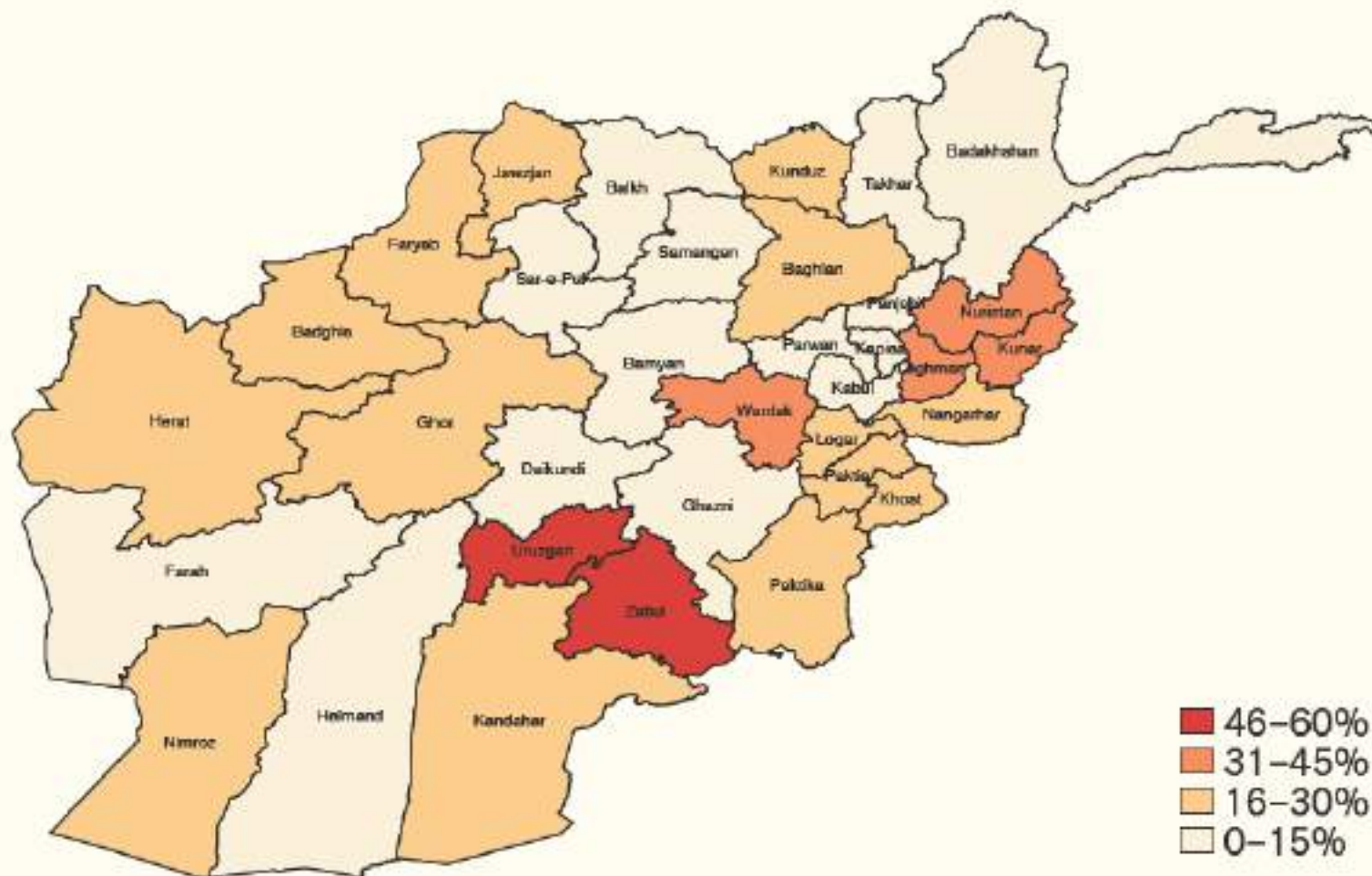
Source: Asia Foundation, Afghanistan in 2016: A Survey of the Afghan People, December 7, 2016, <http://asiafoundation.org/publication/afghanistan-2016-survey-afghan-people>, p. 38.

## SYMPATHY FOR ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS

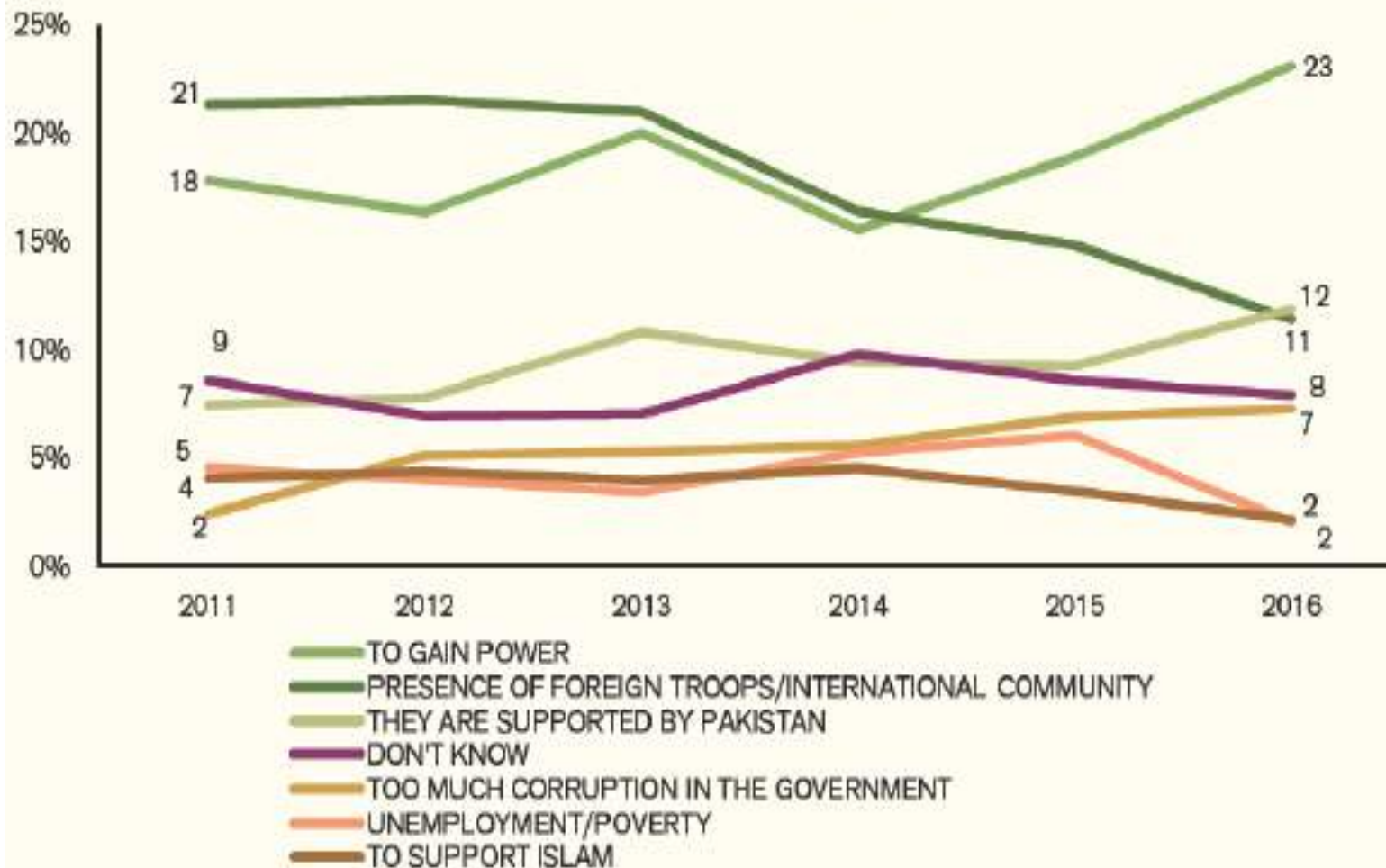


Source: Asia Foundation, Afghanistan in 2016: A Survey of the Afghan People, December 7, 2016, <http://asiafoundation.org/publication/afghanistan-2016-survey-afghan-people>, p. 18.

## SYMPATHY FOR ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS, BY PROVINCE



## REASONS ARMED OPPOSITION GROUPS ARE FIGHTING AGAINST GOVERNMENT

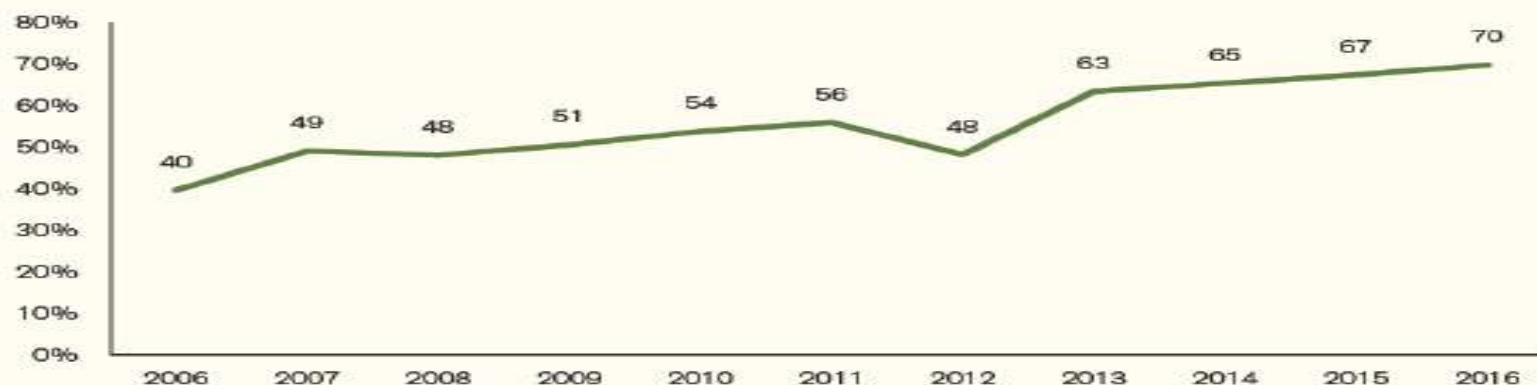




## PERCEPTION OF ISIS/DAESH AS A THREAT, BY REGION



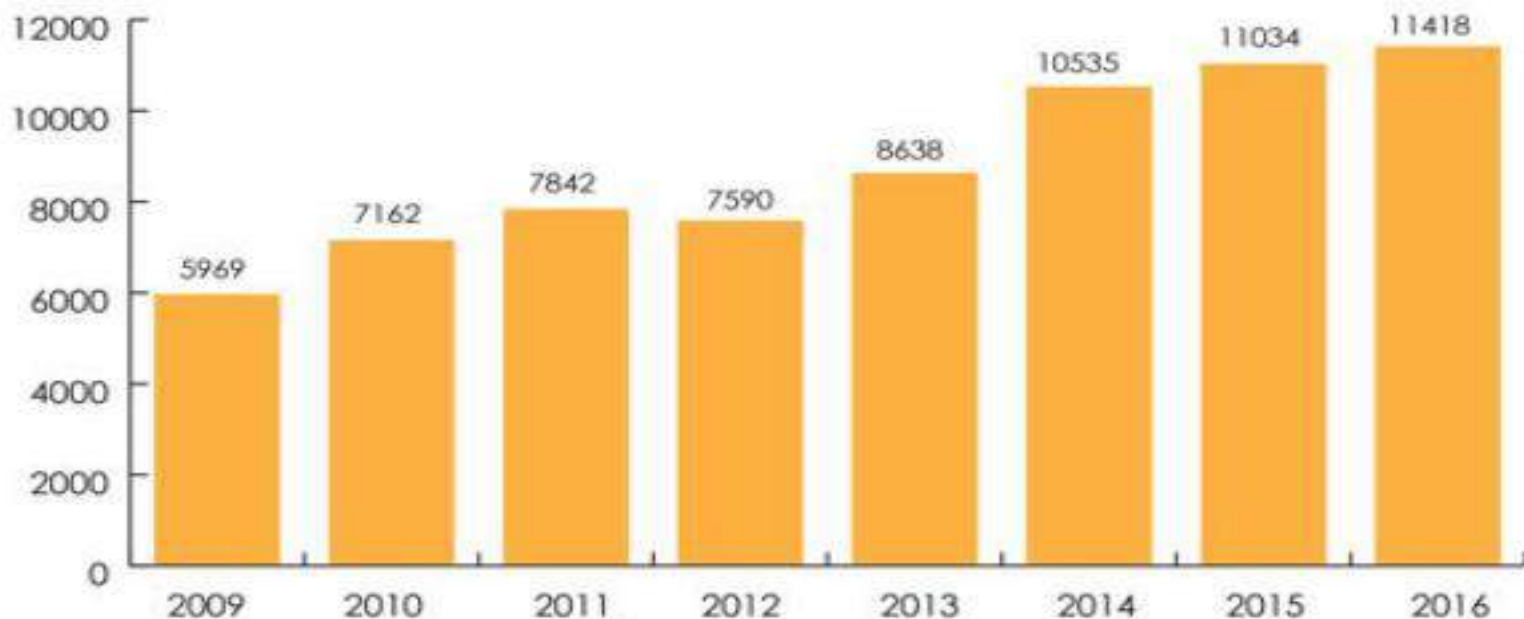
### FEAR FOR PERSONAL SAFETY



### LEVEL OF FEAR, BY ACTIVITY

	CENTRAL/ KABUL	EAST	SOUTH EAST	SOUTH WEST	WEST	NORTH EAST	CENTRAL/ HAZARAJAT	NORTH WEST	NATIONAL AVERAGE
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
VOTING IN A NATIONAL/ PROVINCIAL ELECTION	48	61	65	78	57	38	30	51	54
PARTICIPATING IN A PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION	71	71	78	76	75	67	45	74	72
RUNNING FOR PUBLIC OFFICE	70	76	79	82	79	72	57	77	75
ENCOUNTERING ANP	34	43	51	67	53	37	38	47	45
ENCOUNTERING ANA	28	42	46	64	57	36	37	41	42
TRAVELING FROM ONE PART OF AFGHANISTAN TO ANOTHER PART OF THE COUNTRY	83	81	77	82	84	78	73	84	82
ENCOUNTERING INTERNATIONAL FORCES (WESTERN FORCES ONLY)	76	83	84	88	81	74	60	79	79
ENCOUNTERING THE TALIBAN	93	94	94	88	92	95	92	93	93
ENCOUNTERING ISIS/DAESH	94	93	97	94	94	94	92	97	95

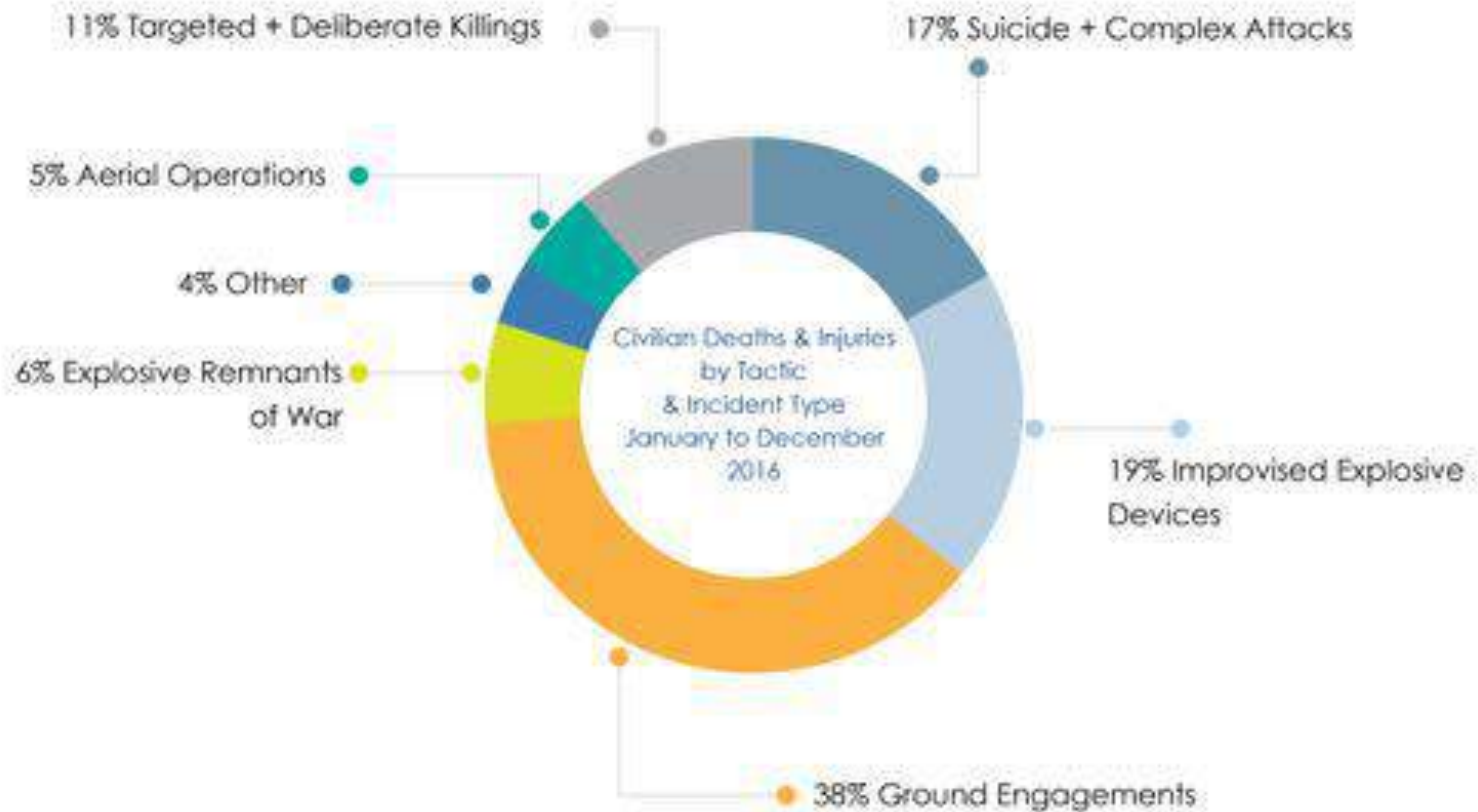
## Afghanistan: UN Estimate of Civilian Casualties: 2009-2016



Between 1 January and 31 December 2016, UNAMA documented 11,418 civilian casualties (3,498 deaths and 7,920 injured); marking a two per cent decrease in civilian deaths and six per cent increase in civilians injured. These figures amount to a three per cent increase in total civilian casualties compared to 2015.<sup>5</sup> Since 2009, the armed conflict in Afghanistan has claimed the lives of 24,841 civilians and injured 45,347 others.

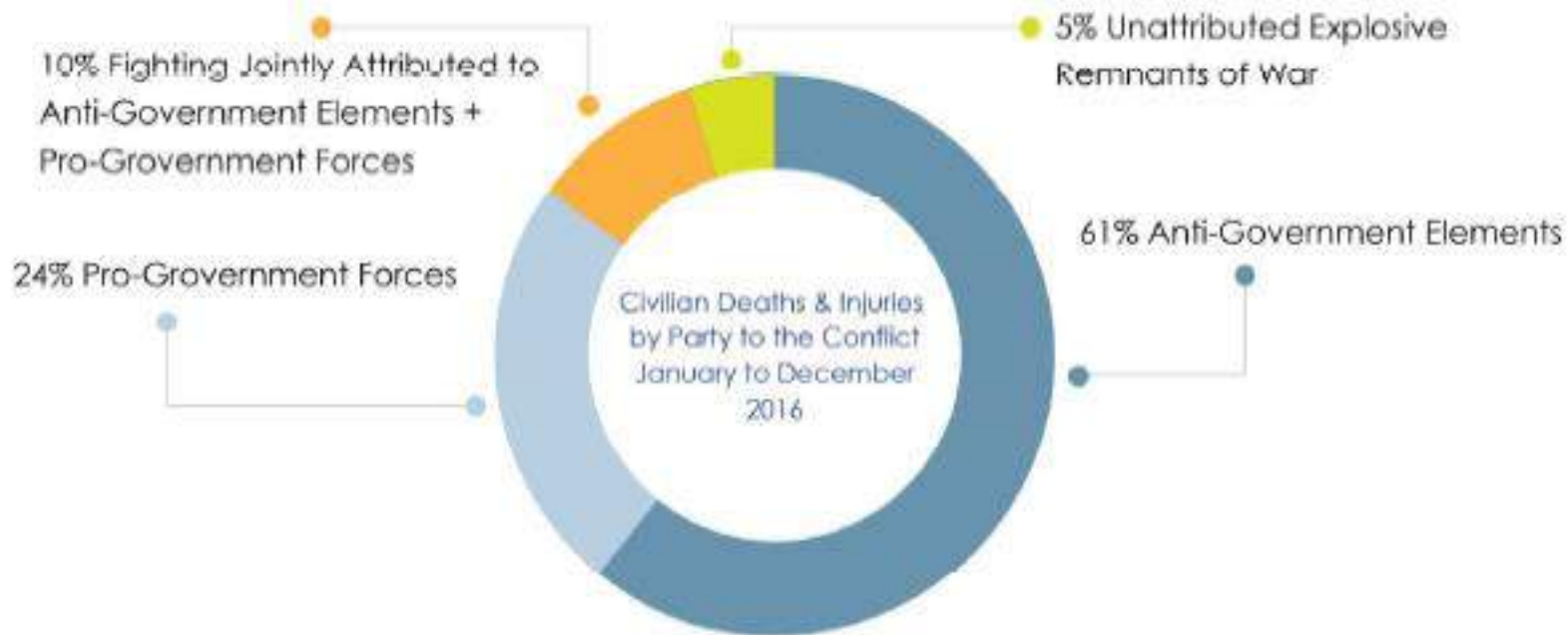
In 2016, UNAMA documented record numbers of civilian casualties from ground engagements, suicide and complex attacks and explosive remnants of war, as well as the highest number of civilian casualties caused by aerial operations since 2009.<sup>6</sup> Increases in civilian deaths and injuries from these tactics drove the overall three per cent rise in civilian casualties, while civilian casualties from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and targeted and deliberate killings decreased.

## Afghanistan: Growing Impact of Ground Engagements





## Afghanistan: Threat Forces Dominate Casualties, But...



UNAMA attributed 61 per cent of civilian deaths and injuries to Anti-Government Elements, (mainly Taliban); 18 24 per cent to Pro-Government Forces (20 per cent to Afghan national security forces, two per cent to pro-Government armed groups and two per cent to international military forces); 19 and 10 per cent to ground engagements between Anti-Government Elements and Pro-Government Forces in which the civilian casualties could not be attributed to one specific party. The remaining five per cent of civilian casualties could not be attributed to any party<sup>21</sup> and resulted mainly from explosive remnants of war.

AGEs includes the Haqqani Network, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, Islamic Jihad Union, Lashkari Tayyiba, Jaysh Muhammed, groups that identify as “Daesh ”/Islamic State Khorasan Province 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

## Afghanistan: Civilian Deaths by Region - II

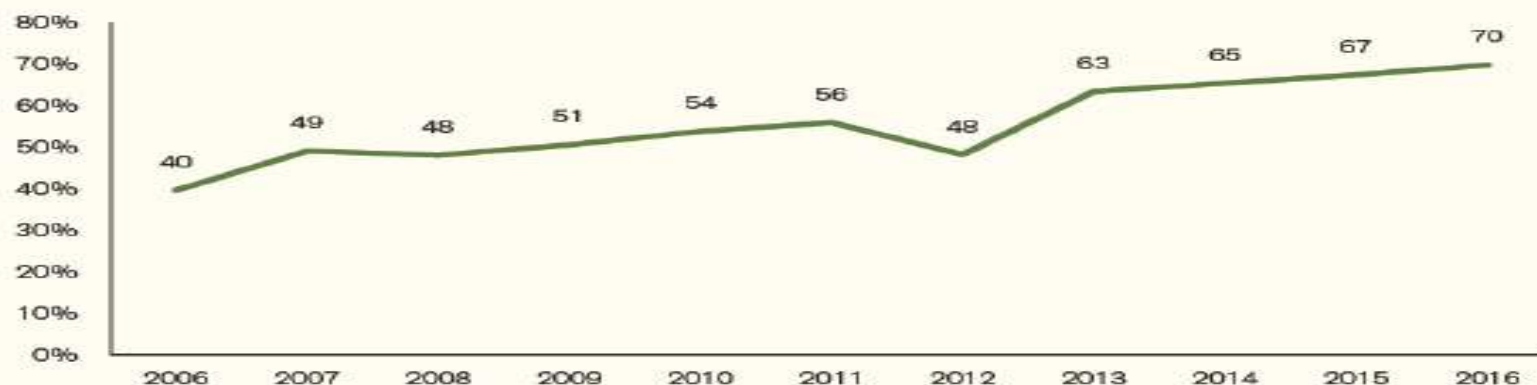
- Civilian casualties increased in five of Afghanistan's eight regions in 2016.
- The armed conflict most affected the southern region, which recorded 2,989 civilian casualties (1,056 deaths and 1,933 injured), a 17 per cent increase compared to 2015.
- The central region recorded the second highest number of civilian casualties – 2,348 civilian casualties (534 deaths and 1,814 injured) – an increase of 34 per cent compared to 2015 due to suicide and complex attacks in Kabul city.
  - Kabul province recorded 1,758 civilian casualties (376 deaths and 1,382 injured), the most of any province in Afghanistan in 2016.
- The north- eastern and eastern regions experienced a decline in civilian casualties; however, both recorded significant numbers – 1,595 civilian casualties (433 deaths and 1,162 injured) in the eastern region and 1,270 civilian casualties (382 deaths and 888 injured) in the north-eastern region.
  - Civilian casualties in the Eastern region decreased by three per cent compared to 2015, when UNAMA recorded 1,647 civilian casualties (484 deaths and 1,163 injured).
  - Civilian casualties in the north-eastern region decreased by 36 per cent compared to 2015 when UNAMA recorded 1,982 civilian casualties (637 deaths and 1,345 injured)
- UNAMA documented
  - 1,362 civilian casualties (384 deaths and 978 injured) in the northern region,
  - 903 civilian casualties (340 deaths and 563 injured) in the south-eastern region,
  - 836 civilian casualties (344 deaths and 492 injured) in the western region and
  - 115 civilian casualties (25 deaths and 90 injured) in the central highlands region

# **Conflicting Patterns of Threat Analysis: Afghan Perceptions, Civilian Casualties, and Terrorist Incidents**

**Three further sets of metrics raise serious issues regarding current official DoD reporting on the current size of the threat: Popular opinion, civilian casualties, and terrorist incidents**

- **A 2016 poll by the Asia Foundation is reassuring in that it shows a steady decline in popular support for the Taliban and other threat forces – although the survey occurred largely in more secure areas under government control. It also showed that those surveyed felt threat forces were fighting for power and not for Islam or the Afghan people.**
- **However, the same survey showed mixed regional perceptions of the increase or decrease in the threat during 2015-2016 by region. It also, however, showed a steady increase in fear for personal safety, and high overall levels of fear by region. At the same time, it showed far more fear of encountering the Taliban and Daesh than of encountering the ANA and ANP – although fear of encountering Western forces was surprisingly high.**
- **UN civilian casualty estimates roughly doubled between 2009-2016, and ground engagements have become the primary cause of such casualties.**
- **Threat forces dominate civilian casualties (61%), but pro-government forces are a rising cause (24%)**
- **Civilian casualties have risen sharply in many regions since 2009 and have risen to re-surge levels in the southern region.**
- **The number of terrorist incidents reported in the START data base used by the U.S. State Department increased by more than four times between 2011 and the end of 2015.**

### FEAR FOR PERSONAL SAFETY



### LEVEL OF FEAR, BY ACTIVITY

	CENTRAL/ KABUL	EAST	SOUTH EAST	SOUTH WEST	WEST	NORTH EAST	CENTRAL/ HAZARAJAT	NORTH WEST	NATIONAL AVERAGE
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
VOTING IN A NATIONAL/ PROVINCIAL ELECTION	48	61	65	78	57	38	30	51	54
PARTICIPATING IN A PEACEFUL DEMONSTRATION	71	71	78	76	75	67	45	74	72
RUNNING FOR PUBLIC OFFICE	70	76	79	82	79	72	57	77	75
ENCOUNTERING ANP	34	43	51	67	53	37	38	47	45
ENCOUNTERING ANA	28	42	46	64	57	36	37	41	42
TRAVELING FROM ONE PART OF AFGHANISTAN TO ANOTHER PART OF THE COUNTRY	83	81	77	82	84	78	73	84	82
ENCOUNTERING INTERNATIONAL FORCES (WESTERN FORCES ONLY)	76	83	84	88	81	74	60	79	79
ENCOUNTERING THE TALIBAN	93	94	94	88	92	95	92	93	93
ENCOUNTERING ISIS/DAESH	94	93	97	94	94	94	92	97	95



# **Conditions Based Commitment: Trends and Indicators: 2017-2018**

# DoD Summary of New Strategy - I

Under the new strategy, the United States will continue to support the Afghan government and security forces in the fight against the Taliban, al-Qa'ida, ISIS, and other insurgents and terrorists to strengthen the Afghan government and prevent the reestablishment of international terrorist safe-havens in Afghanistan. A major change from our previous strategy is the shift from a time-based approach to a conditions-based one. This shift underscores the U.S. commitment to the continued development of the ANDSF, provided that our Afghan partners satisfy their obligations.

The new policy will increase U.S., NATO, and RS partner support to Afghanistan, while simultaneously improving the effects of that support with more tactical-level TAA and combat enablers. More importantly, the strategy integrates U.S. military efforts with the State Department's diplomatic efforts to ensure sustainable, enduring outcomes.

Our efforts will continue to be channeled "by, with, and through" our Afghan partners as part of the TAA mission. Importantly, our NATO allies and partners remain dedicated to Afghan security and the RS mission. Following the U.S. announcement of the new strategy and the uplift of 3,500 U.S. personnel, 27 other NATO Allies and partners also collectively increased their personnel contributions.

The U.S. military mission in Afghanistan will divide its efforts between missions. The majority of U.S. personnel will remain dedicated to the NATO RS mission and its TAA undertaking. At the same time, the U.S. CT mission will endure. The heaviest burden will continue to be borne by the Afghan people and their security forces. Since 2015, the Afghan security forces have been in the lead for the fight against the Taliban-led insurgency. Under the new South Asia Strategy, the United States will conduct TAA below the corps level in the conventional ANDSF in order to replicate our past success with the Afghan special forces. The additional U.S. forces will serve as combat enablers in support of Afghan operations against the Taliban. The changes in policy and resources do not signify a return to major ground combat operations; rather, these changes optimize the use of U.S. expertise, training, and capabilities in Afghanistan.

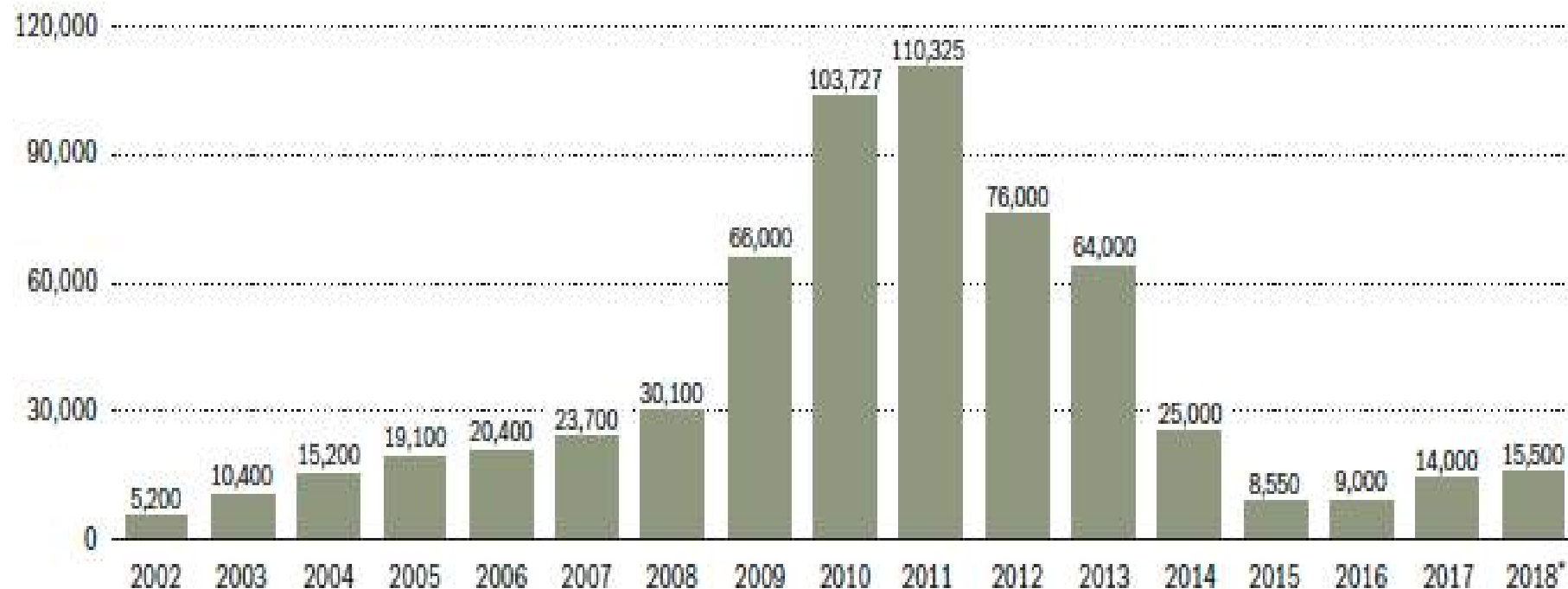
## **DoD Summary of New Strategy - II**

To achieve U.S. objectives and to build upon the gains of the last 16 years, USFOR-A conducts two well-defined and complementary missions. First, through OFS,<sup>3</sup> U.S. forces continue the CT mission against al-Qa'ida, ISIS-K, and their associates in Afghanistan to prevent their resurgence and any external attacks. Second, in partnership with NATO allies and operational partner nations in the Resolute Support mission, U.S. forces advise and assist the ANDSF. The United States supports the institutionalization of ANDSF gains by conducting functionally-based security force assistance (SFA)<sup>4</sup> as part of the NATO-led RS mission. U.S. and coalition forces conduct TAA efforts at the ANA corps level, the ANP zone level, and with the MoD and the MoI to improve their ability to support and sustain the fighting force. During this reporting period, the President authorized the expansion of the TAA mission for conventional ANDSF below the corps level. U.S. and coalition forces also conduct TAA missions with the AAF and ASSF at the tactical level, underscoring the importance of those two critical capabilities.

An array of operational authorities govern the conduct of U.S. military personnel engaged in the CT and TAA missions in Afghanistan. These authorities address U.S. CT operations and security force assistance in support of the ANDSF in their continued fight against the Taliban and other insurgent groups. U.S. forces are permitted to TAA the ANDSF – including the ASSF, AAF, and conventional ground forces – from the national (ministerial/institutional) to the tactical levels to develop institutional capacity, integrate capabilities (e.g., aerial fires, ISR), and improve tactical proficiency. Operational authorities also address circumstances in which U.S. forces may use force in support of the CT and TAA missions, including U.S. accompaniment and combat enabler support to the ANDSF in support of its fight against the Taliban and other insurgent groups. With the recent modification of Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) Executive Order, the United States removed some caveats limiting U.S. fires and close air support to close proximity with ANDSF operations. During the period of this report, these authorities helped the ANDSF prevent insurgent groups from gaining operational momentum and boosted ANDSF confidence and its offensive mindset

## Shift to Conditions-Based Strategy: US Forces Stay and Increase

### U.S. TROOP LEVELS IN AFGHANISTAN, 2002-2018

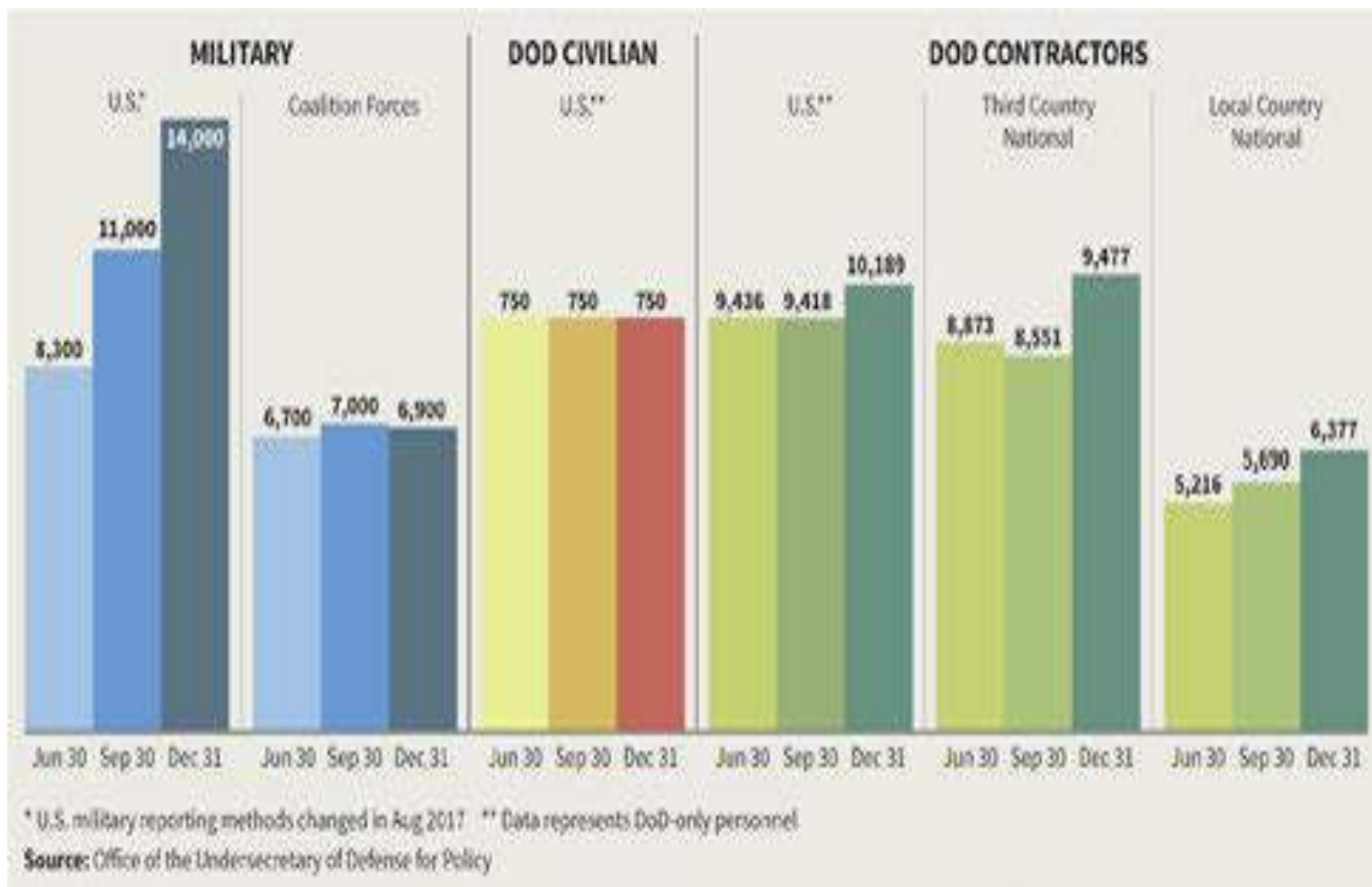


Note: \* Projected for 2018 based on public statements of NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg. According to USFOR-A, the publicly releasable U.S. troop level remains 14,000, as of March 1, 2018.

Source: CRS, *Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2002–FY2012*, 7/2/2009; DOD, *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, 10/2009, p. 18; SIGAR, *Quarterly Report to the United States Congress*, 10/30/2010, p. 73; 7/30/2011, p. 71; 10/30/2012, p. 95; 10/30/2013, p. 87; 10/30/2014, p. 91; and 10/30/2015, p. 92; OSD-P, response to SIGAR data call, 6/30/2016 and 12/27/2016; USFOR-A, response to SIGAR data call, 9/10/2017, 11/27/2017, and 3/1/2018; Reuters, “Despite NATO Pledge to Increase Afghan Support, Troop Shortfall Remains: U.S.,” 11/9/2017.



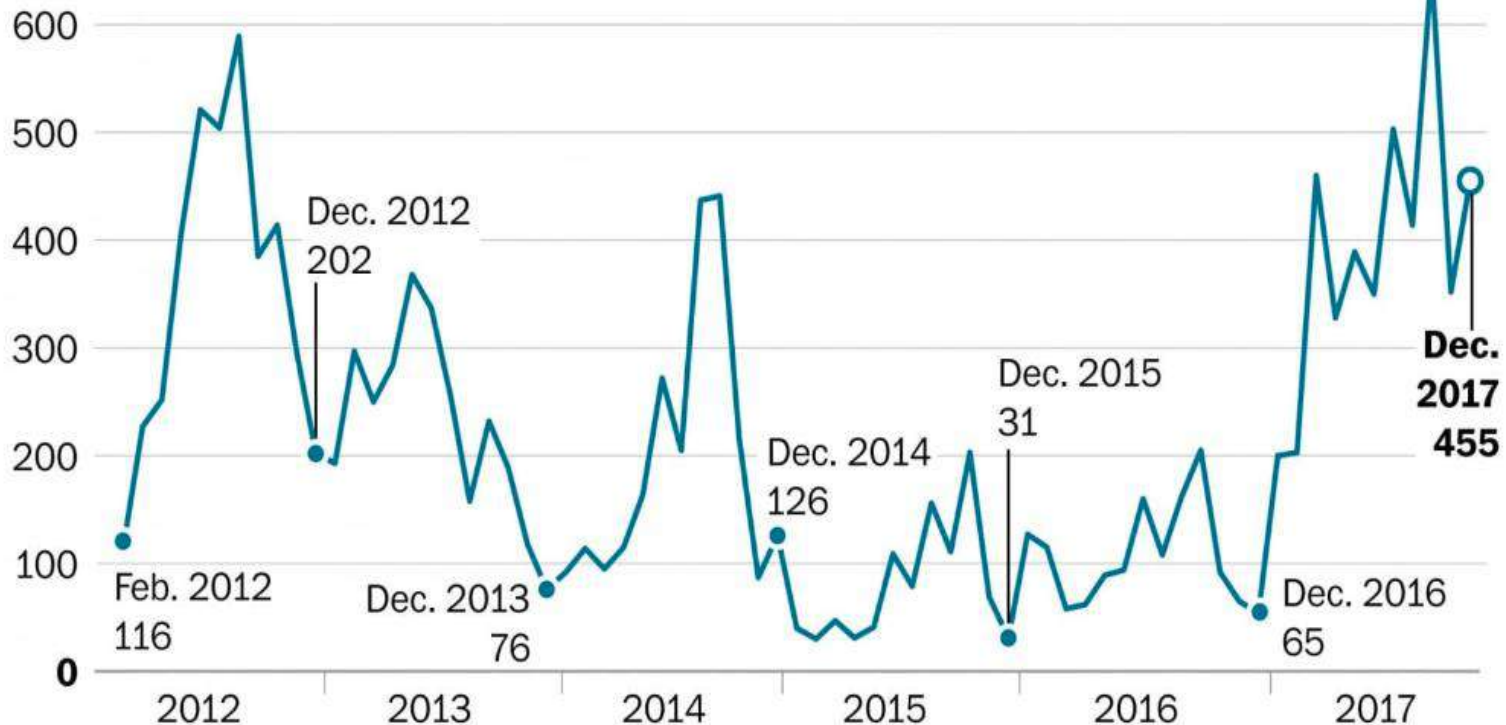
## Rise Affects Civilians as Well



# All Troops Contributing to Resolute Support: November 2017

	Albania	83		Germany	874		Portugal	11
	Armenia	176		Greece	4		Romania	629
	Australia	250		Hungary	110		Slovakia	38
	Austria	12		Iceland	2		Slovenia	7
	Azerbaijan	94		Italy	931		Spain	29
	Belgium	65		Latvia	32		Sweden	49
	Bosnia-Herzegovina	56		Lithuania	28		the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia <sup>1</sup>	39
	Bulgaria	109		Luxembourg	2		Turkey	552
	Croatia	98		Mongolia	120		Ukraine	10
	Czech Republic	251		Montenegro	18		United Kingdom	537
	Denmark	86		Netherlands	102		United States	8,475
	Estonia	5		New Zealand	11			
	Finland	19		Norway	46			
	Georgia	869		Poland	218		Total	15,046

# Patterns in U.S. Air Strikes: 2012-2017



Source: U.S. Air Forces Central Command

THE WASHINGTON POST

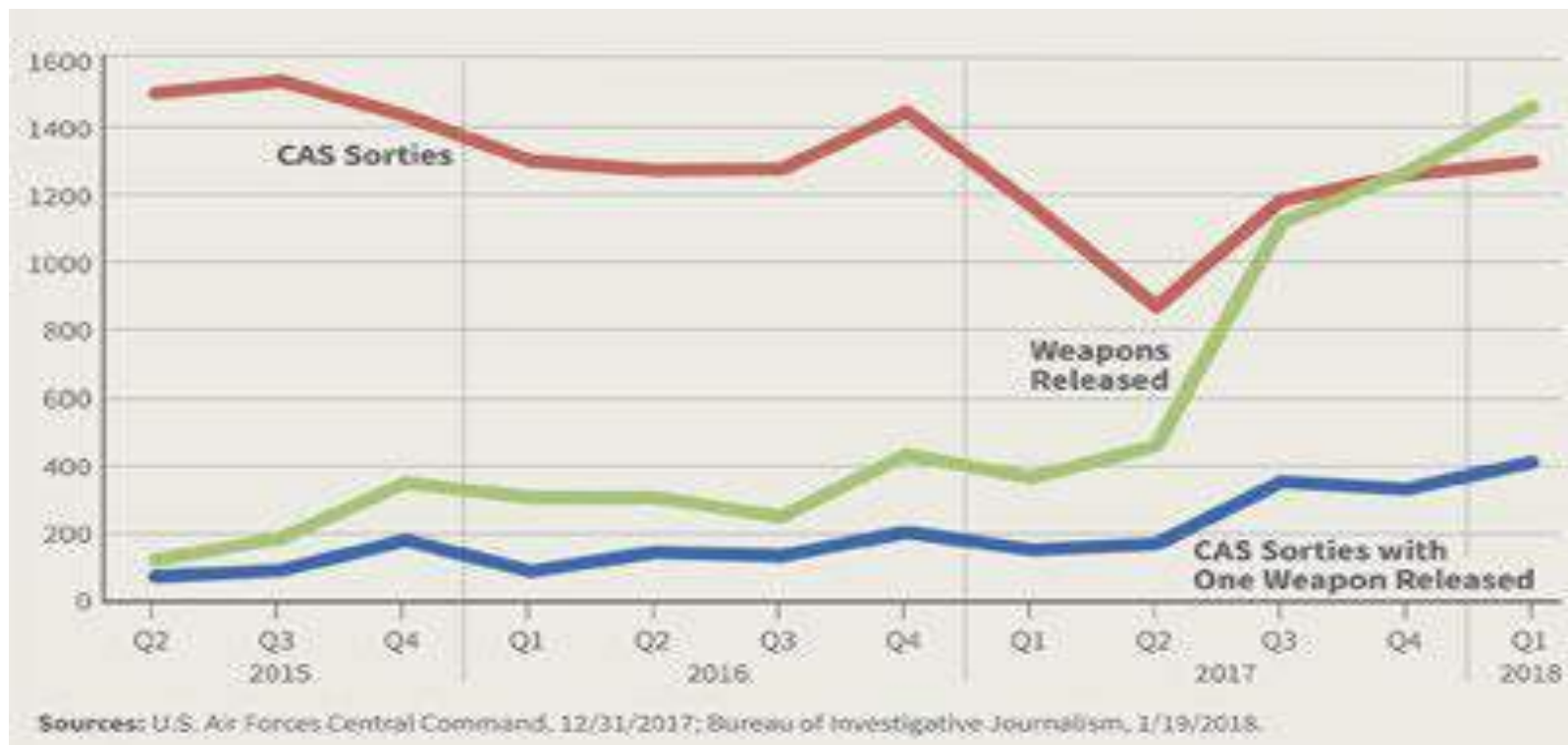
Note: Airstrike indicates one weapon dropped from the air

The U.S. conducted 455 airstrikes in December 2017, an average of 15 a day, compared with just 65 the year before. Even in December 2012, when there were nearly 100,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan, barely 200 strikes took place. All told, 2,000 airstrikes were carried out between August and December of last year, nearly as many as in all of 2015 and 2016 combined.

Max Bearak, "A new U.S. air blitz in Afghanistan isn't stopping for winter. But will it stop the Taliban?," *Washington Post*,

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/a-new-us-air-blitz-in-afghanistan-isnt-stopping-for-winter-but-will-it-stop-the-taliban/2018/01/16/c9bb874c-f4cd-11e7-9af7-a50bc3300042\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/a-new-us-air-blitz-in-afghanistan-isnt-stopping-for-winter-but-will-it-stop-the-taliban/2018/01/16/c9bb874c-f4cd-11e7-9af7-a50bc3300042_story.html)

## US Air Role: 2015-Q1/2018



LIG Estimate of U.S. Air trends: 2015-Q1/2018 The U.S. Air Forces Central Command (AFCENT), which publishes a monthly report on sorties and weapons releases by U.S. military aircraft in Afghanistan, reported 1,296 close air support sorties in Afghanistan during the quarter, 407 of which involved at least 1 weapon release.<sup>130</sup> Close air support refers to “air action by fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft that are in close proximity to friendly forces, and requires detailed integration of each air mission with the fire and movement of those forces.”<sup>131</sup> While the tempo of close air support sorties—with or without a weapon release—grew slightly in recent quarters, the number of reported numbers of weapons released increased substantially. AFCENT reports that U.S. forces released 1,460 weapons in the first quarter of 2018, a four-fold increase from 1 year ago. As U.S. support of ANDSF ground operations increases under the new strategy, and as more advisors deploy with Afghan units, the number of close air support missions is likely to grow.



# AFCENT Summary November 2017

## Operation Freedom's Sentinel & Resolute Support Mission – advising Afghan Air Forces & countering terrorism

November marked the start of a deliberate, conditions-based campaign to hit the Taliban where it hurts most – their revenue sources. Starting Nov. 19, Afghan National Defense and Security Forces and U.S. forces launched combined operations to hit Taliban command and control nodes and their primary revenue source – narcotic related targets. In the first three days of the new campaign, Afghan and U.S. airstrikes removed approximately \$7-10 million of revenue from the Taliban's pocketbook. Subsequent strikes over next two weeks raised total figures to \$12M in Taliban revenue erased and had a negative \$60 million impact on global drug trafficking organizations.

This new campaign signals a shift to an approach guided by conditions on the ground instead of arbitrary timetables or “fighting seasons.” The new campaign will be relentless and empowered by new authorities that allow the U.S. to aggressively take the fight to the enemy.

Unlike previous air operations in Afghanistan since Operation Freedom Sentinel began in January 2015, the Combined Air Operations Center enabled these strikes with deliberate planning that involved hundreds of hours of preparation and intelligence collection. U.S. Air Force F-22s, F-16s, B-52s and MQ-9s were carefully selected for their ability to conduct precision airstrikes with low collateral munitions that minimized the risk of civilian casualties. These aircraft released 80 precision munitions against 19 targets, destroying Taliban narcotics production facilities, a C2 node and an improvised explosive device facility – <https://www.dvidshub.net/feature/AfghanUSForcesNewOffensiveCampaign>. Strike aircraft were enabled by refueling support from KC-10s and KC-135s, persistent ISR from MQ-9s, command and control from E-8 JSTARS, and non-kinetic effects from EC-130Hs.

The ANDSF's role in conducting the opening strikes of this campaign demonstrated their increased ability to conduct complex operations against threats facing their country. November also heralded increased airpower capabilities with the delivery of two more UH-60s, which will soon be piloted by the first six Afghan Air Force UH-60 pilots who graduated from training, Nov. 20. The AAF is expected to have four qualified crews by Spring 2018, and 32 crews by Spring 2019.

Looking ahead, air planners are actively preparing to support the arrival of the U.S. Army Security Force Assistance Brigade in early 2018. Throughout November, mobility crews delivered more than 3,280 short tons of cargo consisting of ammunition and more than 60 vehicles, including MaxxPro Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAPs) and medium tactical vehicles.

# AFCENT Summary: 2012 to 30/12/2017

## OPERATION FREEDOM'S SENTINEL/RESOLUTE SUPPORT MISSION

### Close Air Support\*

### Number of Weapons Released

Less Activity  More Activity

Afghanistan

Sorties		Sorties with at least one weapon release		Number of Weapons Released														
Year	Sorties	Year	Sorties	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total		
2012	28,760	2012	1,975	170	116	227	252	406	521	504	589	385	414	297	202	4,083		
2013	21,900	2013	1,408	193	297	250	284	368	337	256	158	232	189	118	76	2,758		
2014	12,978	2014	1,136	92	114	95	115	164	272	205	437	441	217	87	126	2,365		
2015	5,774	2015	411	40	30	47	31	41	109	79	156	111	203	69	31	947		
2016	5,162	2016	615	127	115	58	62	89	94	160	108	162	205	92	65	1,337		
2017	4,253	2017	1,104	54	200	203	460	328	389	350	503	414	653	352		3,906		

\* Statistics provided includes numbers of sorties (not strikes) and munitions expended by aircraft under CFACC control

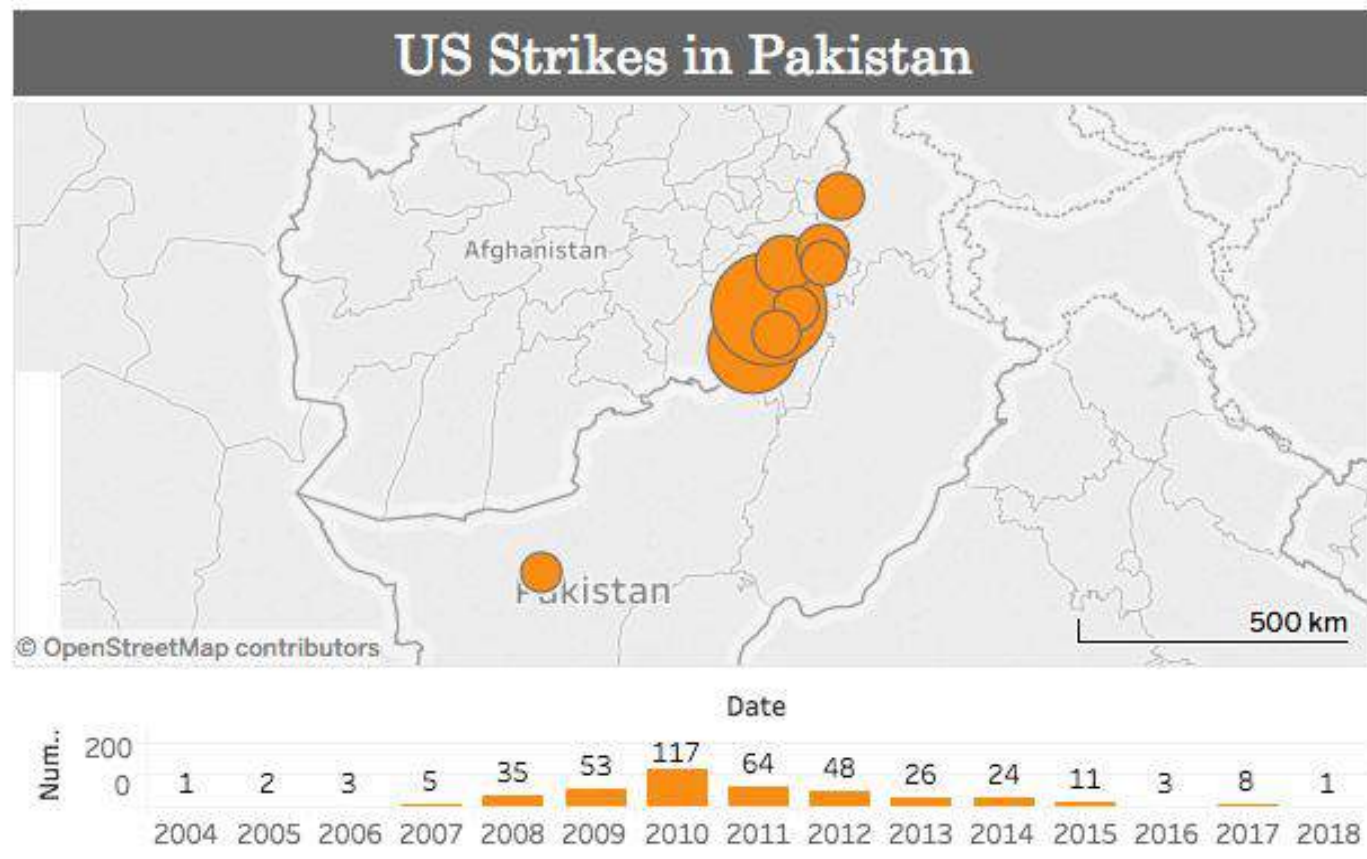
Combined Data (minus OIR)

	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Intel, Surveillance and Recon Sorties	34,937	31,049	32,999	21,634	19,681	15,009
Airlift Sorties	39,000	32,000	17,040	6,900	10,300	10,107
Airlift Cargo (Short Tons)	265,000	201,000	158,400	50,000	69,200	75,908
Airlift Passengers	749,000	506,000	202,700	78,000	111,100	112,010
Supplies Airdropped (Pounds)	41,952,000	10,883,000	28,000	0	0	20,563
Tanker Sorties	16,007	12,319	9,085	5,323	4,910	5,362
Fuel Offloaded (Millions of Pounds)	980	723	636	201	150	155
Aircraft Refuelings	67,020	53,266	46,793	26,162	18,137	16,621
Casualty Evacuation Sorties	2,171	576	115	1	0	0
Saves	1,187	219	32	3	1	0
Assists	1,646	477	84	0	0	0

- Some figures may have changed due to data re-calculation and re-verification
- Assets under CFACC control include a compilation of aircraft from all U.S. military branches of service, as well as Coalition aircraft; however, not all aircraft flying in the AOR fall under CFACC control.

POC: AFCENT (CAOC) Public Affairs – [afcent.pa@afcent.af.mil](mailto:afcent.pa@afcent.af.mil)

# US Air and UCAV Strikes in Pakistan: 2004-1/2018



Over the last two years, Kurram has become a focus of US counterterrorism strikes within Pakistan. The US has launched 12 such attacks inside Pakistan since Dec. 2016; seven of them have occurred inside Kurram, according to data compiled by *FDD's Long War Journal*. The last five US strikes have all taken place inside Kurram.

Elements of the Haqqani Network, including Sirajuddin Haqqani, [relocated to Kurram](#) in 2014 after the Pakistani military telegraphed a planned operation to root out the Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan's network in North Waziristan. Sirajuddin is the operational commander of the Haqqani Network and serves as one of the Taliban's two deputy emirs as well as its military commander.

For perspective on how much the US has focused in on Kurram, the US launched 389 strikes inside Pakistan from 2004 through 2015 and only five of those occurred in Kurram. Instead, more than 95 percent of the 389 strikes inside Pakistan between 2004-2015 took place inside the tribal agencies of North and South Waziristan, which are known hotbeds of numerous Taliban groups as well as global jihadist organizations such as al Qaeda.

As a whole, drone strikes in Pakistan have tapered off significantly since the peak of operations against al Qaeda's leadership and allied jihadist groups in 2010, when 117 strikes were recorded. In 2015, the US launched only 11 drone attacks. In 2016, there were only three more, including the one that killed Mullah Mansour, the previous emir of the Afghan Taliban in May. That strike was the last one of 2016 and the last of President Obama's second term. However, after President Trump took office, the number of strikes inside Pakistan increased to eight in 2017.

Bill Roggio, [US drone strike inside Pakistan targets 'Afghan extremist'](#), Long war Journal, 17.1.18



## SIGAR: US Forces Afghanistan Estimates of District Control of Taliban: February 20, 2017 - I

### DISTRICT CONTROL WITHIN AFGHANISTAN'S 34 PROVINCES AS OF FEBRUARY 20, 2017

Control Status	Districts		Population		Area	
	Number	%	In millions	%	Sq Km	%
GIROA			21.4	65.6%	404,503	62.8%
Control	97	23.8%				
Influence	146	35.9%				
CONTESTED	119	29.2%	8.2	25.2%	135,218	21.0%
INSURGENT			3.0	9.2%	104,068	16.2%
Control	11	2.7%				
Influence	34	8.4%				
<b>Total</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>32.6</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>643,789</b>	<b>100%</b>

Note: GIROA = Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, sq km = square kilometers.

Source: USFOR-A, response to SIGAR data call, 02/20/2017; USFOR-A, response to SIGAR vetting, 4/11/2017.

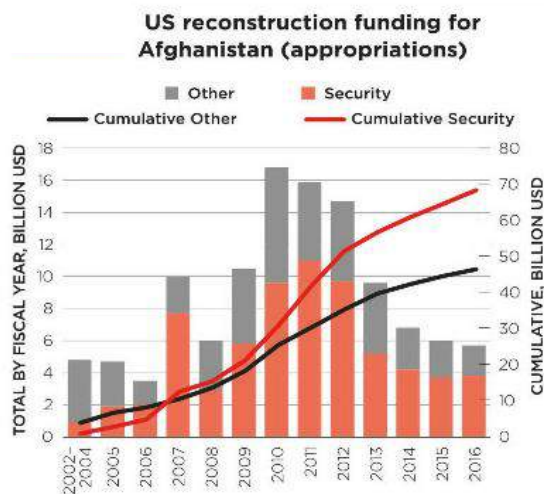


# **SIGAR: US Forces Estimates of District Control of Taliban: February 20, 2017 -**

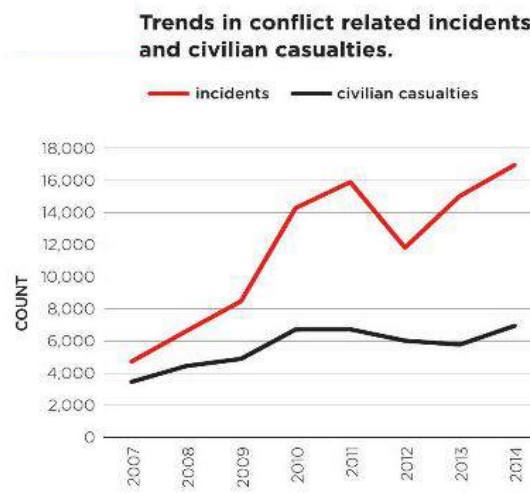
## **II**

- **USFOR-A reported that approximately 59.7% of the country's 407 districts are under Afghan government control or influence as of February 20,**
- **2017, a 2.5 percentage-point increase from the 57.2% reported last quarter in mid-November, but a nearly 11 percentage-point decrease from the same period in 2016. See Figure 3.27 for a historical record of district control.**
- **The number of districts under insurgent control or influence also increased by four this quarter to 45 districts (in 15 provinces) under insurgent control (11) or influence .**
- **According to USFOR-A, 11.1% of the country's total districts are now under insurgent control or influence.**
- **USFOR-A attributes the loss of government control or influence over territory to the ANDSF's strategic approach to security prioritization, identifying the most important areas that the ANDSF must hold to prevent defeat, and placing less emphasis on less vital areas.**
- **With the increase in both insurgent- and government-controlled districts, the number of contested districts (119) dropped by 3.5 percentage points since last quarter, to 29.2% of all districts. It is not clear whether these districts are at risk or if neither the insurgency nor the Afghan government maintains significant control over these areas, as USFOR-A has previously described.**
- **Of the 407 districts of Afghanistan's 34 provinces, 243 districts were under government control (97 districts) or influence (146).**
- **USFOR-A reports an 800,000-person increase in the population under Afghan government control or influence this quarter. Last quarter, USFOR-A remarked that the population under insurgent control or influence had decreased by half a million people from the previous reporting period, to 2.5 million people. However, this quarter, they assess that the population under insurgent control or influence has returned to 3 million people.**
- **Of the 32.6 million people living in Afghanistan, USFOR-A determined that the majority, 21.4 million (65.6%), live in areas controlled or influenced by the government, while another 8.2 million people (25.2%) live in areas that are contested.**

# Afghanistan: Decline in U.S. Aid vs. Rise in Casualties and Conflict Areas

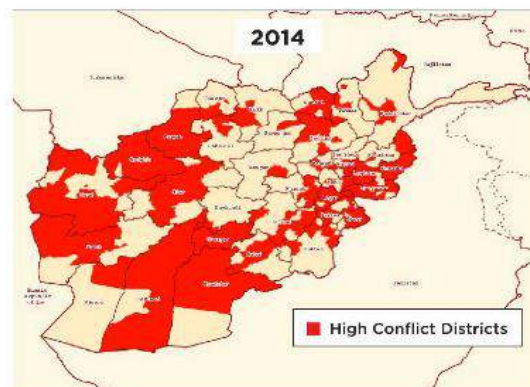
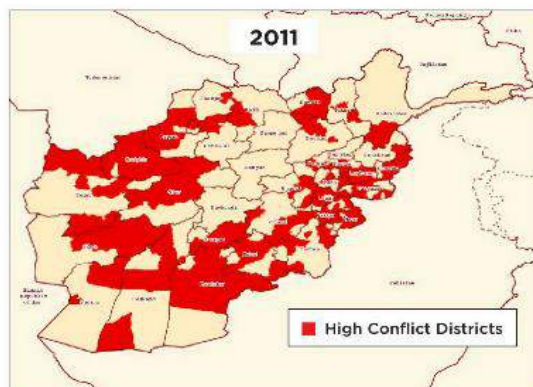


Source: SIGAR (2016)



Source: Authors' elaboration based on SIOCC data

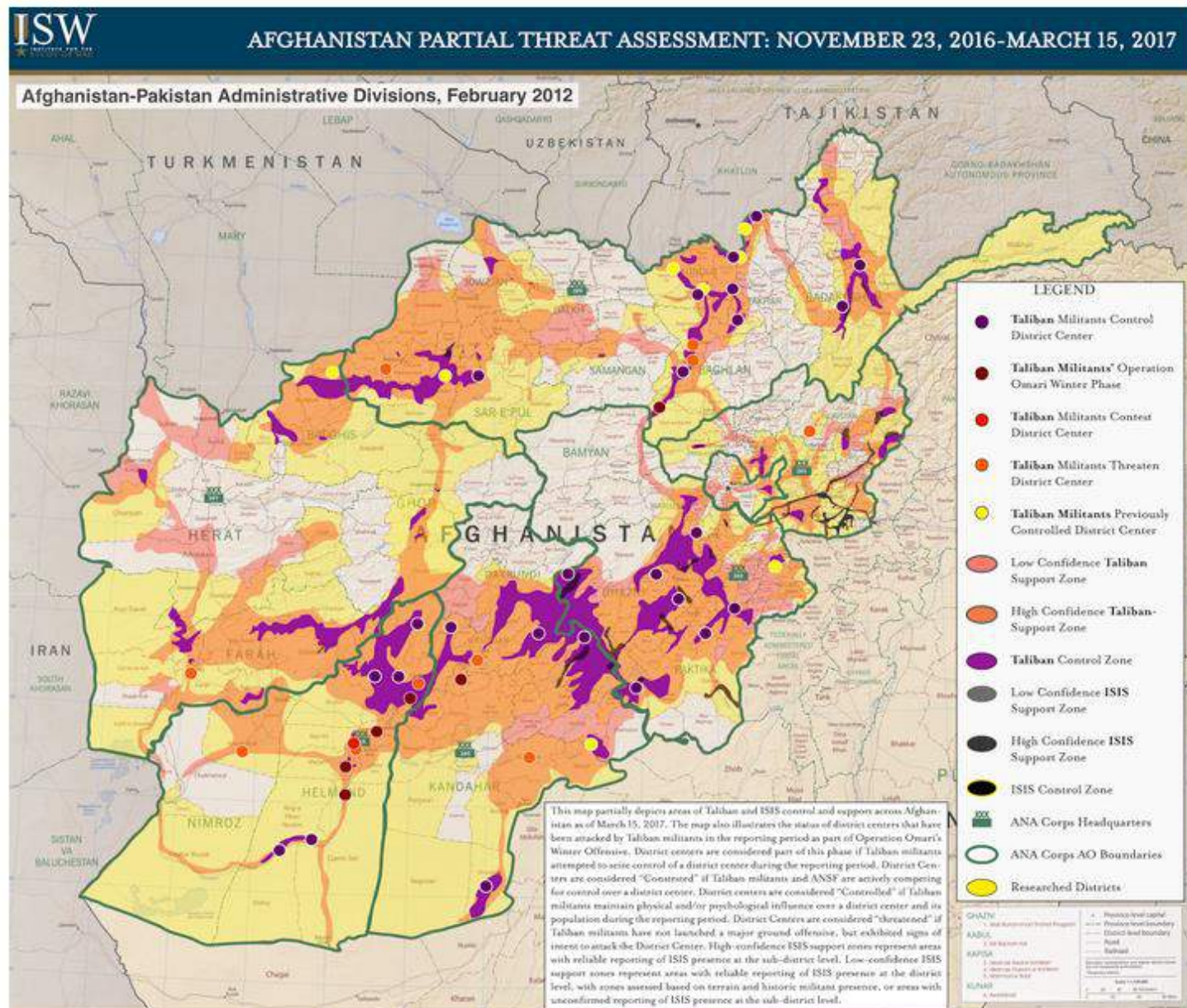
## High conflict districts in 2011 and 2014



Note: A district is defined as high conflict if the number of security incidents is above the national median in 2011.  
Source: Authors' elaboration based on SIOCC data

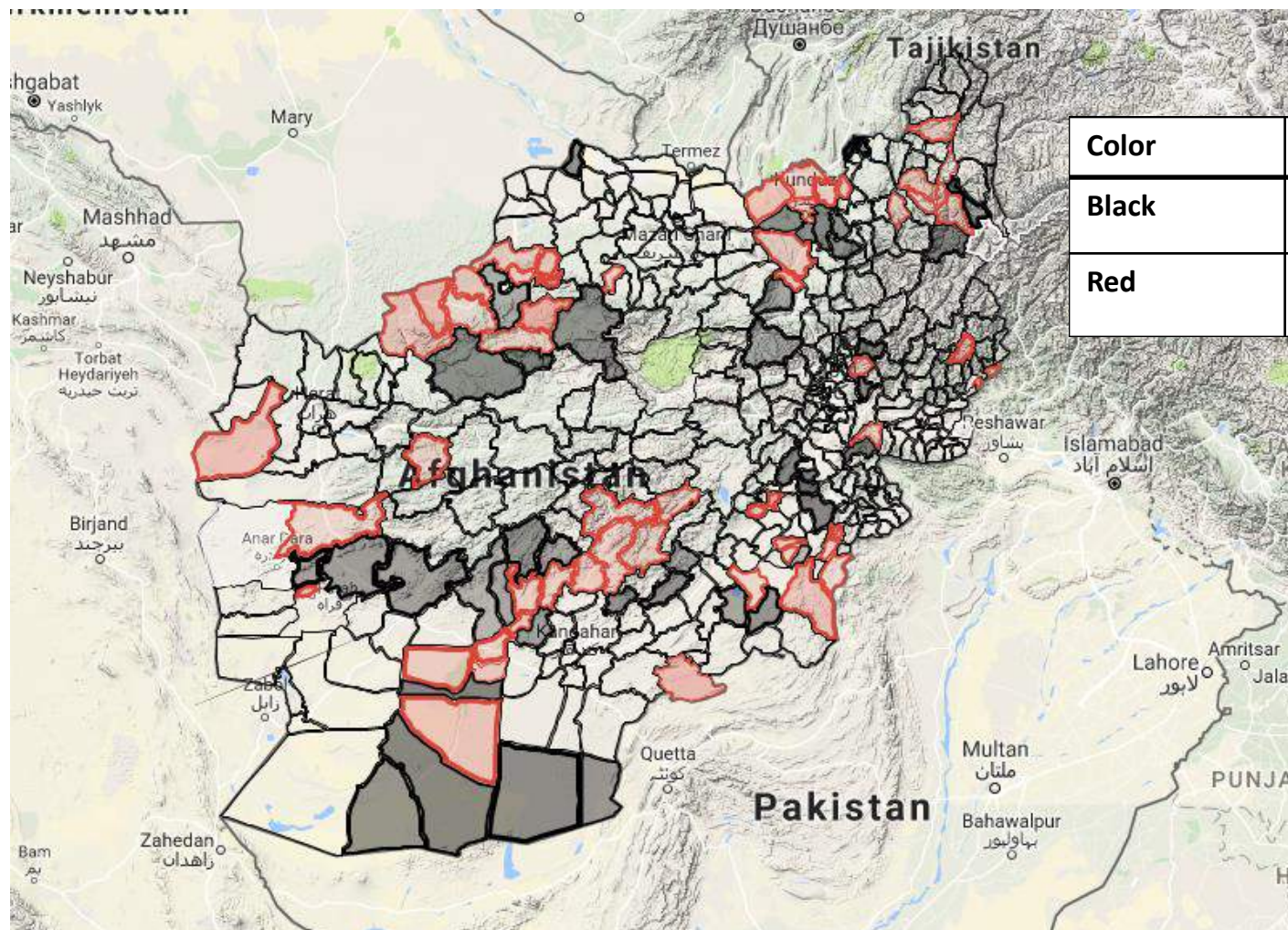
# ISW Estimate of Areas of Risk in Afghanistan: 11.23.16- 3.15.17

Source: ISW,  
<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/#search/map+/151a7e717269d3cb>





# Long War Journal: Estimates of Afghan Taliban Controlled and Contested Districts: March 1, 2017

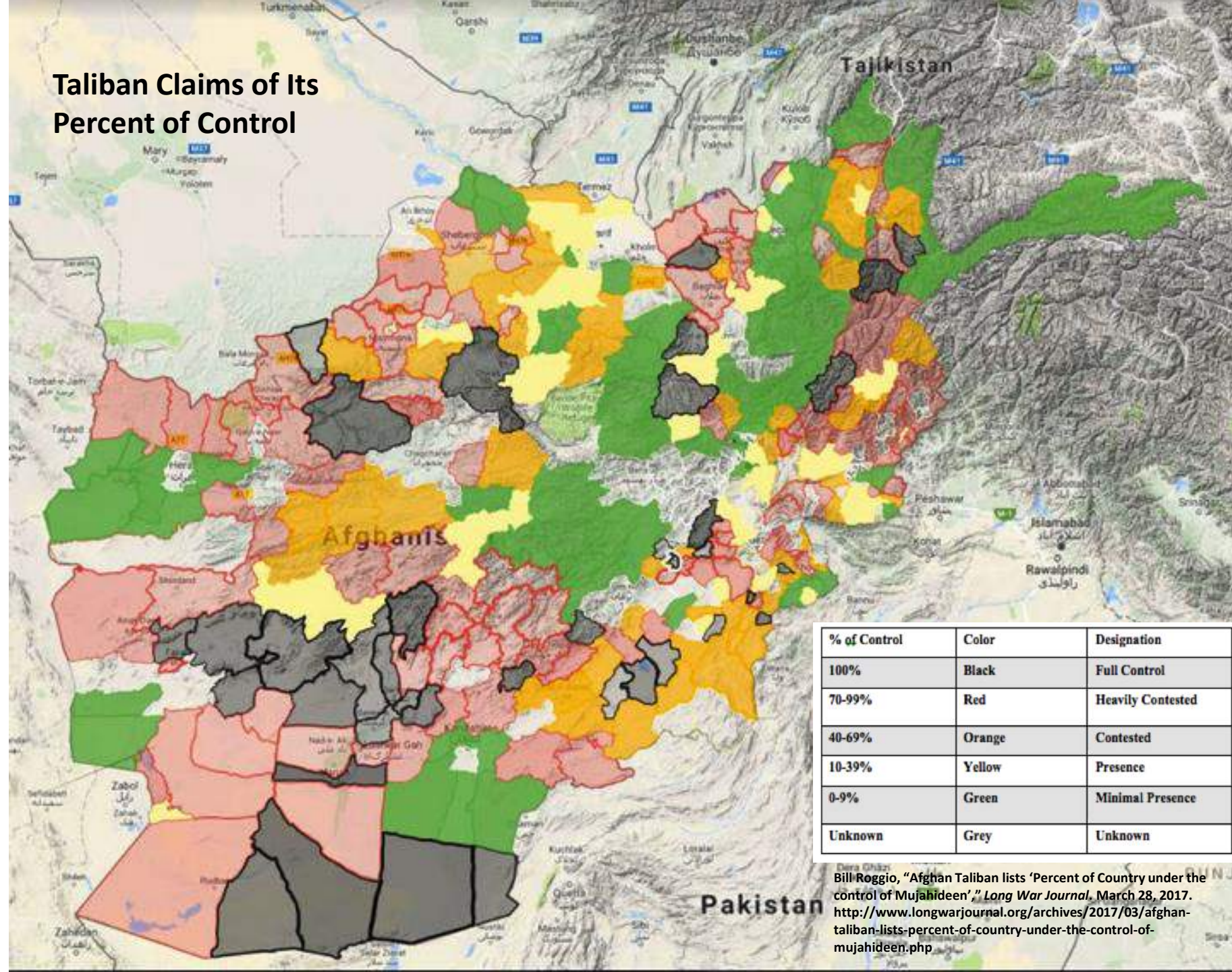


Bill Roggio, "Map of Taliban controlled and contested districts in Afghanistan'," Google Maps, March 1, 2017.

<https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?mid=10Qz0dzdWpjp6bkfyWN6qoLhaaU&ll=33.73028742596195%2C59.147801487657716&z=6>



## Taliban Claims of Its Percent of Control

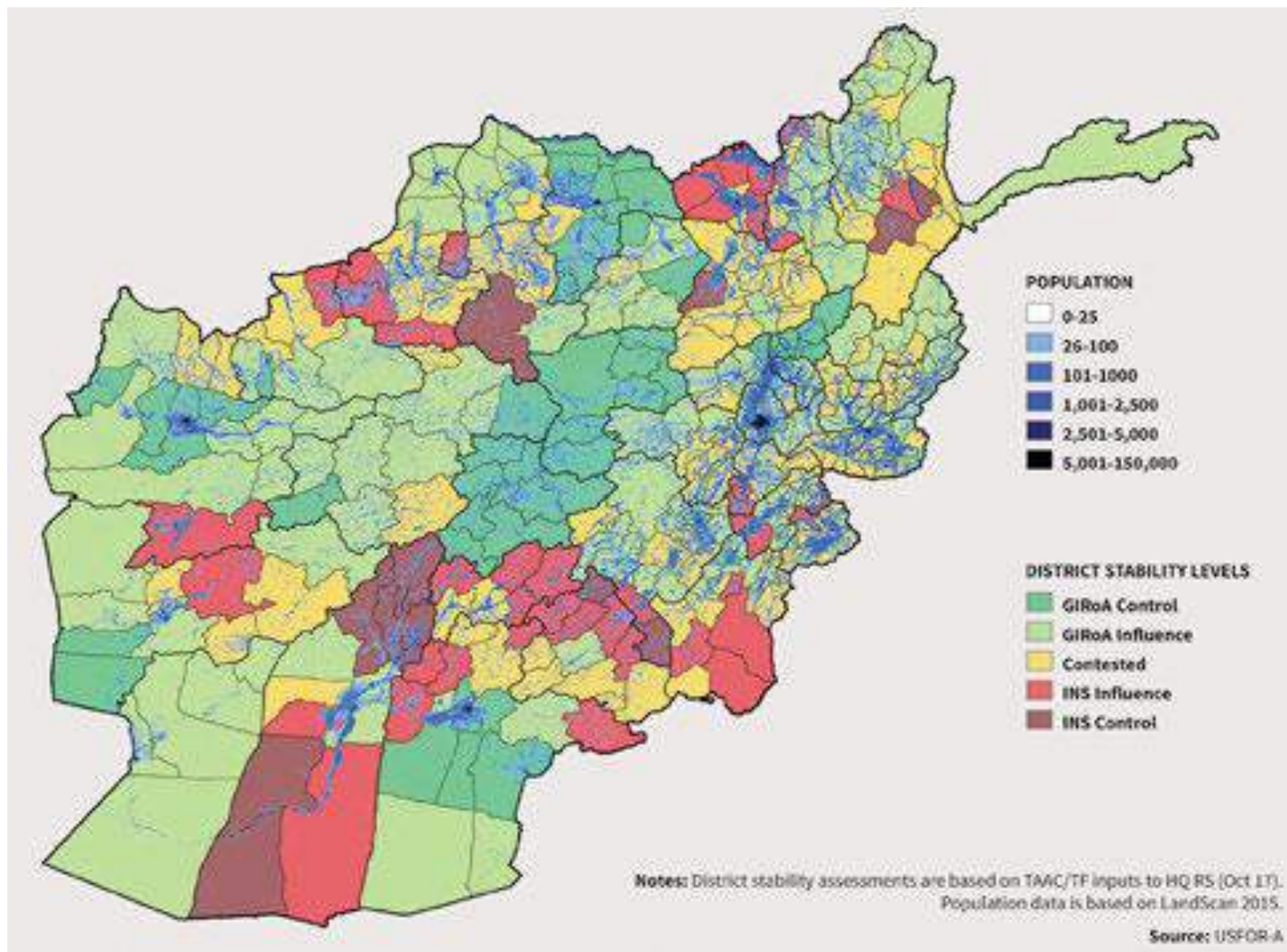


% of Control	Color	Designation
100%	Black	Full Control
70-99%	Red	Heavily Contested
40-69%	Orange	Contested
10-39%	Yellow	Presence
0-9%	Green	Minimal Presence
Unknown	Grey	Unknown

Bill Roggio, "Afghan Taliban lists 'Percent of Country under the control of Mujahideen'," *Long War Journal*, March 28, 2017. <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/03/afghan-taliban-lists-percent-of-country-under-the-control-of-mujahideen.php>

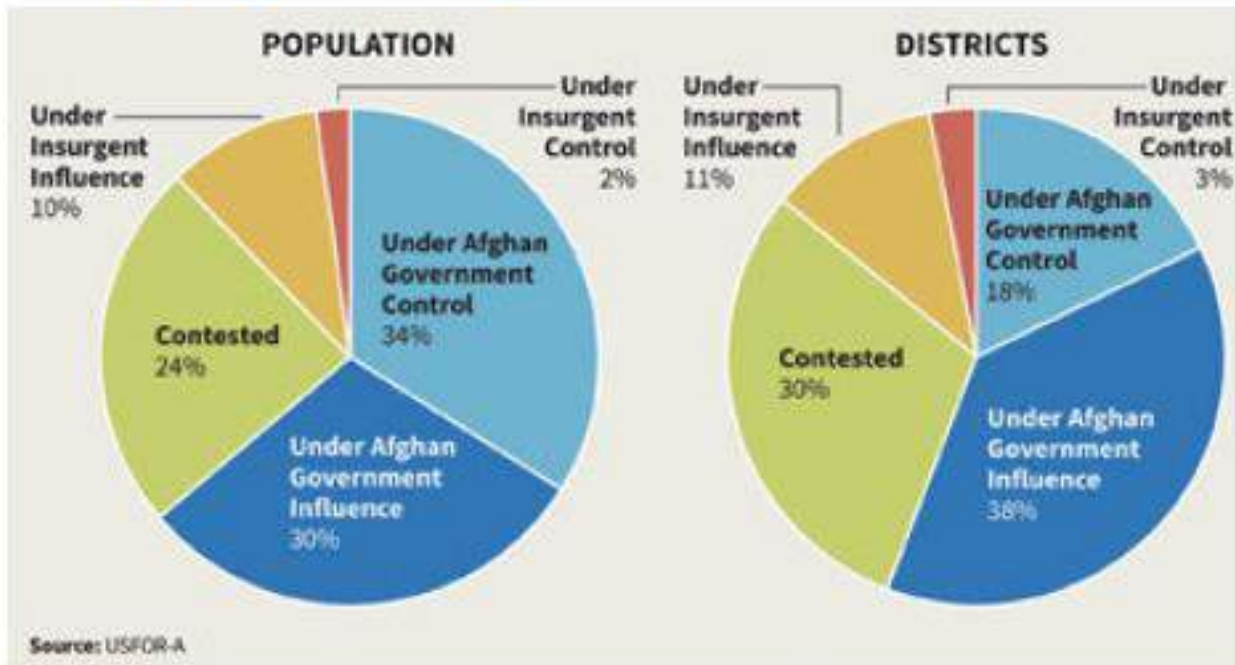


## LIG Estimate of Government vs. Threat Control – I: As of 10/2017



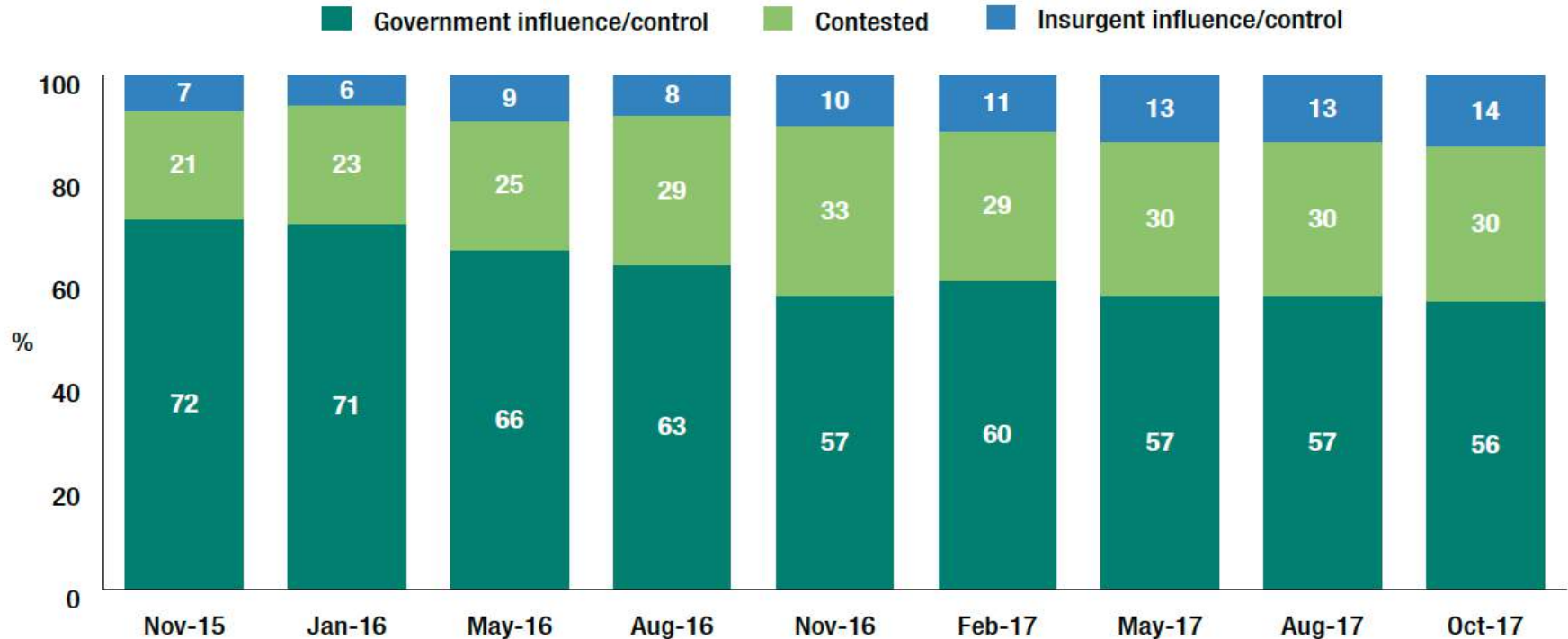
## LIG Estimate of Government vs. Threat Control – II: As of 10/2017

Percentage of Afghans Under Insurgent and Government Control



While military commanders expressed cautious optimism about the South Asia strategy and its initial impact, few unclassified metrics or benchmarks are available to measure clearly the progress of the strategy. On the sole quantifiable metric discussed publicly to date—expanding security to 80 percent of the Afghan population by the end of 2019—Afghanistan made no significant progress in 2017.<sup>12</sup> As of November 2017, the Afghan government controlled territory in which 64 percent of the population resided, the same as the previous quarter, and down from 80 percent in September 2013. In addition, the percentage of districts under government control was largely unchanged at the end of 2017 with the government controlling 56 percent of the country’s 407 districts.

## Danish Overseas Development Institute/SIGAR Estimate of Government vs. Threat Control: March and October 2017



There is no reliable, independent estimate of how much territory the Taliban influences or controls. According to a BBC survey in January 2018, the Taliban were ‘openly active’ in 70% of the country’s districts (Sharifi and Adamou, 2018). The most-cited estimate, from Operation Resolute Support, puts the Afghan government in control of just over half of districts in the country in October 2017, down from three-quarters two years previously. Even if this modest estimate of Taliban influence is indicative, it leaves nearly half of the country

In March 2017, the Taliban published its own estimate claiming that the Taliban controlled nearly 10% of the country’s districts, contested control in 48% and had significant influence in 15% (Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 2017).



# DNI Assessments of Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2017

## Afghanistan

The overall situation in Afghanistan will very likely continue to deteriorate, even if international support is sustained. Endemic state weaknesses, the government's political fragility, deficiencies of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), Taliban persistence, and regional interference will remain key impediments to improvement. Kabul's political dysfunction and ineffectiveness will almost certainly be the greatest vulnerability to stability in 2017. ANSF performance will probably worsen due to a combination of Taliban operations, ANSF combat casualties, desertions, poor logistics support, and weak leadership. The ANSF will almost certainly remain heavily dependent on foreign military and financial support to sustain themselves and preclude their collapse. Although the Taliban was unsuccessful in seizing a provincial capital in 2016, it effectively navigated its second leadership transition in two years following the death of its former chief, Mansur, and is likely to make gains in 2017. The fighting will also continue to threaten US personnel, allies, and partners, particularly in Kabul and urban population centers. ISIS's Khorasan branch (ISIS-K)—which constitutes ISIS's most significant presence in South Asia—will probably remain a low-level developing threat to Afghan stability as well as to US and Western interests in the region in 2017.

## Pakistan

Pakistani-based terrorist groups will present a sustained threat to US interests in the region and continue to plan and conduct attacks in India and Afghanistan. The threat to the United States and the West from Pakistani-based terrorist groups will be persistent but diffuse. Plotting against the US homeland will be conducted on a more opportunistic basis or driven by individual members within these groups... Pakistan will probably be able to manage its internal security. Anti-Pakistan groups will probably focus more on soft targets. The groups we judge will pose the greatest threat to Pakistan's internal security include Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan, Jamaat ul-Ahrar, al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent, ISIS-K, Lashkar-e Jhangvi, and Lashkar-e Jhangvi al-Alami. The emerging China Pakistan Economic Corridor will probably offer militants and terrorists additional targets. Pakistan's pursuit of tactical nuclear weapons potentially lowers the threshold for their use. Early deployment during a crisis of smaller, more mobile nuclear weapons would increase the amount of time that systems would be outside the relative security of a storage site, increasing the risk that a coordinated attack by non-state actors might succeed in capturing a complete nuclear weapon.

# Director of DIA Assessments of Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2017

## Afghanistan and the Taliban

In South Asia, over the past year Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) responded to Taliban pressure on population centers, while sustaining operations against al-Qa'ida and ISIS-Khorasan, which helped to restrict ISIS-Khorasan's territory. **Despite some improvements to command and control and integration of air capabilities, the ANDSF remains beset by persistent shortfalls in combined arms and intelligence integration, as well as overall force generation and sustainment.**

**In 2017, we believe the ANDSF will incrementally improve its capabilities to challenge the Taliban, but military operations will not be decisive. We expect the Taliban to further consolidate control mostly in rural terrain and continue to pressure provincial capitals in Helmand, Uruzgan, and Kunduz Provinces.**

**At the tactical level, we judge the Taliban will keep trying to overrun vulnerable ANDSF positions and population centers and will conduct intermittent high-profile attacks in key cities to degrade confidence in Afghan government-provided security.**

**We believe the ANDSF will need to increasingly focus on long-range planning to improve endemic institutional deficiencies in leadership, force generation, and sustainment in order to defeat the Taliban. Coalition train, advise, and assist efforts in 2017 will be critical to improving the ANDSF's ability to forestall Taliban advances beyond rural areas and in improving ministerial planning and development.**

## Pakistan

In 2017, Islamabad is likely to slowly shift from traditional counterinsurgency operations along Pakistan's western border to more counterterrorism and paramilitary operations throughout the country, which have had some success in reducing violence from militant, sectarian, terrorist, and separatist groups. Anti-Pakistan groups probably will respond to this sustained pressure by focusing their efforts against soft targets. Pakistan's nuclear stockpile continues to grow. We are concerned that this growth, as well as an evolving doctrine and inherent security issues associated with Pakistan's developing tactical nuclear weapons, presents an enduring risk. Islamabad is taking steps to improve its nuclear security and is aware of the extremist threat to its program.

# DoD Threat Assessment: December 2017

General Nicholson, Commander of USFOR-A and RS, assesses that the exploitation of ungoverned sanctuaries outside of Afghanistan by terrorists and Afghan insurgents remains the single greatest external threat to the coalition campaign. External sanctuary continues to hamper efforts to bring Afghan Taliban senior leadership to the negotiating table and allows space for terrorist groups like the Haqqani Network to plan coordinated operations against U.S. and coalition forces, the ANDSF, and civilians, and enables the Afghan Taliban to rest, refit, and regenerate.

Afghanistan faces a continuing threat from this externally supported insurgency and the highest regional concentration of terrorist groups in the world. These pervasive insurgent, terrorist, and criminal networks constitute a threat to Afghanistan's stability. Revenue from drug trafficking, taxation/extortion, illicit mining/agriculture, and foreign financial support continues to sustain the insurgency and Afghan criminal networks. Additionally, extortion and kidnappings by low-level criminal networks continue.

The Afghanistan-Pakistan border region remains a sanctuary for various groups, including al-Qa'ida, al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), the Haqqani Network, Lashkar-e-Tayyiba, Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), ISIS-K, and the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Sanctuary on the Pakistani side and presence on the Afghan side remain security challenges for both countries and pose a threat to regional security and stability.

The Afghanistan-Pakistan relationship remains tenuous and leaders from each country have accused the other of harboring terrorists and allowing the planning of attacks from their soil. The United States continues to encourage both countries to work together to solve common problems, such as border security, but deep-rooted mistrust remains a significant barrier to progress.

Although Pakistani military operations have disrupted some militant sanctuaries, certain extremist groups—such as the Taliban and the Haqqani Network—retains freedom of movement in Pakistan. The United States continues to convey to all levels of Pakistani leadership the importance of taking action against all terrorist and extremist groups.

# **General Nicholson on Strategy - I : November 2017**

**..the subject for today -- is the South Asia strategy, looking at 2017 and ahead to 2018...It is a regional strategy in which Afghanistan figures prominently. The key things to take away from the strategy that I'd like to cover would be, number one, we are now conditions-based, not time-based. We will be here until the job is done.**

**The U.S. approach aligns with the NATO approach. And, as I said last time, war is a contest of wills. The president has left no doubt in terms of our will to win.**

**The goal of this strategy is reconciliation, a negotiated settlement which lowers the level of violence. We achieve this by applying three forms of pressure on the enemy: first, military pressure, through offensive operations and stronger security institutions; second, diplomatic and other forms of pressure on the enablers of the Taliban and the Haqqani Network; three, social pressure, in the form of elections over the next two years, which, if done credibly, will further enhance the legitimacy of the government in the eyes of the people.**

**...there's a regional dimension to the strategy, to limit interference and seek cooperation with Afghanistan's neighbors. We have to realign resources and to execute this strategy well across the whole of the U.S. government and, of course, the coalition, if we are to succeed.**

**...the military effort is necessary but, by itself, not sufficient for success. We must work together with all of the parts of the U.S. government and the coalition in order to be successful.**

**It has been just under a hundred days since the announcement, and we can see the impacts already, especially in terms of our adversaries' reactions... we saw two changes to the enemy's strategy over the last year. As you know from 2016, they started off trying to seize provincial capitals. They suffered heavily when they did so, so they therefore shifted their strategy in 2017 from attempting to seize capitals to a district-focused strategy.**

**And then by August, with the losses that they suffered with that approach and the announcement of the U.S. policy in September, we saw another enemy shift to a guerrilla-style of warfare, with hit-and-run attacks, suicide attacks, et cetera. Each of these shifts represented to us a lowering of ambition by the enemy.**



# General Nicholson on Strategy - II: November 2017

Now, reconciliation will take some time. We'll have to continue to apply the three types of pressure, engage within the region and leverage all of the instruments available to meet our goals.

In the face of this pressure, the Taliban cannot win. Their choices are to reconcile, live in irrelevance, or die.

Let me shift now to a little context for 2017. First, the Taliban is not a popular insurgency. The Afghan people outright reject them. Up to 90 percent believe that a return to Taliban rule would be bad for the country. And notice that I didn't use the word "govern." The Taliban do not govern, they rule through force. They impose their rule on the people. And, increasingly, they are primarily interested in making money. And they are making more money than they need to operate.

So we believe that the Taliban, in some ways, have evolved into a criminal or narco-insurgency. They are fighting to defend their revenue streams. They have increasingly lost whatever ideological anchor they once had. They fight to preserve and expand their sources of revenue. This includes narcotics trafficking, illegal mining, taxing people throughout Afghanistan, kidnapping and murder-for-hire: all criminal endeavors.

Now, population control remains roughly the same as last year. About 64 percent of the population is controlled by the government, about 24 percent live in contested areas, and the Taliban control the remaining 12 percent. But it's worth bearing in mind that Afghanistan has never had a strong central government. The absence of government control doesn't equal Taliban control. It is not a zero-sum equation.

So why did things stay roughly the same through August of this year? Well, we fought most of this year, through Aug. 21, at the lowest level of U.S. force and capability, and, therefore, the highest level of risk, in our 16-year war in Afghanistan. Yet, in spite of that, the Taliban strategy was not successful. It was essentially defeated by the Afghans.

After suffering heavy casualties from attempting to take provincial capitals, the Taliban shifted, as I mentioned, to districts. And then they shifted, again, to guerrilla-style warfare: suicide attacks, hit-and-run, designed to maintain relevance and to inflict casualties, but not to gain and hold new terrain.

# General Nicholson on Strategy - III: November 2017

So we're seeing the nature of the Taliban's efforts changing across the board. I mentioned a steady decline in the level of ambition. Meanwhile, the Afghan Security Forces have become more capable this year. I want to reiterate something that President Ghani often says: The Afghans own the fight, and are proud to. They are willing to fight and die for their future, their country, their families. And in so doing, they're not only fighting on behalf of themselves, but they are fighting against the terrorists who have threatened our homeland and the homelands of our allies as well.

So the Afghan Security Forces went on the offensive this year. This was a result of leadership changes that President Ghani made in May, when he changed out five of six corps commanders, as well as a new chief of general staff and a new minister of defense. These new leaders led offensive operations, and many times throughout the year we held offensive operations in all six corps areas. Absolutely new in the last three years; never happened before. These changes in leadership, strengthened and supported by the renewed international will and the U.S. policy announcement, have shifted the momentum in their favor.

So did airpower. And thus far in 2017, the U.S. has tripled the amount of air-delivered munitions that we've employed. As assets free up from Iraq and Syria and the successful fight against Daesh in that theater, we expect to see more assets come to Afghanistan.

So on that subject, I want to take a moment to address the issue of civilian casualties. First, I'd say, we go to extraordinary lengths to avoid civilian casualties. We have a rigorous process in place to investigate any allegation, from unit plans to aircraft gun tapes, to any interviews, even things that appear in the media. We investigate thoroughly every single allegation.

Now, there were allegations of increased CIVCAS by aerial fires produced by UNAMA this year. We have great respect for UNAMA, and we work closely with them, but we don't always agree on the figures. And in fact, we disagree on some of these numbers regarding aerial casualties. An example of why we would disagree, for example, would be an allegation occurs in a particular place at a particular time, we go back and review and find that we did not drop a munition on that day in that location, for example. This might be one of the reasons that we would disagree.

# **General Nicholson on Strategy - IV: November 2017**

**But -- but increasing, of course, the Afghan's are building better accountability of every place and time that they drop a munition, and of course we have almost 100 percent accountability on the U.S. side every time we deliver an aerial munition. This would be one of the reasons why we would disagree on the numbers.**

**Keep in mind that the U.S. tripled its munitions, but the Afghan Air Force has also grown significantly in its capability to deliver fire since 2016. We are training their pilots. Their pilots are not only getting better at their missions, but also at their reporting...If you look at airpower in relation to what's happening on the ground and with the enemy and the enemy's lack of respect for human life -- again even by the UNAMA account, 6 percent of CIVCAS were caused by aerial fires. The vast majority of the 8,000 allegations that UNAMA has of civilian casualties were caused by the Taliban, Daesh and other anti-government elements.**

**So the takeaway here is that the Afghans have significantly improved in 2017, again with all six of their corps on the offensive simultaneously and the stand-up of the new special operations corps as well; so in effect, seven corps on the offensive taking the fight to the enemy. Daesh has been unable to establish a caliphate in Afghanistan. This was their ambition two years ago. And we see no evidence of fighters making their way from Iraq and Syria to Afghanistan, because they know if they come here they will face death. We've isolated them largely from their outside finance and support, and they're having trouble replacing their leaders. Nevertheless, they do still recruit locally. These are primarily non-Afghans, some members of Islamic Movement Uzbekistan, and many former members of the Pakistani Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan.**

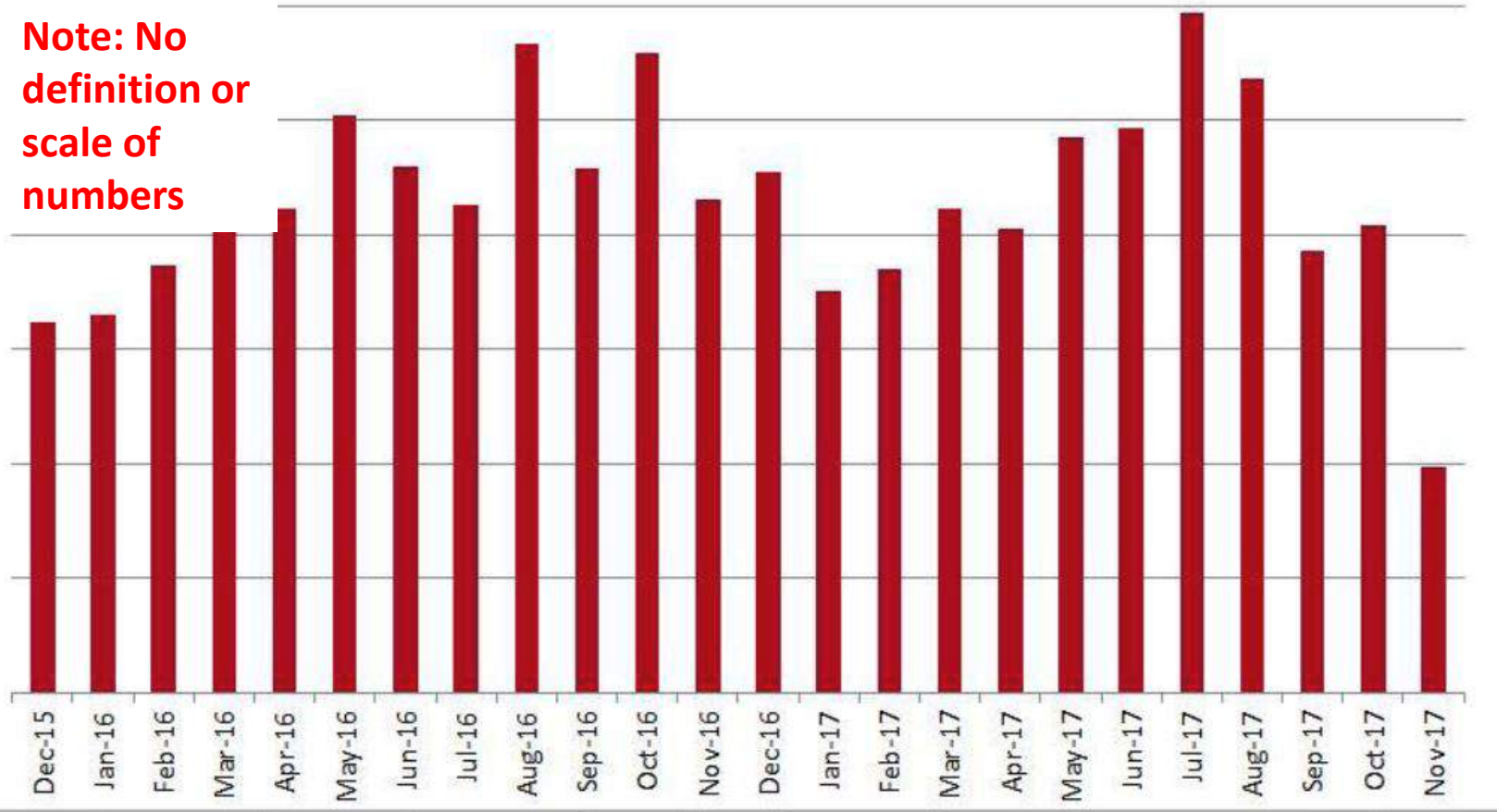
**Since March, we've conducted about 1,400 ground tactical operations and strikes, removing over 1,600 Daesh from the battlefield and reducing over 600 of their structures, facilities, fighting positions, et cetera. And again, it is Afghans who are leading the way in this fight against Daesh; Afghan commandos in particular.**

**Looking ahead to 2018, President Ghani is bringing about a generational change in the leadership of the security institutions. In keeping with its new inherent law, the Afghan government has notified over 2,150 colonels and generals from the Ministry of Defense that they will retire with dignity within the next year. The goal here is to shift the leadership of the Ministry of Defense and the Ministry of Interior from the generation of the 1960s to the generation of the 1990s.**

## Effective Enemy-Initiated Attacks by Month

Note: No definition or scale of numbers

Number of Effective Enemy-Initiated Attacks



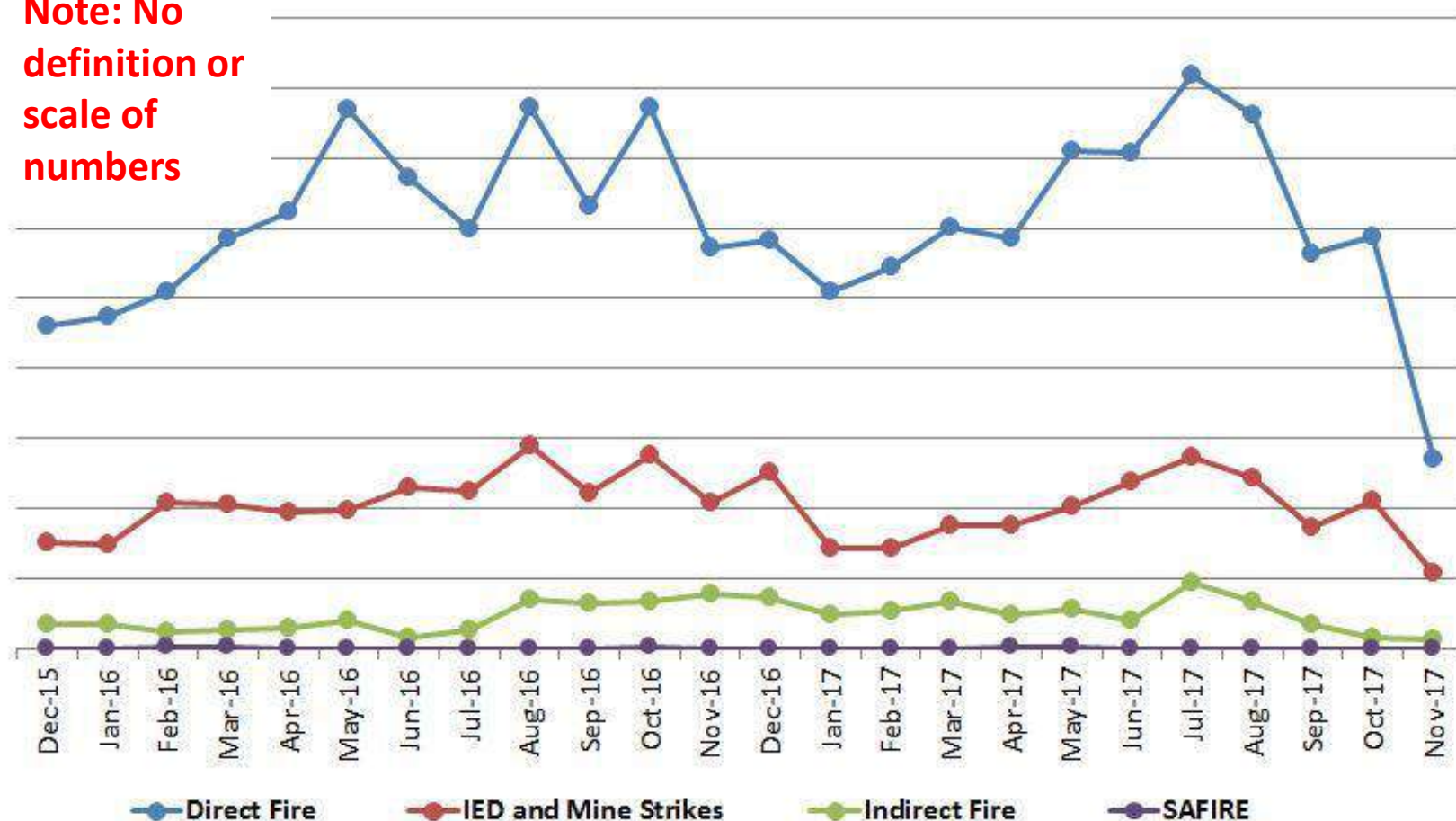
The number of reported effective enemy-initiated attacks was low during the winter months and gradually rose as the Taliban and the ANDSF increased operations in the spring. The overall level of reported enemy-initiated attacks during this reporting period was slightly lower than the same period the previous year. Consistent with the two previous reporting periods and the overall trend since the end of the U.S. and NATO combat missions and the transition to OFS and the RS mission, very few effective enemy-initiated attacks on coalition or U.S. forces... From June 1 to November 20, 2017, the number of effective enemy-initiated attacks were slightly lower than the previous reporting period (December 2016-May 2017); averaging between 780 per month.



## Effective Enemy-Initiated Attacks by Type

Note: No definition or scale of numbers

Number of Effective Attacks



Direct fire remains by far the largest source of effective enemy-initiated attacks, followed by IED attacks and mine strikes (see Figure 4). Consistent with trends over the last several years, indirect fire and surface-to-air fire (SAFIRE) remain the least frequent sources of effective enemy-initiated attacks. The number of IED attacks and mine strikes has remained relatively steady over the last 18 months.

## LIG Estimate of Government vs. Threat Control - III: End 2017

Taliban continued to threaten Afghan security forces and civilians by mounting strikes on ANDSF installations and launching high-profile attacks in Kabul and other locations. The Taliban attacked Afghan security checkpoints and facilities throughout the country, including checkpoints in Farah, Ghazni, and Helmand provinces, and in several other regions.

These attacks often resulted in multiple casualties for both the ANDSF and the Taliban. The Taliban used these attacks to steal equipment that they later used against the ANDSF. As a result, USFOR-A noted in December 2017, the ANDSF had moved to consolidate forces in strategic locations, which reduces the vulnerability of ANDSF equipment to attack. However, the ongoing vulnerability of ANDSF equipment was particularly apparent this quarter, when Taliban fighters stole ANDSF Humvees, filled them with explosives, and then drove the bomb-laden vehicles into police facilities in Paktiya province, leaving more than 80 Afghan officers dead. Two days later, the Taliban used similar tactics to attack an ANA base in Kandahar province, killing more than 40. The Taliban's ongoing shift away from large-scale battles to what Resolute Support described as "guerilla-style tactics" against ANDSF checkpoints, installations, and convoys was especially notable in Helmand province, where U.S. and Afghan forces expanded their campaign against the Taliban.

As the Taliban experienced pressure in the southern part of the country, it increased its attacks in the western provinces, particularly Herat province.<sup>74</sup> USFOR-A noted that checkpoint ambushes in Herat were often unsuccessful, causing the Taliban to shift its attention to ANDSF convoys travelling through the province. Local media reported that the Taliban suffered many casualties during ANDSF offensives against Taliban positions in Herat province. For example, a 10-day operation in Herat's southern Shindand district left as many as 75 Taliban fighters dead.

Herat and the southern provinces remained important theaters of operations for the Taliban. Taliban fighters operating in the south often fused operations with local criminal groups to facilitate movement of personnel, weapons, equipment, and narcotics to other provinces. Resolute Support reported this quarter that the primary Taliban objective was "to freely flex fighters and resources throughout the region" and to disrupt and repel ANDSF and coalition forces that sought to suppress criminal and insurgent activity.

In the northern provinces, the ANDSF focused operations on clearing and securing territory and transportation routes, particularly in the Ghormach district of Badghis province and along Highway 1 (also known as the "Ring Road"). Resolute Support reported that the Taliban continued to threaten major roadways and small areas of territory, if only temporarily, and conducted small-scale attacks on ANDSF checkpoints.

This quarter, USFOR-A observed an increase in Taliban procurement and use of commercial scopes for rifles. These rifle attachments, which are widely available, have provided the Taliban an advantage over the ANDSF during checkpoint attacks, as they enable Taliban fighters to fire more accurately from greater distances and stay out of range of ANDSF return fire.

## LIG Estimate of Role of ISIS I: End 2017



By the end of the quarter, ISIS-K controlled territory in just 3 of 22 districts of Nangarhar province (Achin, Deh Bella, and Pachir wa Agam), down from 9 districts at its peak in November 2015, as shown in Figure 4. In particular, USFOR-A and ANDSF routed ISIS-K from Kot district, cutting off a key supply route for ISIS-K fighters and weapons from border districts, particularly Achin, to districts in central Nangarhar province.

The Afghan MoD and Resolute Support reported killing approximately 1,600 ISIS-K fighters in 2017.<sup>104</sup> The campaign against ISIS-K and the Taliban in Nangarhar province has also been costly for U.S. forces. Of the 15 U.S. forces fatalities in 2017, 8 occurred in Nangarhar province, though not all deaths were the result.

## LIG Estimate of Role of ISIS II: End 2017

In 2015-2016, ISIS-K eclipsed al Qaeda as the focus of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan. Although ISIS has a stated goal of carrying out global attacks and forming a caliphate, and ISIS has been either responsible for or the inspiration for many attacks in the West, the affiliate ISIS-K is largely focused on violence inside Afghanistan. Despite rumors that ISIS fighters have been fleeing Iraq and Syria to join ISIS-K, DoD officials have stated there is no evidence of that. Instead, ISIS-K is filling its ranks primarily with Pakistani and Afghan militants who are defecting from other terrorist or insurgent groups.

...As ISIS-K lost territory in Nangarhar province, General Nicholson cautioned that ISIS-K fighters could regroup and relocate to another part of Afghanistan. Over the course of the year, small numbers of self-proclaimed ISIS-K militants appeared in Jowzjan, Kunar, and other provinces.<sup>106</sup> However, these militants may not benefit from the same geographic, social, and security advantages that favored rapid ISIS-K growth in Nangarhar province, such as weak government and Taliban control in rural areas, deep mountain cave networks, and a long tradition of Salafist ideology and education in the region.

Additionally, it is not clear to what extent the various ISIS-K factions in Afghanistan cooperate with each other. USFOR-A said ISIS-K might shift its focus from controlling territory to launching more high profile attacks. According to USFOR-A, ISIS-K “utilizes easily-procured explosive precursors readily available in Pakistan” and then transfers them to Kabul for attacks.<sup>109</sup> During the quarter, ISIS-K claimed responsibility for several mass-casualty attacks in Kabul, including attacks targeting an intelligence training center, a television station, a Shia cultural center, and an Afghan intelligence office near the U.S. embassy.<sup>110</sup> ISIS-K continued to be able to procure weapons and recruit fighters from outside Afghanistan and it has demonstrated an ability to continue attacking Kabul despite growing pressure on its core territory in Nangarhar. General Nicholson noted, however, that pressure on ISIS in Iraq and Syria has not resulted in a surge of fighters transiting to Afghanistan.

This quarter, USFOR-A reported that the level of and potential for ISIS-K cooperation with the Taliban remained low. Last quarter, an attack in Sar-e Pul province raised concerns that the two groups might join forces, but a subsequent investigation by the United Nations found that local militants claimed dual affiliation for local and political purposes, not because the two groups were launching joint operations.



# LIG Estimate of Role of Al Qaida: End 2017

Founded in 1988, al Qaeda Core (AQ) carried out a series of spectacular terrorist attacks, culminating in the September 11, 2001 attacks. Counterterrorism operations have killed many high-level members, including founder Osama bin Laden, disrupting the organization's ability to carry out plots against Western targets. AQ has not succeeded in executing audacious attacks since 2005, which CNA attributed to a combination of successful counterterrorism efforts, the rise of ISIS, and the lackluster leadership of bin Laden's replacement, Ayman al Zawahiri. CNA reported that while "far-flung franchisees" operate outside of AQ's control and its brand has become increasingly "toxic," it has still provided theological and ideological inspiration and strategic and operational guidance to affiliates in nearly two dozen countries. While AQ has been severely degraded, the group has been able to replenish its ranks and remain tightly knit, and has proven to be "resilient, agile, and tenacious."

Al Qaeda and its affiliate, al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent retain a limited presence in Afghanistan (see page 32). USFOR-A assessed that "the safe haven support that Afghan-based AQ members likely receive from other [violent extremist organizations] is probably the greatest obstacle to eliminating their presence in Afghanistan."

During the quarter, ANDSF and coalition forces conducted operations against al Qaeda in Ghazni, Zabul, and Pakiya provinces, resulting in the deaths of several al Qaeda fighters. An operation in Ghazni province killed Omar Khateb, who Afghan intelligence and U.S. officials described as the most senior al Qaeda leader killed since October 2016.

Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) was founded in 2014 as a conglomerate of groups operating in Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, and Pakistan. However, the group may be "more about the appearance of expansion" in reaction to the AQ's split with ISIS than about actual expansion. AQ members are involved in AQIS's leadership and provide guidance to AQIS. The group's largest attack was a failed attempt to hijack a Pakistani warship in 2014. Otherwise, AQIS has mainly carried out low-level attacks since its formation, such as hit-and-run assassinations of scholars, bloggers, social activists, and authors. While AQIS goals align with AQ's, CNA described AQIS as the "weakest and least active" al Qaeda affiliate and said that it poses "little if any threat to the United States."

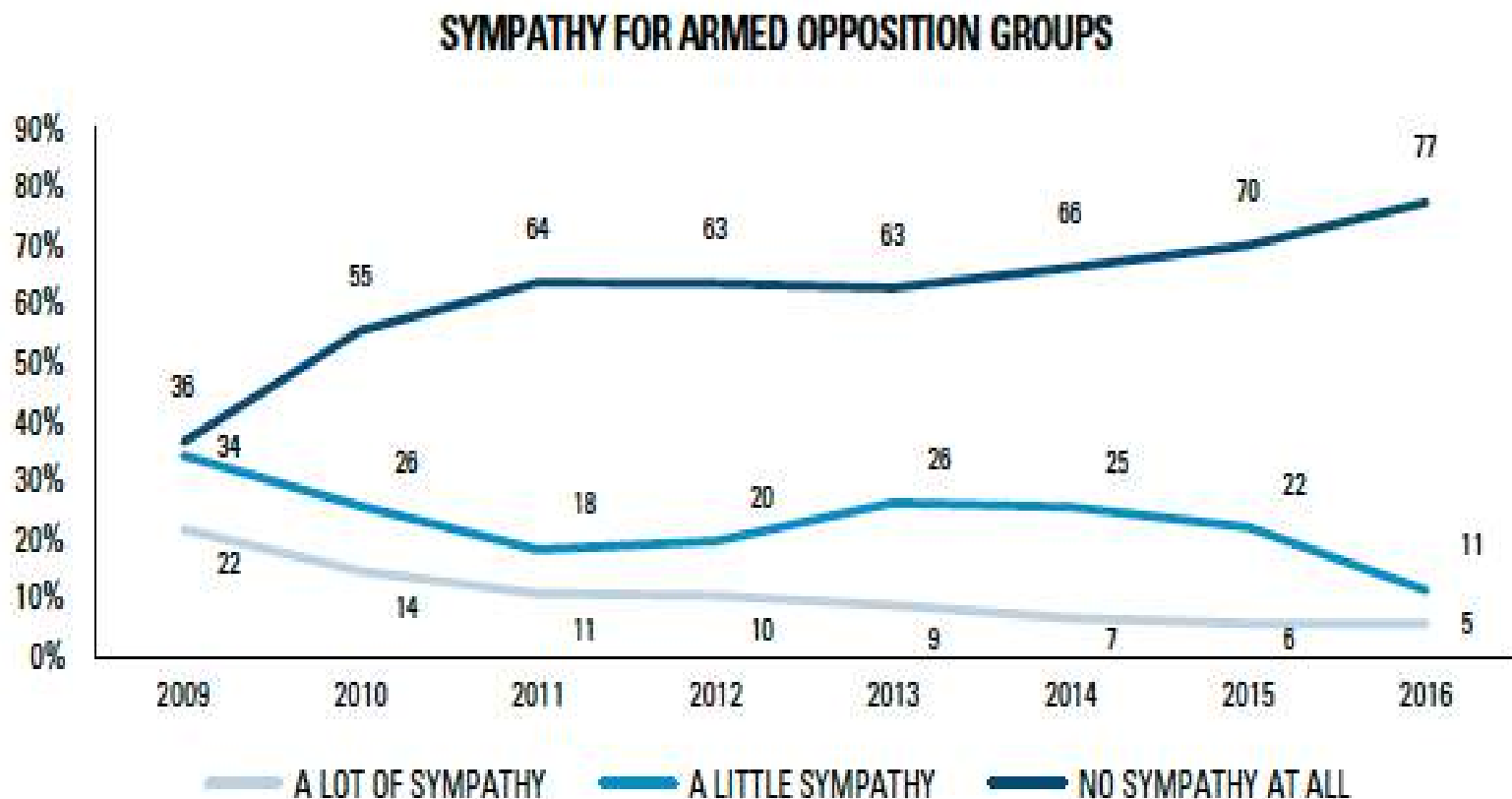
Experts contend, however, that al Qaeda remains the predominant threat to the United States. Despite the fact that the United States went to war in Afghanistan in 2001 to eliminate al Qaeda and affiliated groups and supporters, 16 years later, the group still has a presence in the country.<sup>126</sup> According to estimates, there are 50-200 al Qaeda militants in Afghanistan and Pakistan. While their capability to plan and carry out attacks along the lines of 9/11 has been substantially degraded, the threat is not eliminated.

Experts state that al Qaeda has been able to exploit the rise of ISIS-K to rebuild and rebrand itself as a more "moderate" terrorist group. It has also lowered its profile and deepened ties with the Taliban according to analysts, and it continues to focus on a "long game."

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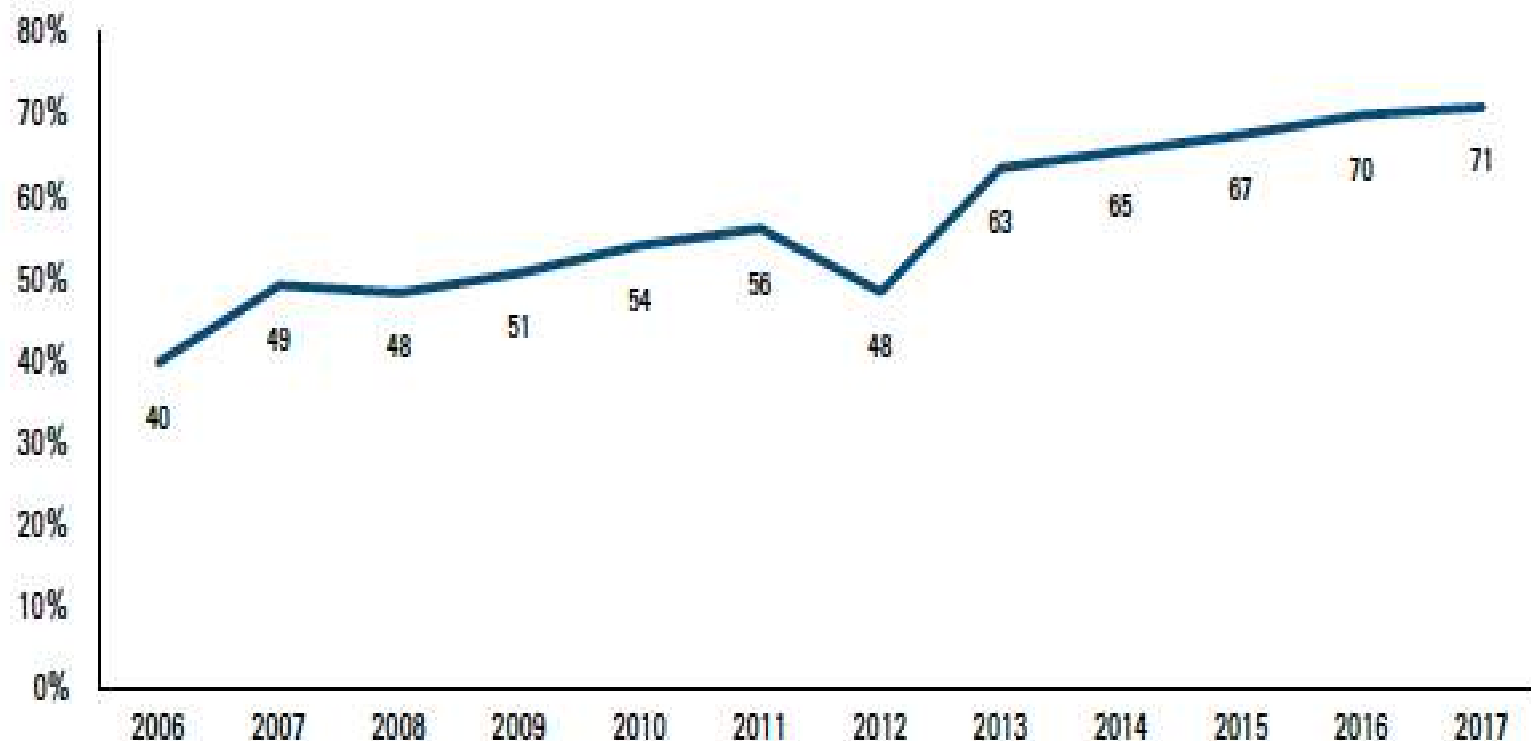
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Source: Asia Foundation, *Afghanistan in 2017: A Survey of the Afghan People*, November 14, 2017, <https://asiafoundation.org/publication/afghanistan-2017-survey-afghan-people/>, p. 59.



**FIG 2.16: x77a.** *Thinking about the reasons why armed opposition groups have been fighting during the past year, in general, would you say that you have a lot of sympathy, a little sympathy, or no sympathy at all for armed opposition groups?*

## FEAR FOR PERSONAL SAFETY



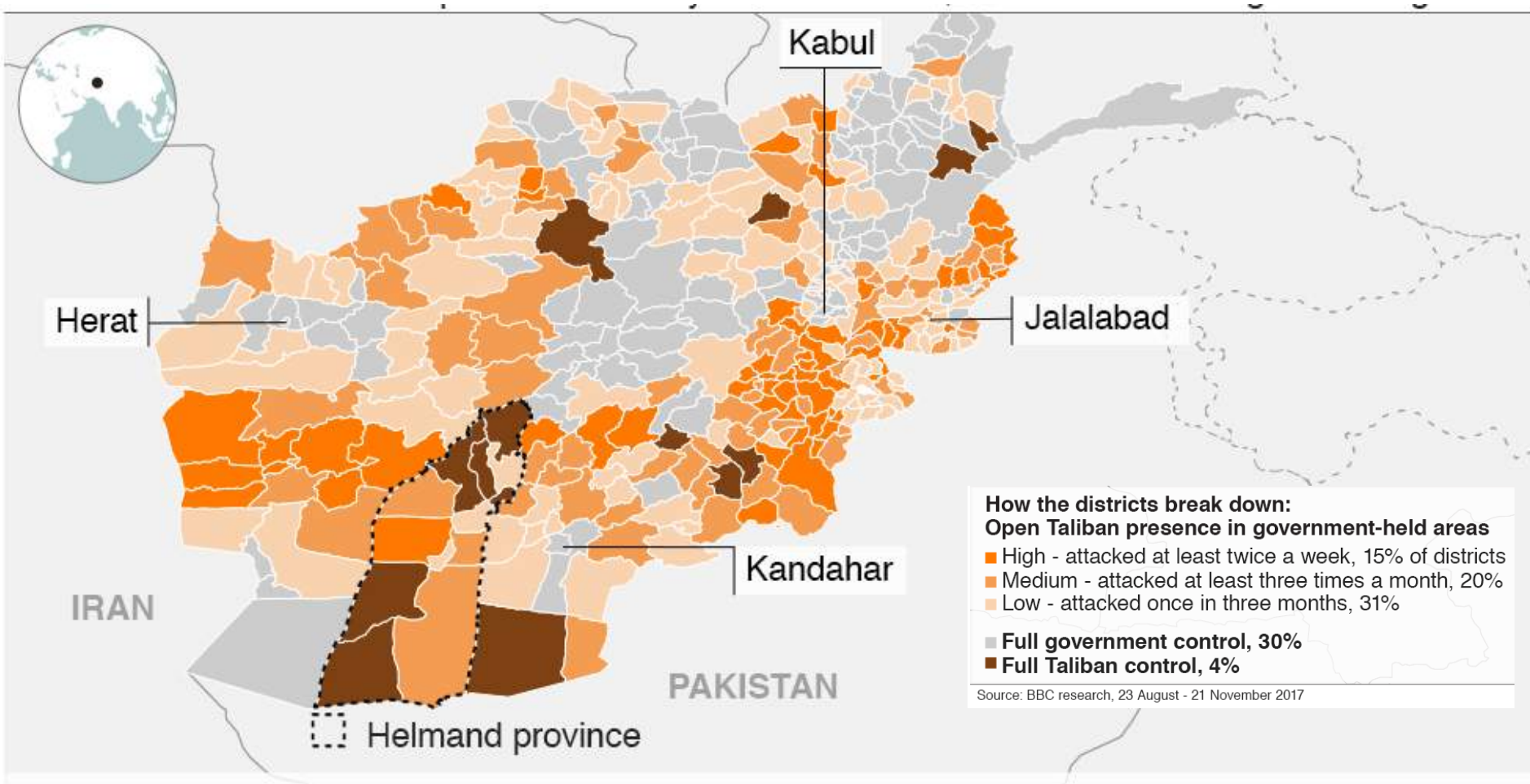
**FIG. 2.1: Q-17.** *How often do you fear for your own personal safety or security or for that of your family these days? Would you say you always, often, sometimes, rarely, or never fear for you and your family's safety? (Percent who respond "always," "often," or "sometimes.")*



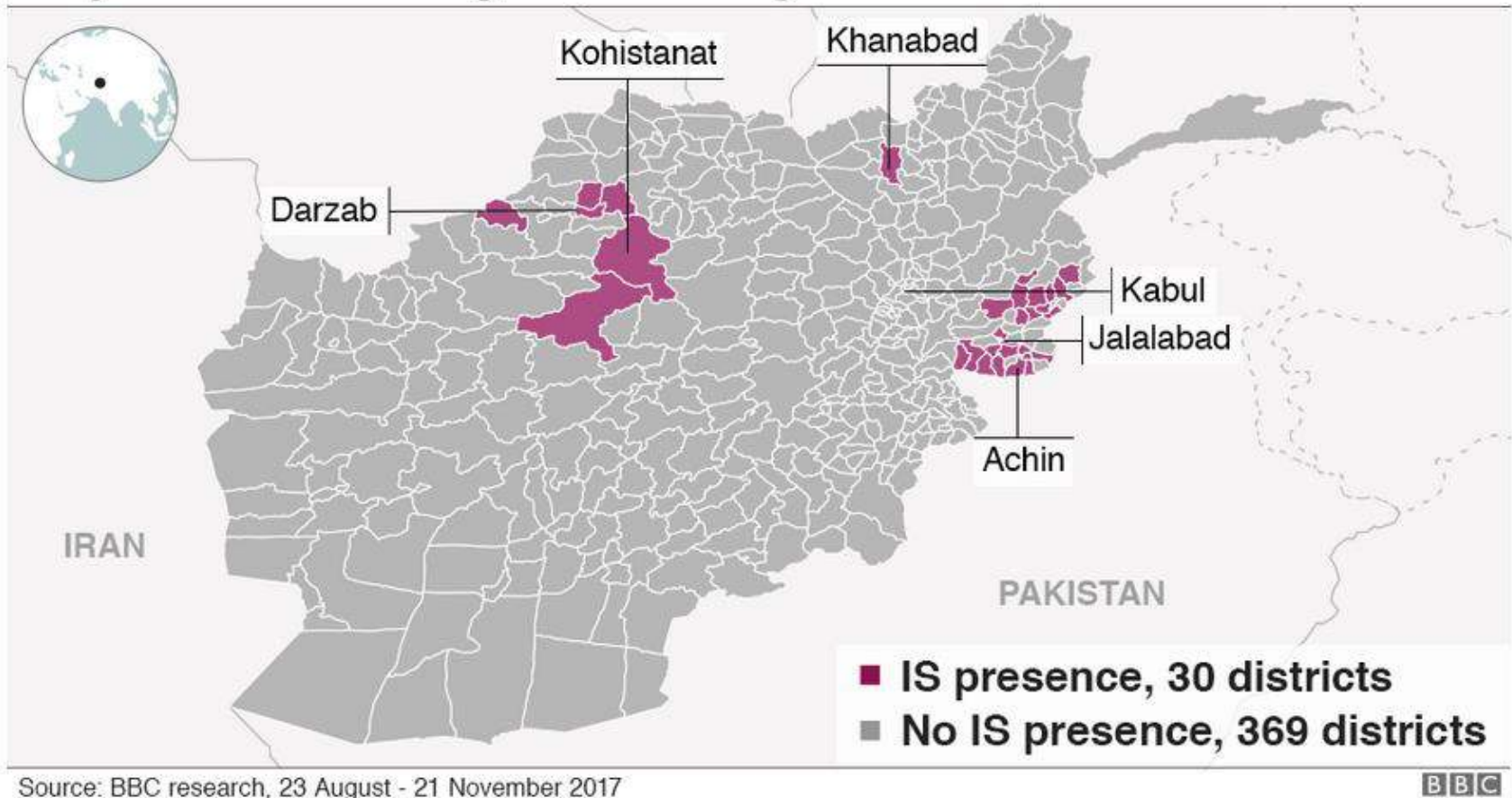
**BBC: January 2018 – I**

## Taliban presence in Afghanistan by district

Labelled cities have also experienced deadly suicide attacks, car bombs and targeted killings



## IS presence in Afghanistan by district



## **BBC: January 2018 – III**

### **Taliban presence in Afghanistan by district**

Labelled cities have also experienced deadly suicide attacks, car bombs and targeted killings

**Taliban fighters, whom US-led forces spent billions of dollars trying to defeat, are now openly active in 70% of Afghanistan, a BBC study has found.**

**Months of research across the country shows that the Taliban now control or threaten much more territory than when foreign combat troops left in 2014.**

**The Afghan government played down the report, saying it controls most areas.**

**But recent attacks claimed by Taliban and Islamic State group militants have killed scores in Kabul and elsewhere.**

**Afghan officials and US President Donald Trump have responded by ruling out any talks with the Taliban. Last year Mr Trump announced the US military would stay in the country indefinitely.**

**The BBC research also suggests that IS is more active in Afghanistan than ever before, although it remains far less powerful than the Taliban.**

**How much territory do the Taliban control?**

**The BBC study shows the Taliban are now in full control of 14 districts (that's 4% of the country) and have an active and open physical presence in a further 263 (66%), significantly higher than previous estimates of Taliban strength.**

**About 15 million people - half the population - are living in areas that are either controlled by the Taliban or where the Taliban are openly present and regularly mount attacks.**

**"When I leave home, I'm uncertain whether I will come back alive," said one man, Sardar, in Shindand, a western district that suffers weekly attacks. "Explosions, terror and the Taliban are part of our daily life."**

**The extent to which the Taliban have pushed beyond their traditional southern stronghold into eastern, western and northern parts of the country is clearly visible from the BBC study.**

**Areas that have fallen to the Taliban since 2014 include places in Helmand province like Sangin, Musa Qala and Nad-e Ali, which foreign forces fought and died to bring under government control after US-led troops had driven the Taliban from power in 2001. More than 450 British troops died in Helmand between 2001 and 2014.**

**In the areas defined as having an active and open Taliban presence, the militants conduct frequent attacks against Afghan government positions. These range from large organised group strikes on military bases to sporadic single attacks and ambushes against military convoys and police checkpoints.**

# **BBC: January 2018 – IV**

## **Taliban presence in Afghanistan by district**

Labelled cities have also experienced deadly suicide attacks, car bombs and targeted killings

During the research period, the BBC study found 122 districts (just over 30% of the country) did not have an open Taliban presence. These areas are ranked as under government control, but that does not mean they were free of violence.

Kabul and other major cities, for example, suffered major attacks - launched from adjacent areas, or by sleeper cells - during the research period, as well as before and after.

The BBC's research has been [reviewed by the Kabul-based Afghanistan Analysts Network, which has been reporting on Afghanistan since 2009.](#)

Co-Director Kate Clark said: "Such a well-researched investigation into the Afghan war is rare and very welcome. The findings are shocking, but unfortunately not surprising - they ring true as an accurate mapping of the extent of the conflict.

"But it is disturbing to realise that each bit of orange shading on the map translates into lives lost and damaged."

In 2016, Afghan civilian casualties [hit a new high](#) - a rise attributed by the UN largely to the Taliban

Violence has soared since international combat troops left Afghanistan three years ago.

More than 8,500 civilians were killed or injured in the first three-quarters of 2017, according to the UN. Final figures for the year are awaited. The vast majority of Afghans die in insurgent violence but civilians often suffer as the military, with US backing, fights back, both on the ground and from the air.

Although much of the violence goes unreported, big attacks in the cities tend to make the headlines. Such attacks are occurring with greater frequency and the Afghan security forces appear unable to stop them.

During the research period, gunmen stormed the headquarters of Kabul's Shamshad TV, leaving one staff member dead and 20 wounded. IS said it carried out the attack. There were other attacks in Kandahar, Herat and Jalalabad.

In the last 10 days of January three attacks left the capital reeling, with more than 130 people dead. Last May, Kabul experienced the deadliest single militant attack since 2001.

How much territory does the government say it controls?

Presented with the BBC's findings, President Ashraf Ghani's spokesman Shah Hussain Murtazavi said: "In some districts areas may change hands. But if you look at the situation this year [2017/18] the activities of the Taliban and IS have been considerably curtailed.



## **BBC: January 2018 – V**

### **Taliban presence in Afghanistan by district**

Labelled cities have also experienced deadly suicide attacks, car bombs and targeted killings

**"The Afghan security forces have won the war in the villages. It is no longer possible for the militants to take control of a province, a major district or a highway. There's no doubt that they have changed the nature of the war and are launching attacks on Kabul, targeting mosques and bazaars."**

**He added: "My understanding is that the BBC report is influenced by conversations with people who may have experienced some kind of incident maybe for an hour in one day. But the activities and services provided by our local administrations across the districts show that the government is in control in the absolute majority of districts - except for a handful where the Taliban are present."**

**However, in an acknowledgement of how far security has deteriorated, President Trump agreed last year to deploy 3,000 more soldiers, taking the size of the US force in Afghanistan to about 14,000.**

**On the eve of the publication of the BBC study, the US military denied trying to prevent a government watchdog from disclosing the amount of Afghan territory believed to be under the control of the Taliban. [In its latest report the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction \(Sigar\)](#) had said it found the move troubling.**

**Meanwhile, there is no prospect of an end to the conflict and a new generation of Afghans live in the shadow of violence.**

**"My kids are not safe outside the family home so I don't let them out," said Pahlawan, a Kabul carpet seller with 13 children.**

**"They are basically under house arrest. I have built them a school in my warehouse. Their world is walls and carpets. Although we are in Kabul, it's like raising them in a jungle."**

## UN: February 2018 - I

The Secretary-General of the United Nations (UN) reported in late February that the security situation in Afghanistan remained highly unstable as conflict between the government and insurgents continued throughout the country and high-profile attacks in urban centers increased. The UN reported 23,744 security incidents during 2017, the most ever recorded, but only a negligible increase from 2016.

Armed clashes continued to cause the most security incidents (63% of incidents), roughly on par with 2016, followed by improvised explosive devices (IEDs) and air strikes. The UN said that the 950 air strikes recorded in 2017 represented a nearly 68% increase compared with the same period in 2016, though the U.S. Air Force's figure (4,361 strikes during 1,248 missions) is significantly higher. Notably, suicide attacks increased by 50%, and targeted killings and abductions increased by 6% compared with 2016.

The eastern and southern regions of Afghanistan continued to experience the highest number of security incidents in 2017, comprising 55% of the total. 99 USFOR-A commented that the uptick in security incidents in 2017 was partially the result of increased military and police activity compared to 2016. From December 15, 2017, to February 15, 2018, the UN recorded 3,521 security incidents, a 6% decrease compared to the same period last year....this is an average of 55.9 incidents per day, a nearly three incident-per-day decrease compared to the same period last year (58.6), but nearly four incidents per day higher than the same period two years ago (52.1). This quarter's figure remains considerably lower than the daily average of 64.1 incidents over the last three years.

...The UN noted the spike in high-casualty attacks in urban areas over the reporting period, in particular two high-profile complex attacks and a large vehicle bombing in Kabul....Despite the uptick in violence in the cities, the winter season saw a decline in the number of direct Taliban attacks throughout the country, with the Taliban failing to seize any provincial capitals or district centers during the reporting period. Afghan and international officials attributed this to the intensified air-strike campaign by Coalition and Afghan forces and more night raids by Afghan special forces.

Still, the insurgency continued to place pressure on Afghan forces, with coordinated attacks against ANDSF checkpoints in Helmand, Kandahar, Nimroz, Kunduz, Ghazni, and Farah Provinces. These attacks did not result in significant territorial gains for the insurgency, but inflicted casualties on the ANDSF and allowed insurgents to capture their weaponry and logistical supplies. As was the case throughout 2017, the Taliban continued to control some of Afghanistan's more remote territories.

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) documented 10,453 civilian casualties from January 1, 2017, through December 31, 2017, an overall decrease of 9% compared to 2016 and the first year-on-year decrease since 2012. The casualties included 3,438 deaths.

## UN: February 2018 - II

UNAMA also reported a very slight increase in civilian casualties recorded from January 1 through March 31, 2018, compared to the same period in 2017. UNAMA remarked that civilian casualties remain at the high levels recorded during the first quarter of the last two years: there were 2,258 casualties (763 deaths and 1,495 injuries) in the first quarter of this year, 2,255 over the same period in 2017, and 2,268 in 2016. In a change from previous years, suicide IEDs and complex attacks were the leading cause of civilian casualties thus far in 2018 (33% of casualties), followed by ground engagements (30%) and non-suicide IEDs (12%).

During the first quarter of 2018, UNAMA “note[d] with concern” that the number of civilian casualties caused by anti-government elements had increased significantly. Anti-government elements caused 67% of civilian casualties, a 6% increase from the same period last year. Of these, 50% were attributed to Taliban, 11% to IS-K, 4% to unidentified anti-governmental elements (including self-proclaimed IS-K), and 2% to fighting between antigovernment groups. Anti-government attacks which deliberately targeted civilians accounted for 39% of all civilian casualties, more than double last year’s recorded Pro-government forces caused 18% of all civilian casualties in the first three months of 2018, a 13% reduction when compared to the same period in 2017.

Of these, 11% were attributed to the ANDSF, 2% to international military forces, 4% to undetermined pro-government forces, and 1% to pro-government armed groups. Also notable was that civilian casualties from ground engagements decreased by 15%, and child casualties (583, including 155 deaths and 428 injuries) decreased by 23% compared to last year.

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# DNI Assessment 2/2018

## Afghanistan

*The overall situation in Afghanistan probably will deteriorate modestly this year in the face of persistent political instability, sustained attacks by the Taliban-led insurgency, unsteady Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) performance, and chronic financial shortfalls.*

The National Unity Government probably will struggle to hold long-delayed parliamentary elections, currently scheduled for July 2018, and to prepare for a presidential election in 2019. The ANSF probably will maintain control of most major population centers with coalition force support, but the intensity and geographic scope of Taliban activities will put those centers under continued strain. Afghanistan's economic growth will stagnate at around 2.5 percent per year, and Kabul will remain reliant on international donors for the great majority of its funding well beyond 2018.

## Pakistan

*Pakistan will continue to threaten US interests by deploying new nuclear weapons capabilities, maintaining its ties to militants, restricting counterterrorism cooperation, and drawing closer to China.*

Militant groups supported by Islamabad will continue to take advantage of their safe haven in Pakistan to plan and conduct attacks in India and Afghanistan, including against US interests. Pakistan's perception of its eroding position relative to India, reinforced by endemic economic weakness and domestic security issues, almost certainly will exacerbate long-held fears of isolation and drive Islamabad's pursuit of actions that run counter to US goals for the region.



# **DIA Assessment 2/2018**

## **Afghanistan**

**In South Asia during the past year, Afghan national defense and security forces (ANDSF) protected major population centers and denied the Taliban strategic gains while combating ISIS-Khorasan. ISIS-Khorasan intends to expand ISIS's self-declared caliphate and compete with the Taliban for recognition as the dominant militant group in the region. Although degraded, al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent, which represents al-Qa'ida's primary geographic and ideological presence in South Asia, has retained the intent and limited capability to threaten coalition and Afghan forces and interests in the region.**

**We assess that the ANDSF will build on incremental successes from the previous year by developing additional offensive capabilities and setting conditions for major military operations. We expect the Taliban to threaten Afghan stability and undermine public confidence by conducting intermittent high-profile attacks in urban areas, increasing influence in rural terrain, threatening district centers, and challenging vulnerable ANDSF locations. Rural areas will remain contested between the Taliban and the ANDSF over the next year as the Taliban consolidates control in these areas and attempts to pressure provincial capitals, predominantly in the south and northwest.**

**The ANDSF will almost certainly need to focus on increasing its fighting capability, improving its leadership development and unity of command, and countering corruption to further develop a sustainable security solution in Afghanistan that would compel the Taliban to seek negotiations to end the conflict. Continued coalition airstrikes as well as train, advise, and assist efforts this year will remain critical enablers to improving the ANDSF's ability to forestall Taliban advances beyond rural areas and in extending security and governance.**

## **Pakistan**

**Islamabad is likely to proceed with its counterinsurgency operations and border management efforts along its western border while sustaining counterterrorism and paramilitary operations throughout the country. These efforts have had some success in reducing violence from militant, sectarian, terrorist, and separatist groups, but Pakistan will look to the United States and the Afghan government for support against anti-Pakistan fighters in Afghanistan.**

## **Chairman JCS Views- I: March 2018**

**Marine Corps Gen. Joe Dunford, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff,...told reporters traveling with him that ...the advisory effort is already having an effect with the Afghans being able to leverage coalition air and ground fires and also being able to integrate coalition fires with Afghan fires. "Their ability at the tactical level to conduct combined arms [operations] in conjunction with maneuver will be significantly improved by the advisory effort....As I reflected on the last 18 to 24 months," Dunford said, "it really was the Afghan special security forces, with our special operations advisors, that have actually bought the time and space that allows us to implement the South Asia strategy."**

**The current U.S. and coalition campaign in Afghanistan "is not another year of the same thing we've been doing for 17 years," Dunford said. Through 2013, he said, U.S. forces were in the lead in Afghanistan. In June 2013, Afghan forces took the lead in terms of authority and responsibility. That began a coalition drawdown from 140,000 troops in the country to 28,000 by the end of 2014.**

**The number of coalition forces in the country further dropped to "8,000 and we weren't able to deliver an advisory effort at the right level," Dunford believes the right levels of resources now back the strategy, and this should bring new capabilities, boost confidence and build momentum in Afghanistan. This should bring pressure to bear on the Taliban to stop fighting and give them the incentive to reintegrate with the Afghan population and, more broadly, to seek some political process in Afghanistan for peace. "With the conditions-based strategy now, the Taliban is looking at perpetual war that they cannot win"**

**The chairman said he is optimistic about the military campaign this year because of the growing capabilities of the Afghan air force and the expertise with which the Afghans are integrating the capabilities into their battle plans. The campaign this summer is designed to help the government secure more of the country to enable citizens to vote in legislative elections this fall and in presidential elections in 2019. The Afghan government would like to expand government control so more of the population can participate.**

**Security of the elections and a reduction in casualties among Afghan forces are two metrics the chairman said he will examine moving forward.**

## **Chairman JCS Views- II: March 2018**

**“I would expect to see a reduction in the casualties experienced by the Afghan forces as a result of their ability to integrate combined arms and their ability to cooperate across the pillars of security.**

**The chairman said he expects the United States to play a role in reconciliation efforts between the Afghan government and the Taliban. “Our strategy for South Asia includes reconciliation as one of the end states,” he said. “It’s our objective as well as the Afghans.”.. Having a reintegration process for those Taliban willing to make peace, he said, will support the longer-term goal of reconciliation. “They are related...What we expect to see now is a formal reintegration program supported by the Afghans, the United States and the coalition.”**

**The character of the fight is different at every Training Advise Assist Command in the country, and advisors are going to have to adapt their advice to the needs of the Afghan forces they are based with, the chairman said.**

**At Tactical Base Gamberi in the eastern part of the country, advisors work with the Afghan 201st Corps. The battle plan is well-developed and leaders expect deliberate operations to wrest area from the Taliban.**

**In the Train Advice Assist Command – Southwest region, the Afghans control central Helmand province’s population centers. The overall province is a very rural area and the fighting is really over denying the Taliban the resources from drugs.**

### **Well-Trained Advisors**

**“We sent over these well-trained, experienced, hand-selected advisors and now they have to adapt to the environment they are in and what the Afghans need,” Dunford said.**

**The key in Afghanistan is to bring political pressure, social pressure and military pressure to bear on the Taliban to convince them they cannot win on the battlefield, the chairman said. “What is the impact on the Taliban’s will to fight as they increasingly look up in the sky and it’s no longer coalition aircraft -- it’s Afghan aircraft? When they see the pillars of security are cooperating? When they realize that the forces giving them the toughest times are doubling in size?... Am I focused on doing all those things simultaneously? Yes. That’s my message going back home and that’s what [Defense Secretary James N. Mattis] came back with as well. We have the military elements in place. Let’s make sure we are equally focused on the other elements of the strategy.”**

# Command Views- I: March 2018

Army Brig. Gen Michael R. Fenzel, the chief of plans for the Resolute Support mission here, said Afghan security forces are a force in being. They do have problems, but they are being addressed, he said. The Afghans' capabilities today are something he could only imagine during earlier deployments to the country, he added.

It goes beyond purely military aspects, Fenzel said, as the Afghan government is moving against corruption and nepotism and the government is working to replace older, less professional military officers with better-trained and younger ones.

## South Asia Strategy

President Donald J. Trump's South Asia Strategy unveiled in August also played a large part, the general said, as America's commitment to the Afghan theater is not time constrained now, and more advisors working at different levels with increased permissions.

"I won't purport to speak for the Taliban, but I have to imagine that their big plans to march on Kabul as we left, and now they see us with no time line, additional commitments, overwhelming commitment of enablers that comes with this shift of the main effort from Iraq and Syria to Afghanistan, and they are seeing it on the ground. ... It's got to be demoralizing from the Taliban's perspective," Fenzel said in an interview with reporters traveling with Marine Corps Gen. Joe Dunford, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

Some 88 percent of the Afghan population does not support the Taliban, Fenzel said. "You look where they are now as we enter this fighting season," he said. "We are more capable as an advisory force than we've ever been before, and the Afghan fighting forces are more effective than they have ever been before.

"I have to wonder if they don't say to themselves, 'Perhaps now is as good as it is going to get for reconciliation,'" he continued. "That is our end state: getting to the negotiating table so we can realize peace."

Ghani is open to negotiations, but he, the Afghan forces and the coalition will continue pressure against the Taliban to help them make the right decision for the country.

Army Maj. Gen. Christopher F. Bentley, senior advisor to the ministry of defense at U.S. Forces Afghanistan, has five tours in Afghanistan, beginning in 2001. This is Afghanistan's struggle, he said, noting that Ghani and his national unity government have defined the road map for the country. Though he and Army Gen. [John M. Nicholson](#), the commander of the Resolute Support mission and of U.S. forces in Afghanistan helped to define the scope, he emphasized that success is an Afghan goal.

Bentley said the South Asia Strategy has caused many changes in Afghanistan. The biggest effect of the announcement was the realization among government leaders and the Afghan population that "America's not leaving," he said.



## Command Views- II: March 2018

That changed the calculus in the country, he added, with government leaders and forces taking new heart and the Taliban realizing they could not just “wait out” the NATO mission. Taliban leaders realized that “they need to get in the arena or get left behind,” Bentley said.

### Security in Kabul is High Priority

Security in Afghanistan’s capital of Kabul is front and center this year, Bentley said, as the nation also readies for elections. Whenever the election is, he added, the security situation will be such that it can happen.

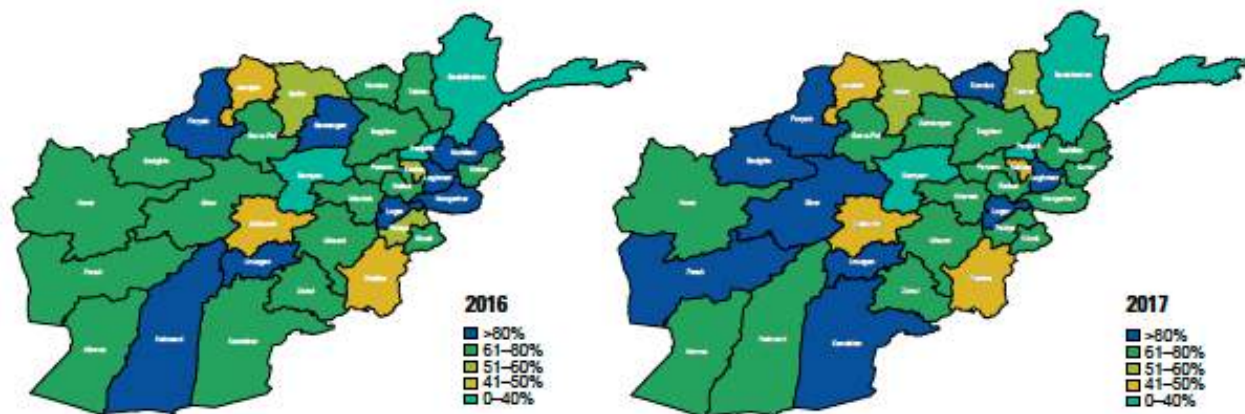
Kabul is a growing challenge. In 2001, its population was around 1.2 million. It is now more than 5 million. The capital is the economic heartbeat of the country, and Afghan forces must provide for the safety of the citizens. “The security piece has been redefined over the last 90 days to better incorporate a holistic national defense infrastructure,” Bentley said.

Recent attacks in Kabul – as horrific as they are – are not military, he noted -- they are terrorism, pure and simple. The Taliban cannot challenge Afghan forces in pitched battles, he said, and certainly cannot do so in Kabul. That is why they have reverted to attacks on civilian, soft targets, he explained.

Still, he added, these attacks draw the attention of the world.

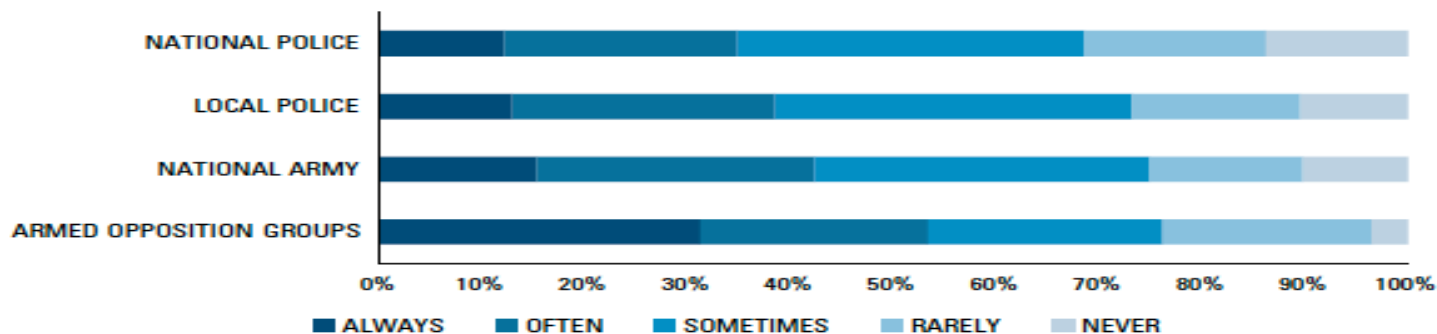
“Every event that happens in Kabul, whether we define it as tactical or not, has a strategic implication,” he said. “We must allow for a secure Kabul that allows for the social and economic growth of its citizens.”

## FEAR FOR PERSONAL SAFETY, BY PROVINCE



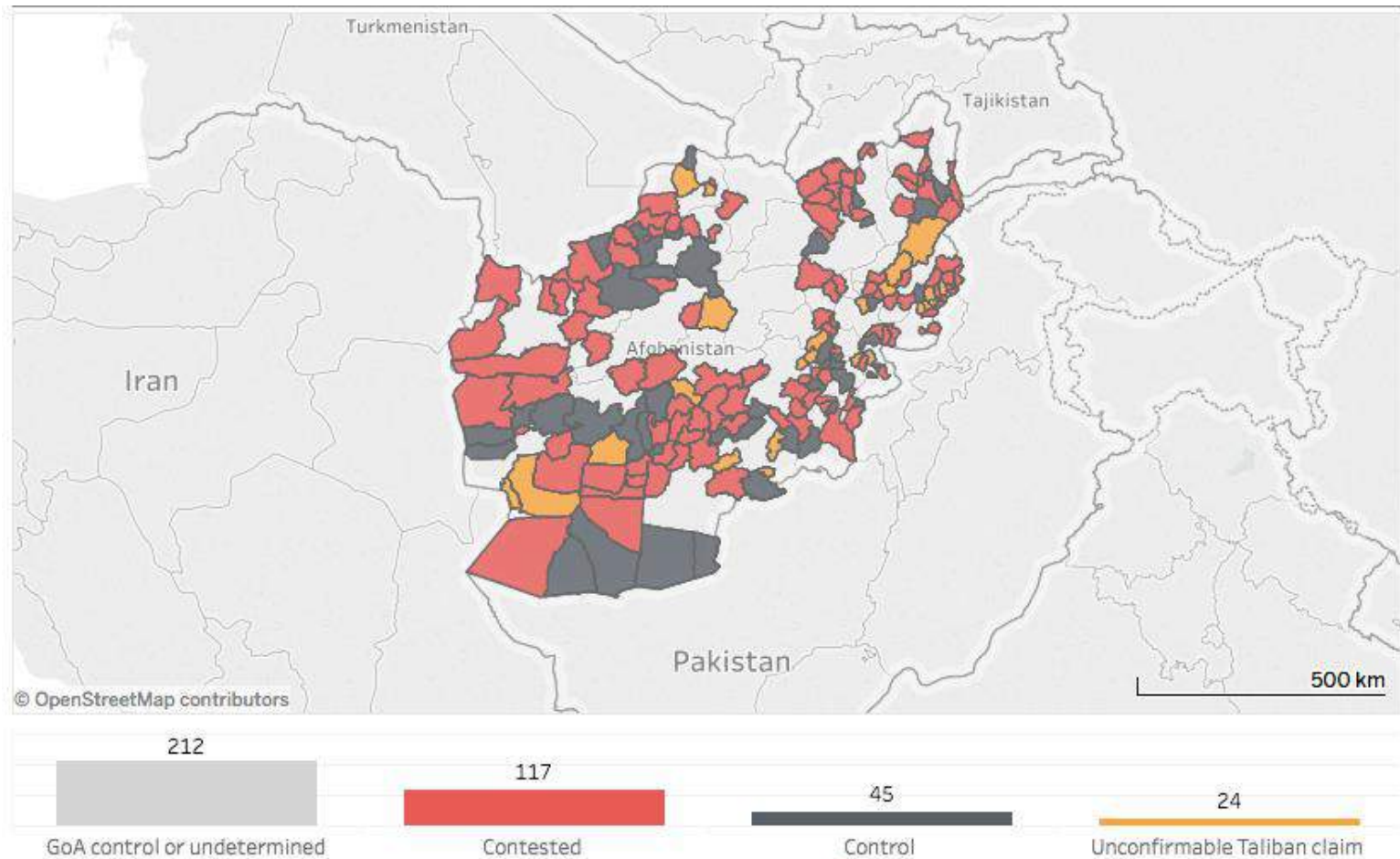
**FIG. 2.2: Q-17.** *How often do you fear for your own personal safety or security or for that of your family these days? Would you say you always, often, sometimes, rarely, or never fear for you and your family's safety? (Percent who respond "always," "often," or "sometimes.")*

## FEAR FOR PERSONAL SAFETY, BY SECURITY PROVIDER



**FIG. 2.3: Q-11.** *There are many security forces in the country. Which of these groups would you say is most responsible for providing security in your village/gozar? Q-17.* *How often do you fear for your own personal safety or security or for that of your family these days? Would you say you always, often, sometimes, rarely, or never fear for you and your family's safety?*

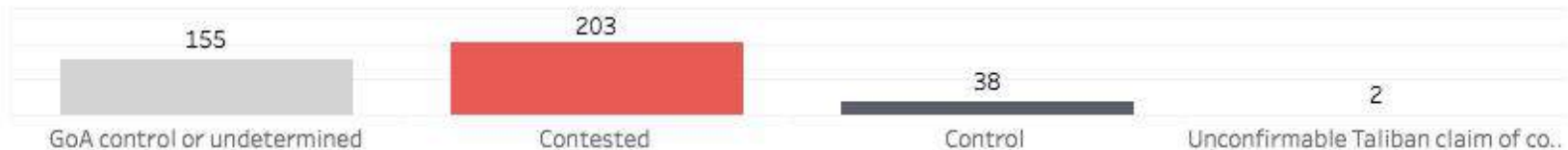
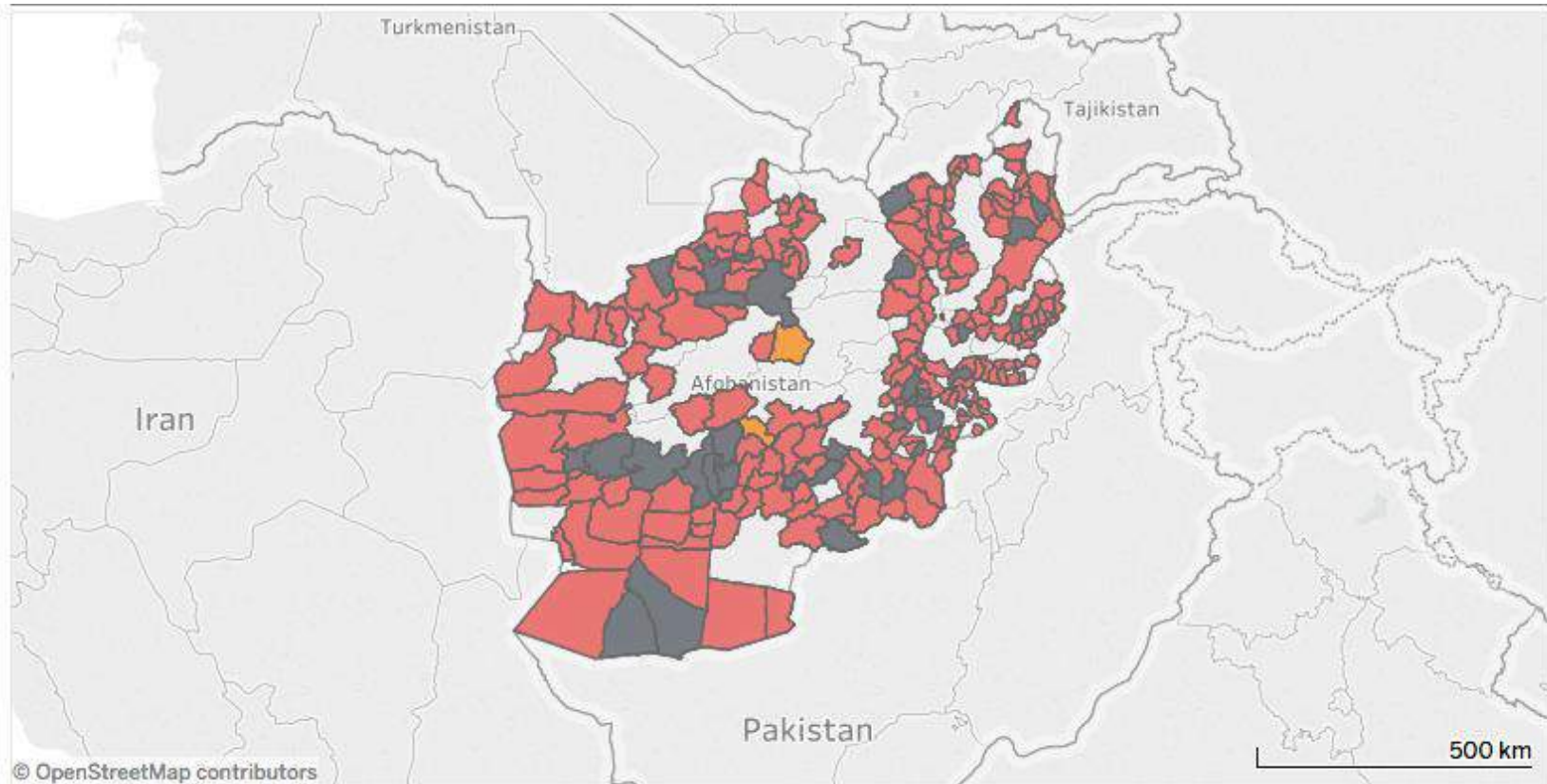
# Major Shifts in FDD Long-War Journal Estimate of Taliban Control in Afghanistan – I : Estimate of 11/1/2018



The data and research behind this map are entirely open-source. This is a living map that FDD's Long War Journal frequently updates as verifiable research is conducted to support control changes. Any "Unconfirmed" district colored orange has some level of claim-of-control made by the Taliban, but either has not yet been—or can not be— independently verified by FDD's Long War Journal research. A "Contested" district means that the government may be in control of the district center, but little else, and the Taliban controls large areas or all of the areas outside of the district center. A "Control" district means the Taliban is openly administering a district, providing services and security, and also running the local courts.

Source: FDD Long War Journal, Accessed January 11, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/mapping-taliban-control-in-afghanistan>.

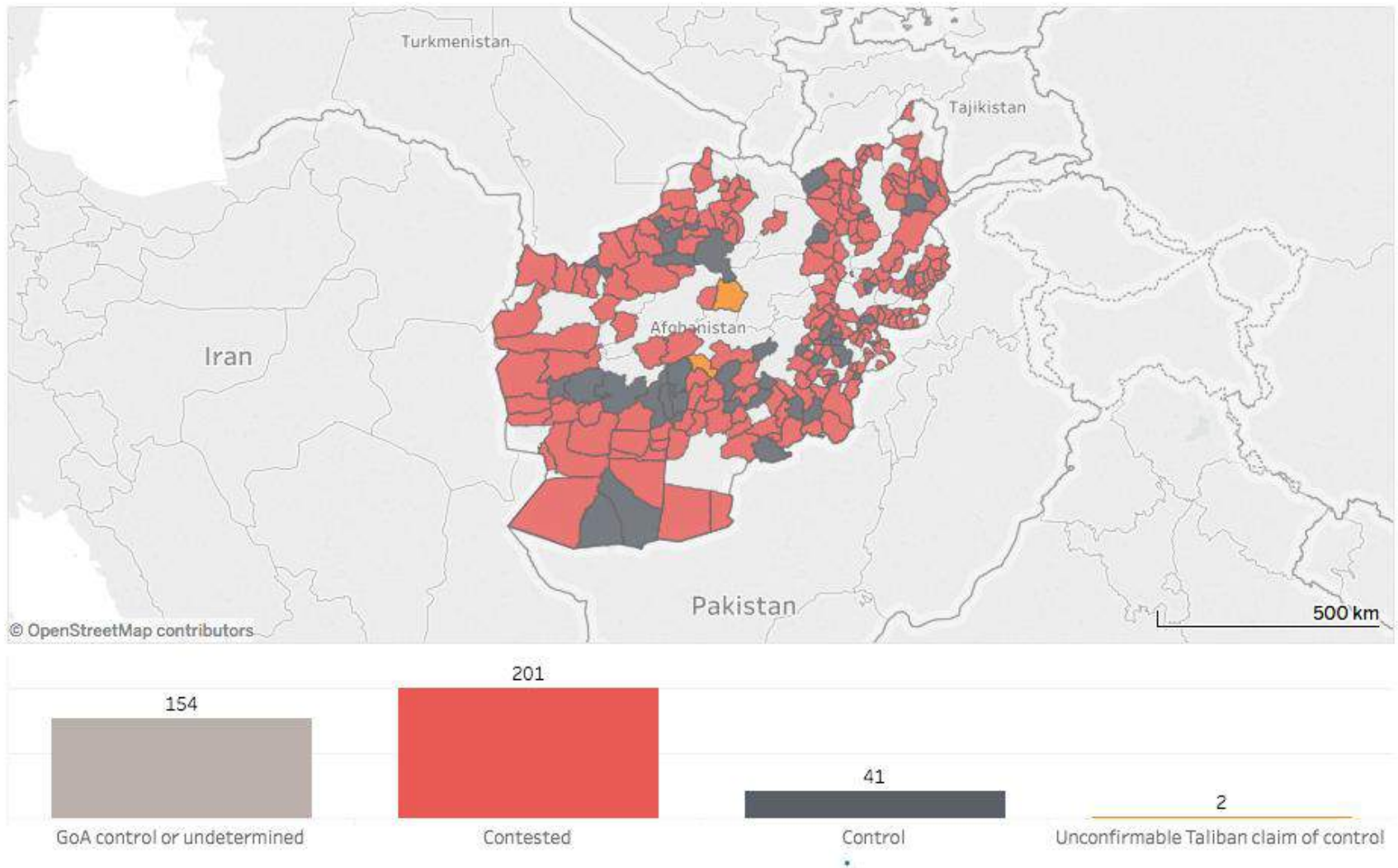
# Major Shifts in FDD Long-War Journal Estimate of Taliban Control in Afghanistan II: Estimate of 17/5/2018



The data and research behind this map are entirely open-source. This is a living map that FDD's Long War Journal frequently updates as verifiable research is conducted to support control changes. Any "Unconfirmed" district colored orange has some level of claim-of-control made by the Taliban, but either has not yet been—or can not be— independently verified by FDD's Long War Journal research. A "Contested" district means that the government may be in control of the district center, but little else, and the Taliban controls large areas or all of the areas outside of the district center. A "Control" district means the Taliban is openly administering a district, providing services and security, and also running the local courts. Source: FDD Long War Journal, Accessed January 11, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/mapping-taliban-control-in-afghanistan>.



# Major Shifts in FDD Long-War Journal Estimate of Taliban Control in Afghanistan II: Estimate of 21/6/2018



The data and research behind this map are entirely open-source. This is a living map that FDD's Long War Journal frequently updates as verifiable research is conducted to support control changes. Any "Unconfirmed" district colored orange has some level of claim-of-control made by the Taliban, but either has not yet been—or can not be— independently verified by FDD's Long War Journal research. A "Contested" district means that the government may be in control of the district center, but little else, and the Taliban controls large areas or all of the areas outside of the district center. A "Control" district means the Taliban is openly administering a district, providing services and security, and also running the local courts.

Source: FDD Long War Journal, Accessed June 22, 2018, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/mapping-taliban-control-in-afghanistan>.



# Methodology of FDD Long-War Journal Estimate of Taliban Control in Afghanistan

Mapping Taliban Control in Afghanistan, Created by Bill Roggio & Alexandra Gutowski

**Description:** For nearly two decades the government of Afghanistan, with the help of U.S. and coalition forces, has been battling for control of the country against the ever-present threat of the Afghan Taliban. FDD's Long War Journal has been tracking the Taliban's attempts to gain control of territory since NATO ended its military mission in Afghanistan and switched to an "advise and assist" role in June 2014. Districts have been retaken (by both sides) only to be lost shortly thereafter, largely resulting in the conflict's current relative stalemate. However, since the U.S. drawdown of peak forces in 2011, the Taliban has unquestionably been resurgent.

**Methodology:** The primary data and research behind this are based on open-source information, such as press reports and information provided by government agencies and the Taliban. This is a living map that LWJ frequently updates as verifiable research is conducted to support control changes. Any "Unconfirmed" district colored orange has some level of claim-of-control made by the Taliban, but either has not yet been—or can not be—independently verified by LWJ research. A "Contested" district may mean that the government may be in control of the district center, but little else, and the Taliban controls large areas or all of the areas outside of the district center. A "Controlled" district may mean the Taliban is openly administering a district, providing services and security, and also running the local courts.

Beginning in Jan. 2018, LWJ incorporated district-level data provided by the Special Investigator General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, which is based on assessments by Resolute Support, NATO's command in Afghanistan.

Resolute Support/SIGAR has five assessment levels: insurgent controlled, insurgent influenced, contested, government influenced, and government controlled. LWJ does not maintain an "influenced" assessment for the districts, and simply has three assessment levels: insurgent controlled, contested, and government controlled.

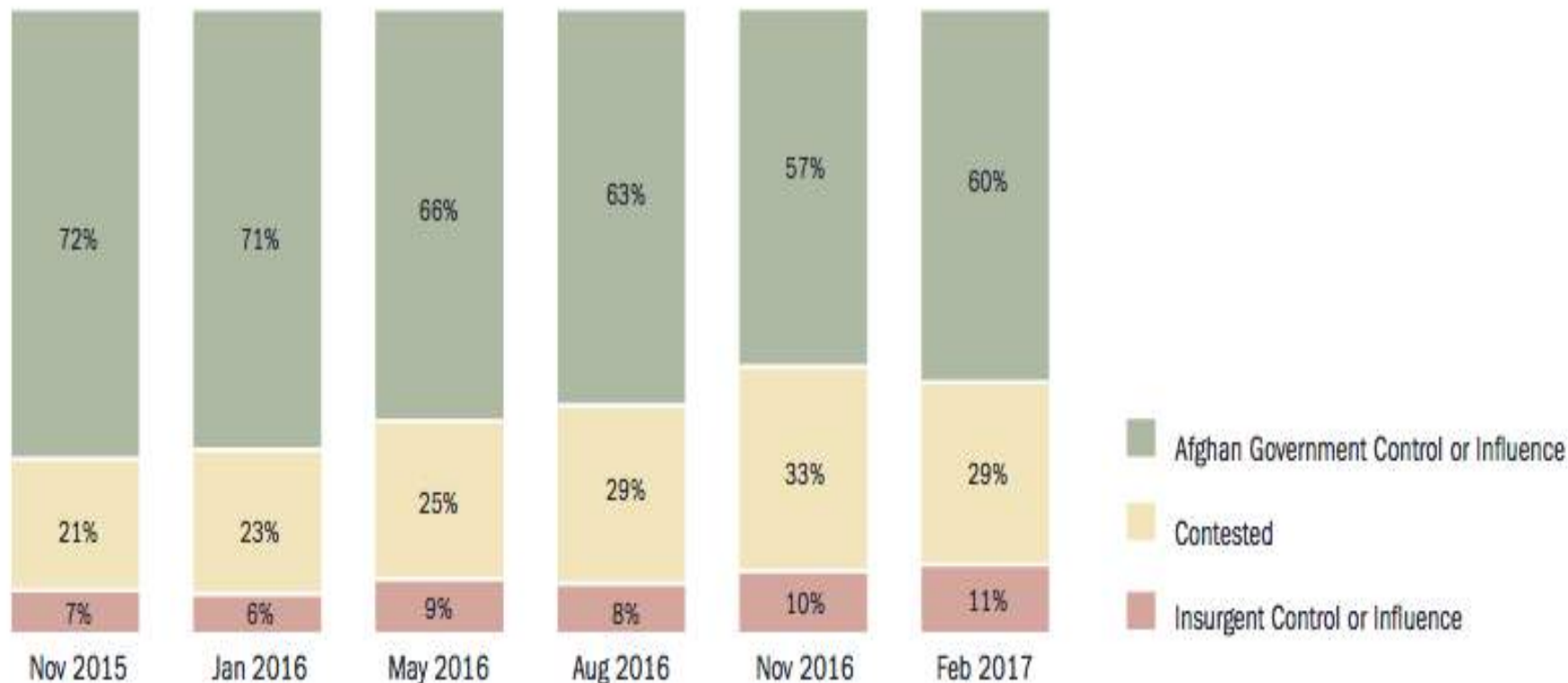
LWJ considers the influenced assessment to equate to contested. The reasoning is that if the Taliban wield influence in, say 30% or 70% of a district, the end result is the same. Neither the government, nor the Taliban, fully control the district, and it is therefore contested.

LWJ uses the following methodology to reconcile SIGAR/Resolute Support's information with LWJ's data:

- If RS/SIGAR assessment of a district matches LWJ's assessment, there are no changes.
- If RS/SIGAR identifies a district as Insurgent Controlled and LWJ identifies as contested, then LWJ assesses the district as Insurgent Controlled (based on review of available information).
- If RS/SIGAR identifies a district as Insurgent Influenced and LWJ determines it to be Contested, LWJ assesses the district as Contested.
- If RS/SIGAR identifies a district as Contested and LWJ has no determination, LWJ accepts RS/SIGAR's assessment and identifies the district Contested.
- If RS/SIGAR identifies a district as GIRoA Influenced, and LWJ has information there is significant Taliban activity in the district (frequent attacks on police and military, attacks on the district center or military bases, closing schools, etc.), then LWJ assesses the district as Contested.
- If RS/SIGAR identified a district as GIRoA Influenced, and LWJ cannot see evidence of Taliban activity, LWJ assesses the district as GIRoA Controlled.

## SIGAR - I: Lower Estimate of Threat Control of Districts in Early 2017: 11/2015-2/2017

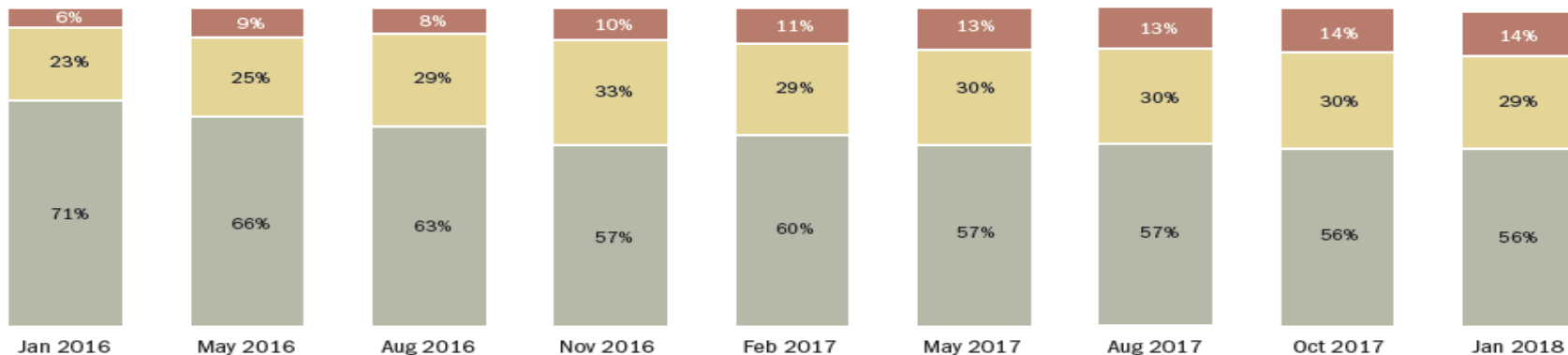
HISTORICAL DISTRICT CONTROL OF AFGHANISTAN'S 407 DISTRICTS AS OF FEBRUARY 20, 2017



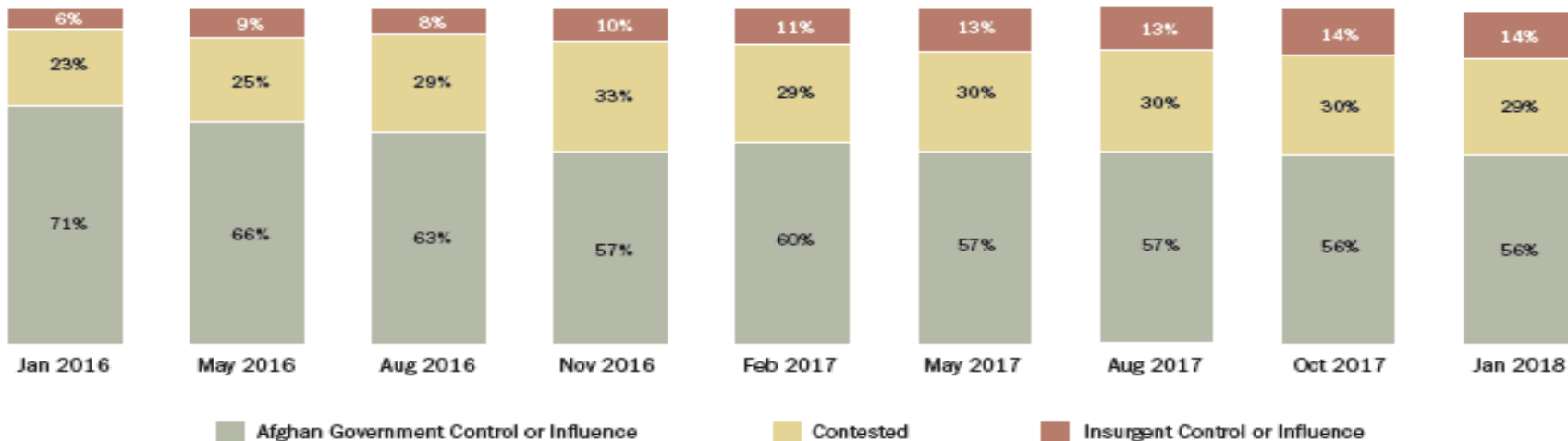
Source: USFOR-A, response to SIGAR data call, 02/20/2017.

# SIGAR- II: Higher Estimate Threat Estimate of Control for Same Periods in 4/2018: 1/2016-1/2018

HISTORICAL DISTRICT CONTROL IN AFGHANISTAN



HISTORICAL DISTRICT CONTROL IN AFGHANISTAN



Note: Components may not add to 100 because of rounding.

Source: USFOR-A, 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, and 3/22/2018; USFOR-A, response to SIGAR vetting, 1/16/2018.

# Definition of Control Metrics

## Control Metrics

There are multiple, different units of measure for expressing a district-level assessment of control that can be and are often used to assist in operational assessment and decision-making during the conduct of a wide variety of military operations. At least three major metrics can be used in judging government-versus-insurgency control in Afghanistan. They measure different factors, need not be parallel indicators, and may have different implications for progress assessments and decision-making. In no special order, these metrics are:

**District Control:** Whether a government has effective control of a district bears on its ability to assert its sovereignty within direct sight of the people, deliver public services like health and education, provide policing, and—hopefully—operate the instruments of governance in ways that improve public perceptions of its legitimacy and effectiveness.

**Population Control:** From a hearts-and-minds point of view and for the ability to monitor and suppress insurgent activity, controlling one district with a large population might be more important than controlling three with only a few, scattered villages. On the other hand, a government might have statistically verified control of every district within its borders; but if, say, 33% of the population were disaffected or actively supportive of insurgents, that government could still face a critical threat to its viability—especially

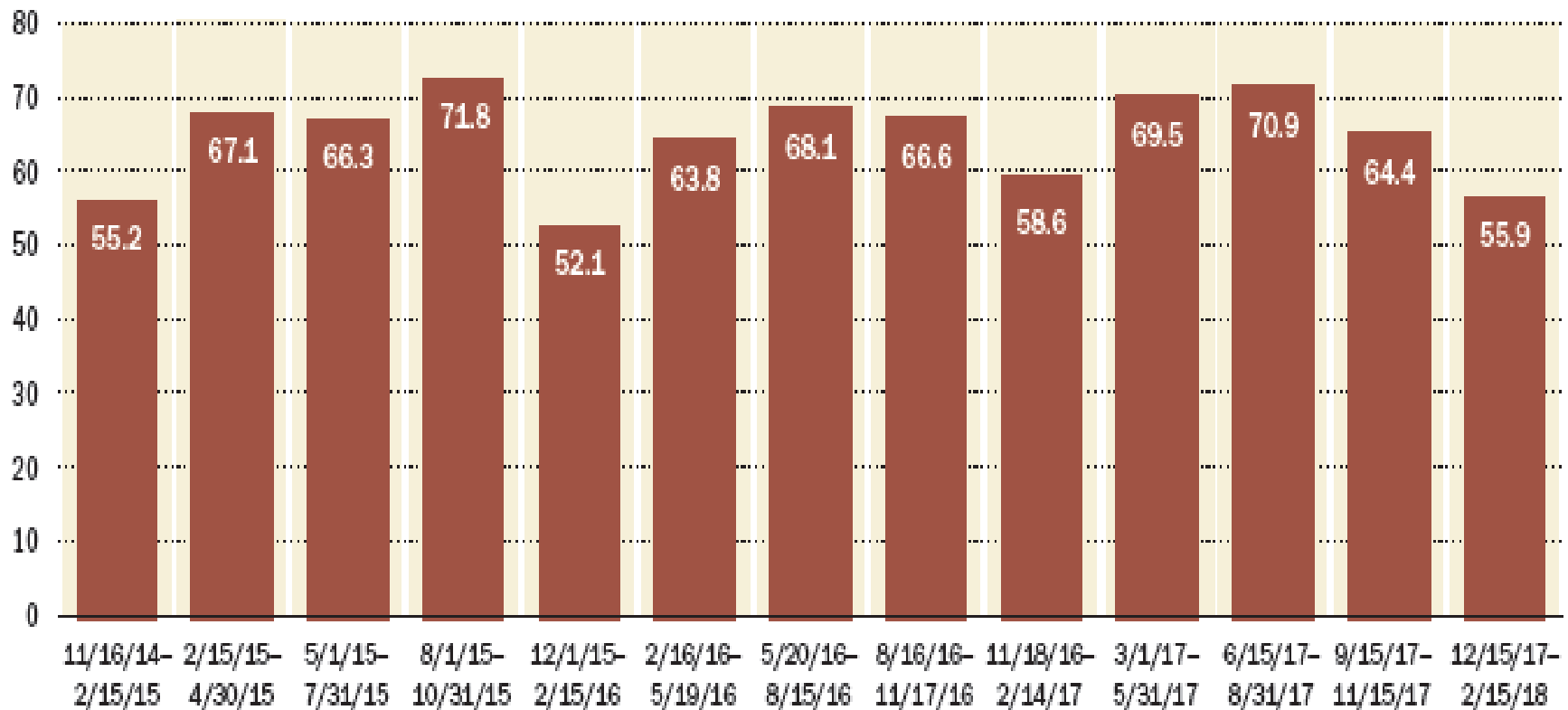
if the nonsupportive citizens are in compact groups that facilitate communication, recruitment, and planning of anti-government operations.

**Area Control:** Sheer control of land area, regardless of governance structures or resident population, can be an important metric, especially if hostile elements assert control over areas containing important agricultural land (including revenue-producing poppy fields), transportation corridors and bottlenecks, electric transmission, watersheds, or mineral reserves. Area control also facilitates movement and staging of forces, government or hostile, for active operations.

All three metrics are important to ascertain and assess, individually and in concert. That they are not synonymous or parallel can be easily seen, for example, in SIGAR's quarterly report of April 30, 2017. The security section of that report presented data from USFOR-A showing RS's assessment of district-level control at the time, insurgents controlled 2.7% of Afghanistan's districts, but 9.2% of the population, and 16.2% of the land area. Which indicator is most significant is not *prima facie* evident, and their comparative significance might vary with changing concerns and objectives as time passes. In any case, drawing broad conclusions from any or all of these macro-level indicators is best done with the caveat that they may contain granular but important variations in underlying detail.

Source: Analysis by SIGAR Research and Analysis Directorate staff and by SIGAR Special Advisor Lieutenant General John F. Goodman, USMC (Ret.), 4/2018.

# UN Count of Average Daily Security Incidents: 11/2014-2/2018



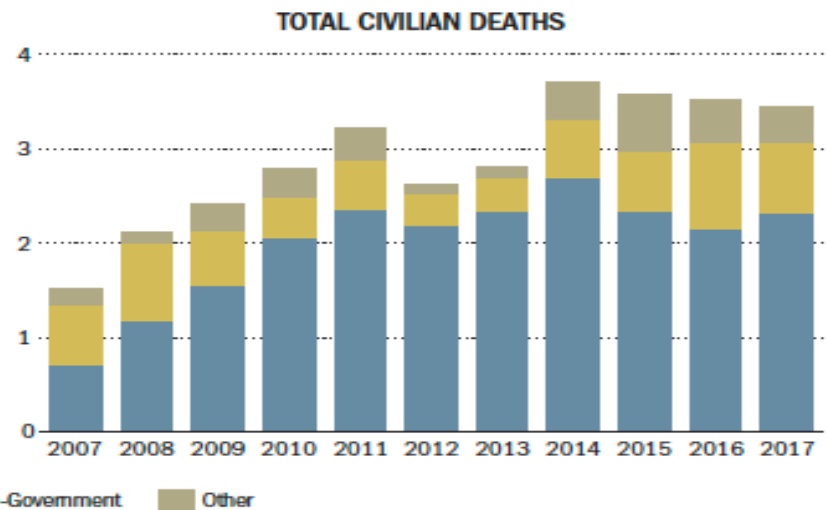
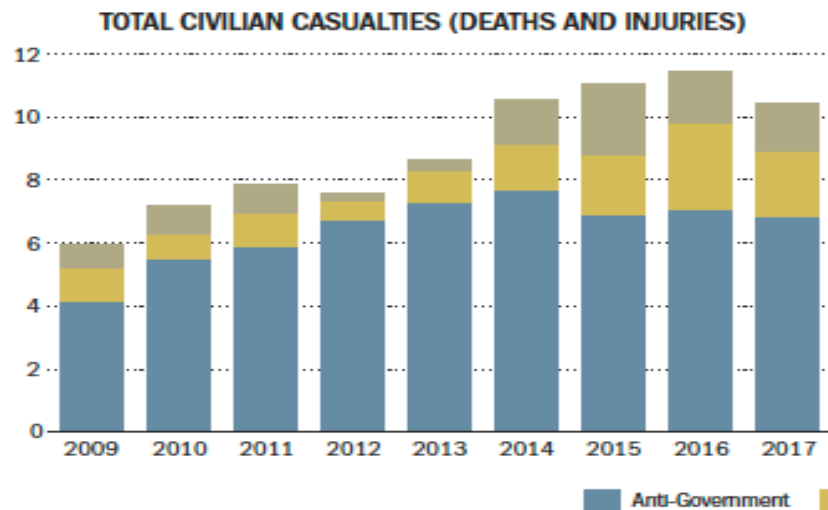
Note: The gaps in some reporting dates are due to lack of UN reporting during those periods.

Source: UN, *The situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, reports of the Secretary-General, 2/27/2015, p. 4; 6/10/2015, p. 4; 9/1/2015, p. 4; 12/10/2015, p. 5; 3/7/2016, p. 6; 6/10/2016, p. 4; 9/7/2016, p. 5; 12/13/2016, p. 4; 3/3/2017, p. 4; 6/15/2017, p. 4; 9/15/2017, p. 4; 12/15/2017, p. 5; 2/27/2018, p. 5; SIGAR, analysis of UN-provided data, 4/2018.



# US Estimate of Civilian Casualties 2007-2017

## TOTAL CIVILIAN CASUALTIES AND DEATHS BY RESPONSIBLE PARTY (THOUSANDS)



Note: "Other" encompasses all casualties for which pro- and anti-government elements were not solely responsible, such as casualties resulting from crossfire or unexploded ordnance. The "Total Civilian Deaths" figure on the right appears on page 5 of UNAMA's report.

## AERIAL OPERATIONS CIVILIAN CASUALTIES



Note: A similar graphic appears on page 45 of UNAMA's report.

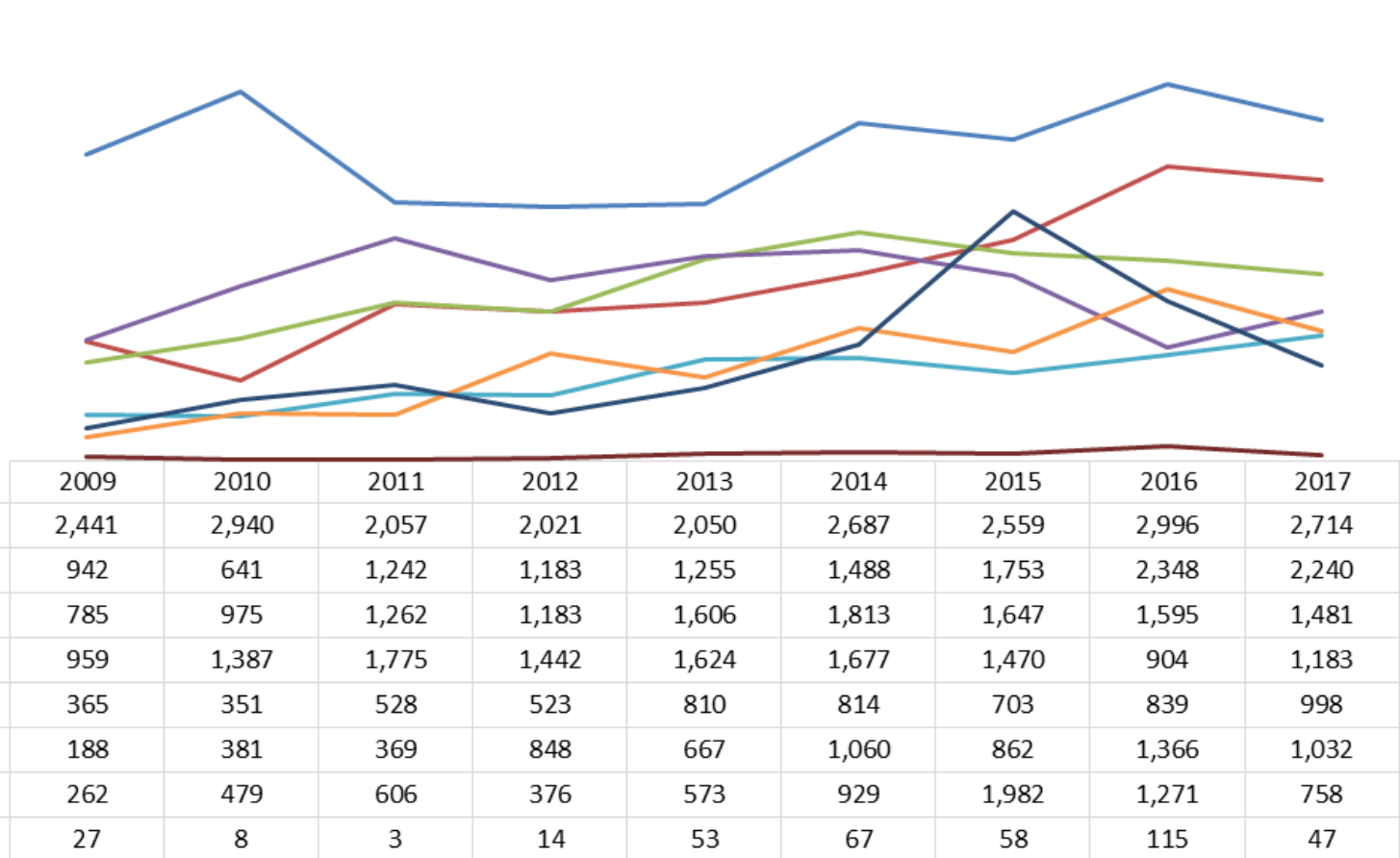
Source: UNAMA, Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: Annual Report 2017, 3/6/2018, p. 45.

# UN Estimate of Civilian Casualties by Region: 2007-2017

## Civilian Deaths & Injuries by Region

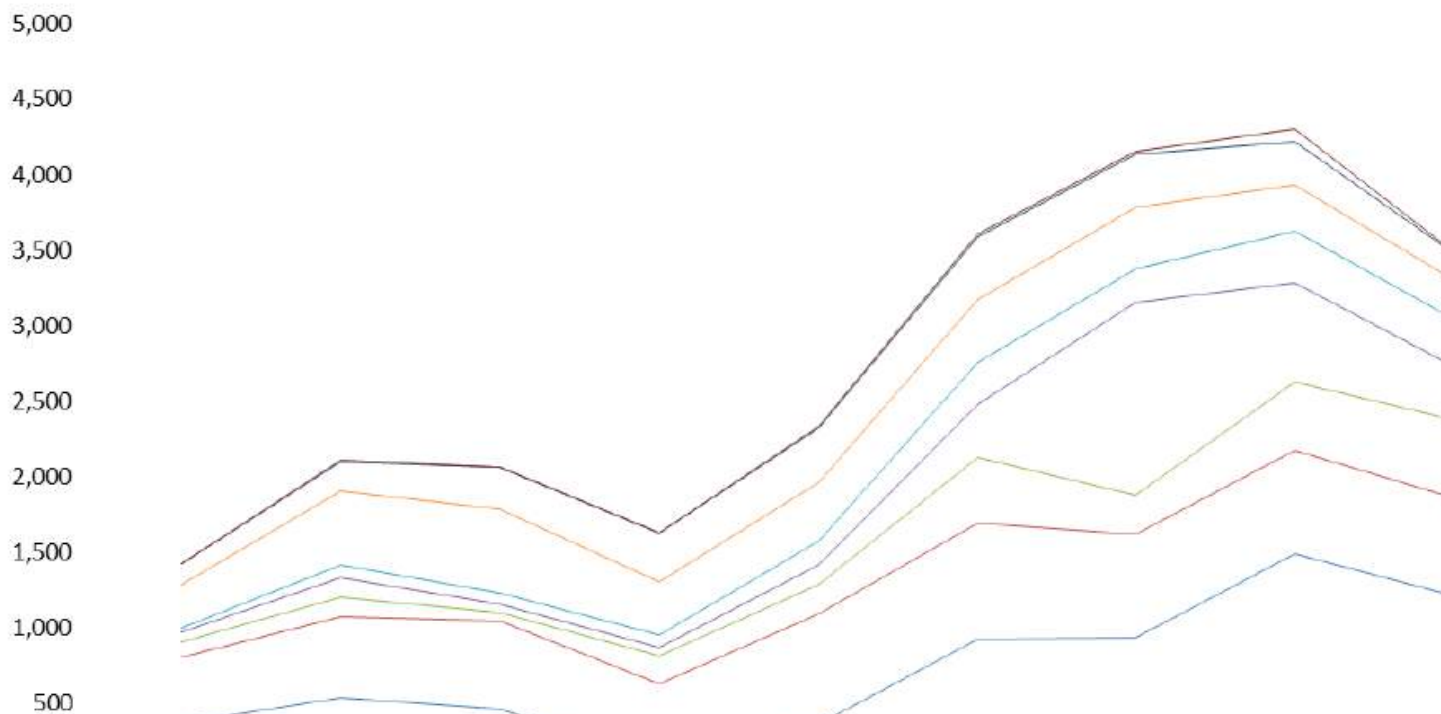
January to December 2009 - 2017

3,500  
3,000  
2,500  
2,000  
1,500  
1,000  
500  
-



# UN Estimate of Civilian Ground Casualties by Region: 2007-2017

January to December 2009 - 2017



	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017
Central Highlands	-	8	1	3	12	18	22	79	10
Central	139	192	276	325	355	415	351	288	169
South Eastern	289	496	549	348	392	413	404	312	264
Western	28	83	77	85	152	276	222	340	314
North Eastern	68	128	51	56	129	352	1,269	656	349
Northern	100	125	60	181	196	435	261	446	517
Eastern	430	535	578	507	777	770	686	688	650
Southern	376	543	470	127	368	925	936	1,491	1,211

## **SIGAR: Area Control Trends as of April 2018**

**This quarter (!Q2018), the Afghan government made some modest improvements to its control of districts, population, and land area. As of January 31, 2018, roughly 65% of the population (21.2 million of an estimated 32.5 million total) lived in areas under Afghan government control or influence, up one percentage point since last quarter. The insurgency continued to control or influence areas where 12% of the population lived (3.9 million people), unchanged from last quarter, while the population living in contested areas (7.4 million people) decreased to roughly 23%, about a one percentage-point decline since last quarter.**

**This quarter's population-control figures show a slight deterioration from the same period last year, when the Afghan government controlled or influenced 65.6% of the population and the insurgency only 9.2%.<sup>120</sup> The goal of the Afghan government is to control or influence territory in which 80% of the population (26 million people) live within the next year and a half.**

**Since SIGAR began receiving population-control data in August 2016, Afghan government control has decreased by roughly four percentage points, and the overall trend for the insurgency is rising control over the population (from 9% in August 2016 to 12% in January 2018)...Using Afghanistan's 407 districts as the unit of assessment, as of January 31, 2018, 229 districts were under Afghan government control (73 districts) or influence (156)—an increase of two districts under government influence since last quarter. This brings Afghan government control or influence to 56.3% of Afghanistan's total districts.**

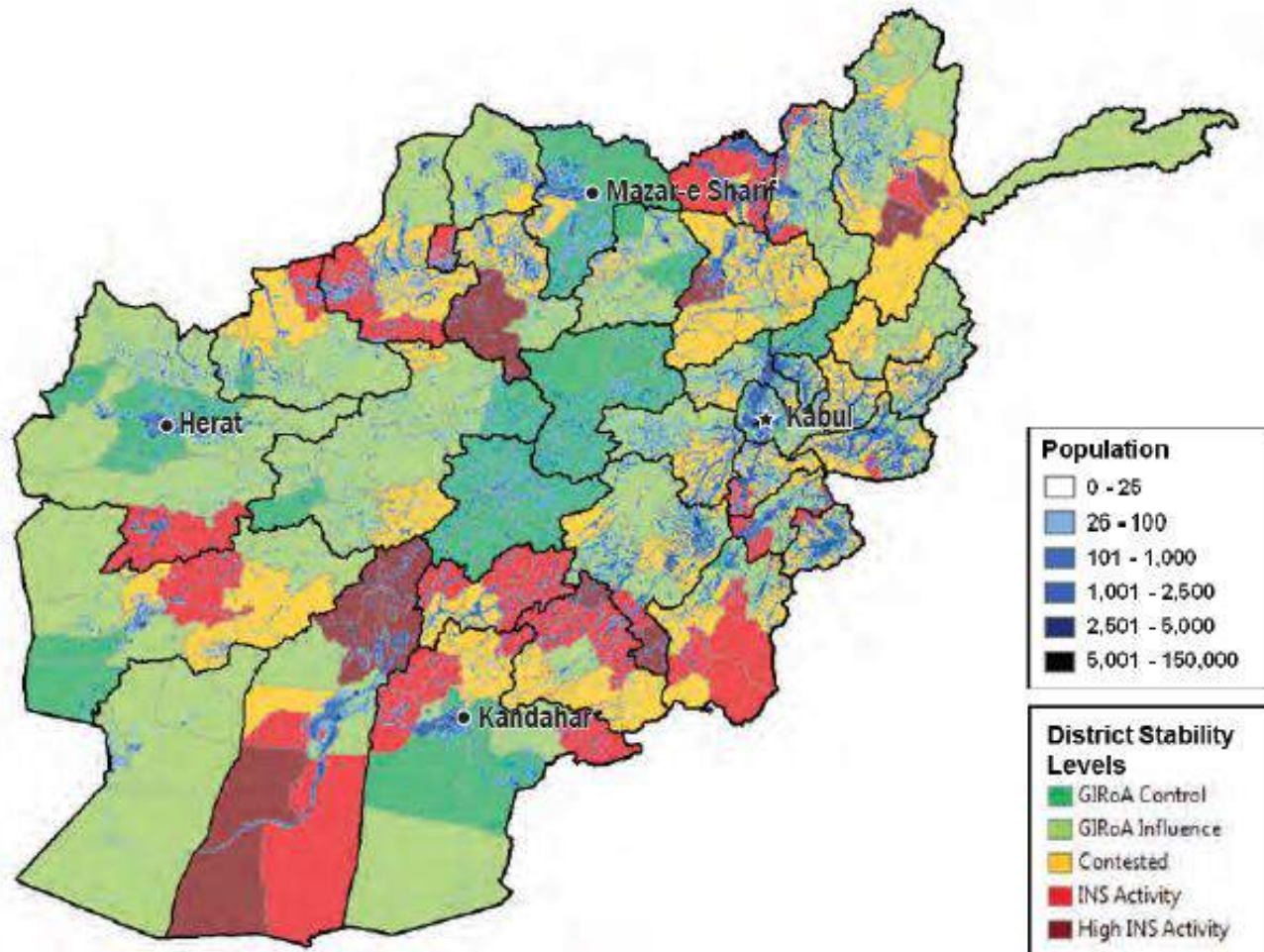
**There were 59 districts under insurgent control (13) or influence (46), an increase of one district under insurgent influence since last quarter. Therefore, 14.5% of the country's total districts are now under insurgent control or influence, only a slight increase from last quarter, but a more than three percentage point increase from the same period in 2016.**

**The remaining 119 districts (29.2%) are contested—controlled by neither the Afghan government nor the insurgency. ...the Afghan government's control of districts is at its second lowest level, and the insurgency's at its highest level, since SIGAR began receiving district control data... the Afghan government's control of districts is at its second lowest level, and the insurgency's at its highest level, since SIGAR began receiving district control data in November 2015**

## CONTROL OF AFGHANISTAN'S 407 DISTRICTS AS OF JANUARY 31, 2018

### SIGAR Estimate of Control: May 2018

SIGAR, Quarterly  
Report to Congress,  
May 2018, p. 89



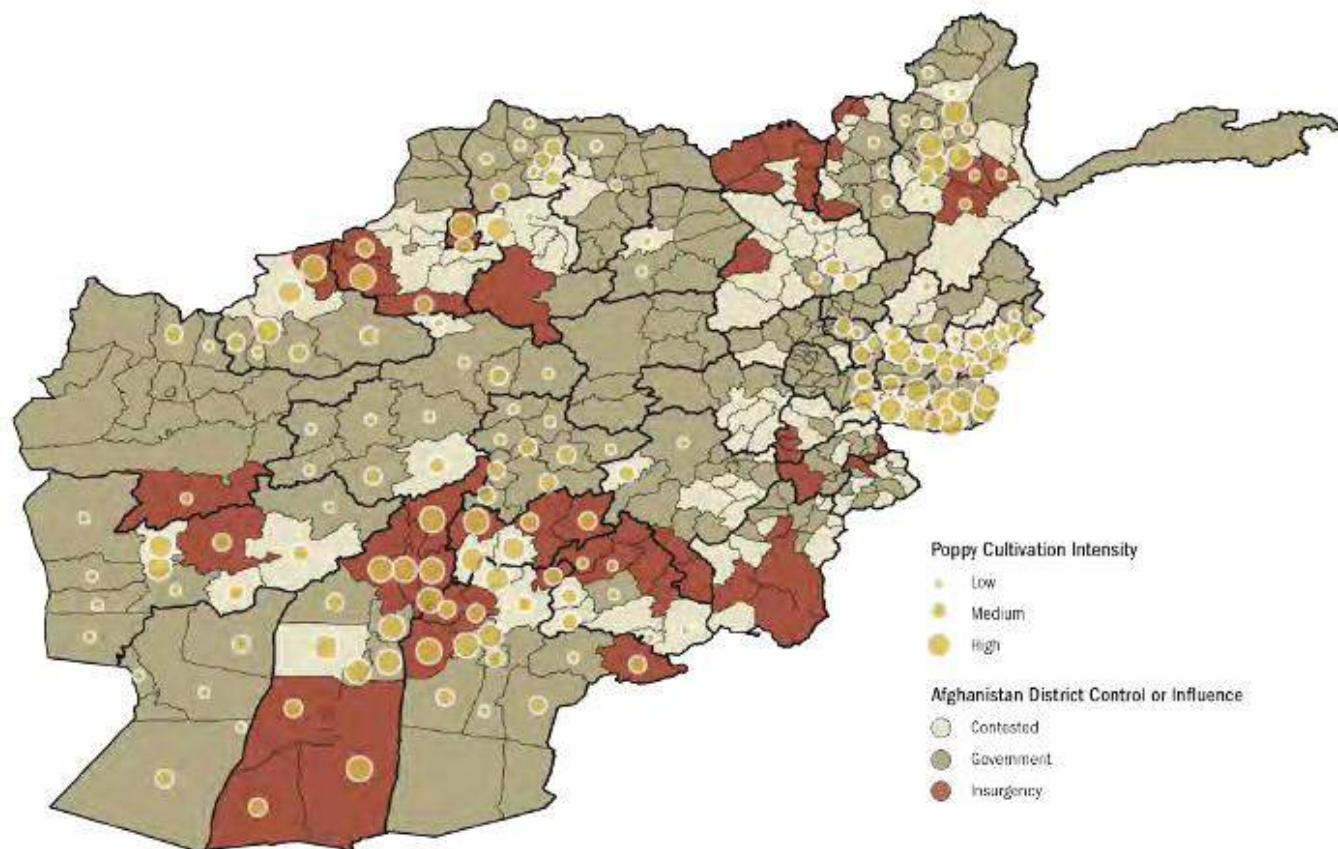
Note: GIROA = Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. INS = Insurgent. The population data depicted here reflects how the Afghan population is dispersed throughout the country. However, the entire population of a given area is not necessarily under the district stability level indicated. A district is assigned its district-stability level based on the overall trend of land-area/population control of each district as a whole. The map-key categories shown here do not correspond exactly to the categories used in USFORA's March 2018 data responses.

Source: USFORA, response to SIGAR vetting, 4/12/2018.



# How Narcotics Overlap with Threat Activity

DISTRICT OPIUM-POPPY CULTIVATION AND AFGHAN GOVERNMENT CONTROL OR INFLUENCE



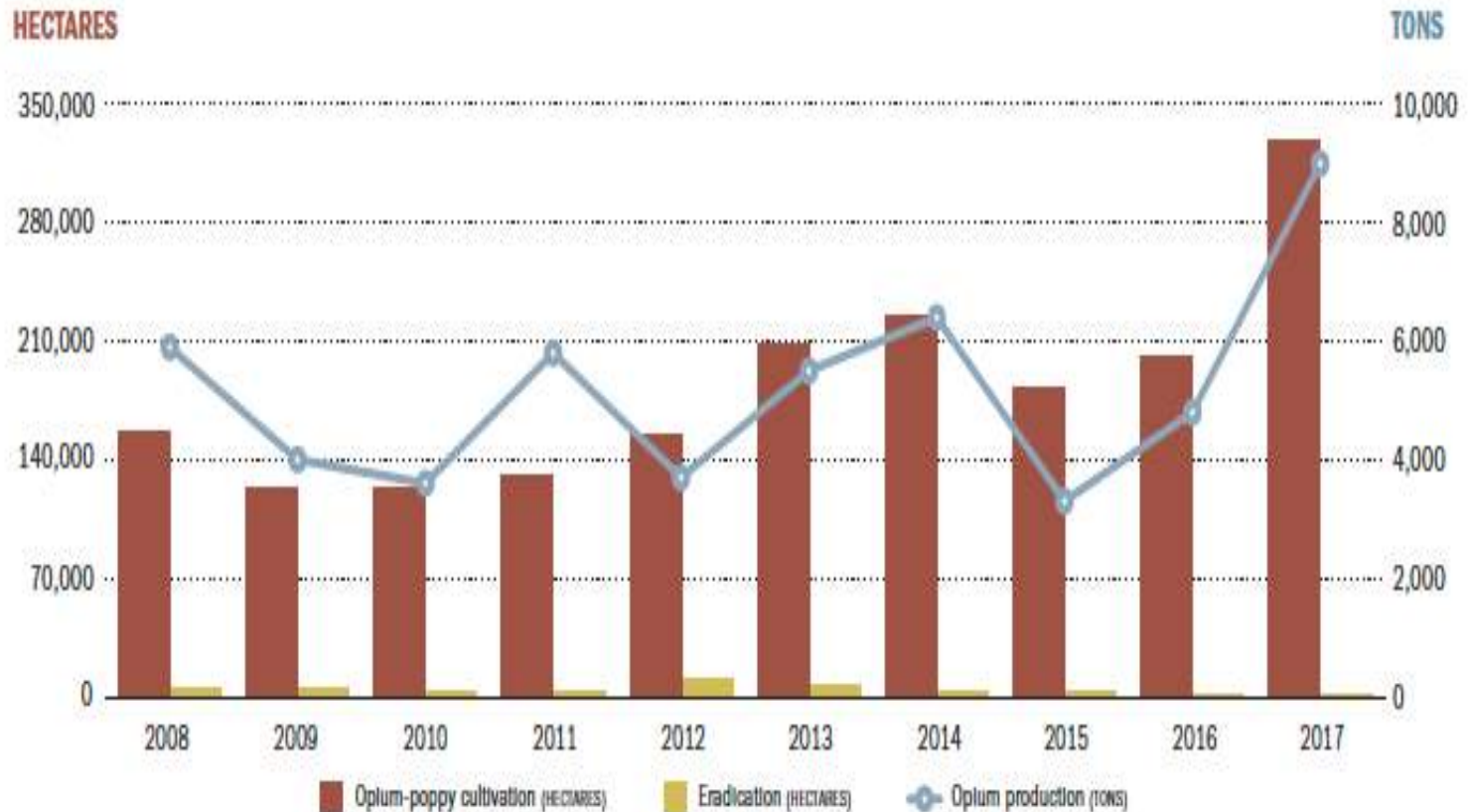
Note: The district-level administrative boundary file was originally obtained from Princeton University's Empirical Studies of Conflict (ESOC) portal (<https://esoc.princeton.edu/files/administrative-boundaries-398-districts>). ESOC's file was created based off of the district file originally created by the Afghanistan Information Management Services (<http://www.aims.org.af/>) and includes 398 districts. Because Resolute Support (RS) uses a district-level boundary file that contains 407 districts, some districts could not be assessed at the level used by RS. The following districts were assessed by RS but do not appear in UNODC's breakdown and cannot be located or plotted on the map: Marjah in Helmand (results included with Nad Ali), Bad Pash in Laghman, Jaghatu in Ghazni, Delaram in Nimroz, Mirzakeh in Paktia, and Chinaru in Uruzgan (do not exist in UNODC listing). UNODC has poppy cultivation results for the following districts which are not listed in RS: Hisai-Dawuni in Parajshir Province. As of 2017, UNODC includes Ghormach District in Faryab Province in 2017, but it remains part of Badghis Province in RS's data.

The analysis was conducted with ArcGIS Pro software. Districts with zero hectares of poppy in 2017 were eliminated from the data before analysis. Poppy area (ha) was then normalized by district area (mi<sup>2</sup>) and placed into three classes based on a geometric interval method. Geometric interval places an approximately equal number of observations into each class, however the width of the classes may not be equal. The "Low," "Medium," and "High" upper limits are respectively  $1.2 \times 10^{-3}$ ,  $13.0 \times 10^{-3}$ , and  $120.0 \times 10^{-3}$ .

Source: USFORA, data call response, 3/22/2018; UNODC, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017: Cultivation and Production*, 11/2017, pp. 64-70.

# The Rising Economic Impact of Opium - I: 2015-2016

AFGHAN OPIUM-POPPY CULTIVATION, ERADICATION, AND PRODUCTION SINCE 2008



Source: UNDOC, World Drug Report 2016, 5/2016, Annex, vii, ix, xii; UNODC, Afghanistan Opium Survey 2017: Cultivation and Production, 11/2017, pp. 5-6, 64-71.

# The Rising Economic Impact of Opium - II: 2015-2016

The World Bank, IMF, and others exclude the value of opium production from their reported GDP estimates. Afghanistan's Central Statistics Organization releases official GDP growth figures in two categories—one that includes and one that excludes opium value (in 2016, 3.6% and 2.1% respectively). Opium-related earnings boost domestic demand and are a significant source of foreign exchange. Exports of opium were valued at \$2 billion in 2015.

The estimated net value of opium production was \$2.9 billion in 2016, equivalent to 16% of official GDP. The United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime estimated that the farm-gate value of opium production—national potential production multiplied by the weighted average farm-gate price of dry opium at the time of harvest (which excludes money made by traffickers)—for 2017 was \$1.4 billion, a 55% increase over the 2016 figure of \$0.9 billion.

# **The Separate (?) Challenges of Terrorism**

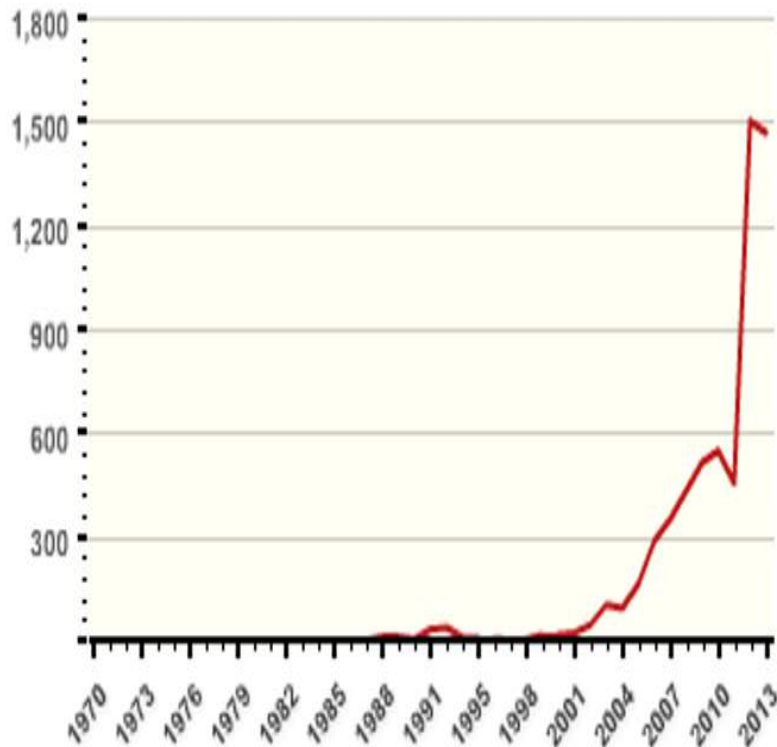
# **The Uncertain and Dubious Character of Terrorism Statistics**

- **The U.S. government no longer has its National Counter Terrorism Center issue unclassified official data.**
- **The START estimates in the trend data that follow are drawn from media sources and are inherently more uncertain.**
- **Much of the sharp rises in the charts that follow seem to be driven more by the violence created by active insurgencies than actual terrorism.**
- **They may still, however, be useful as broad indicators of the overall rise in violence within given insurgencies.**

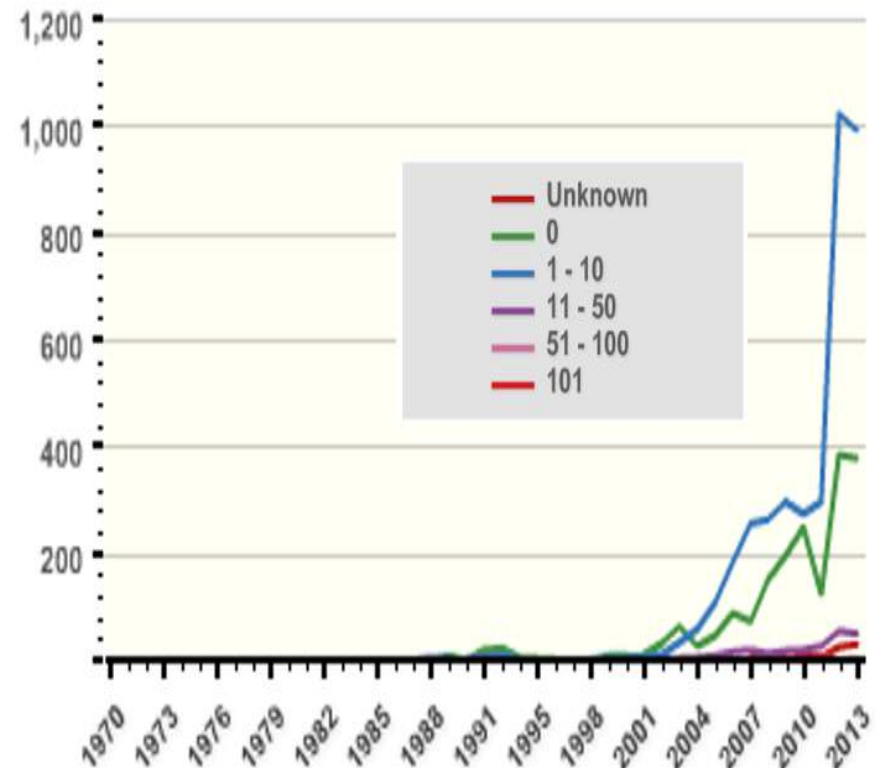


# Rise in Terrorism in Afghanistan: 1970-2013

## Afghanistan- Terrorist Incidents



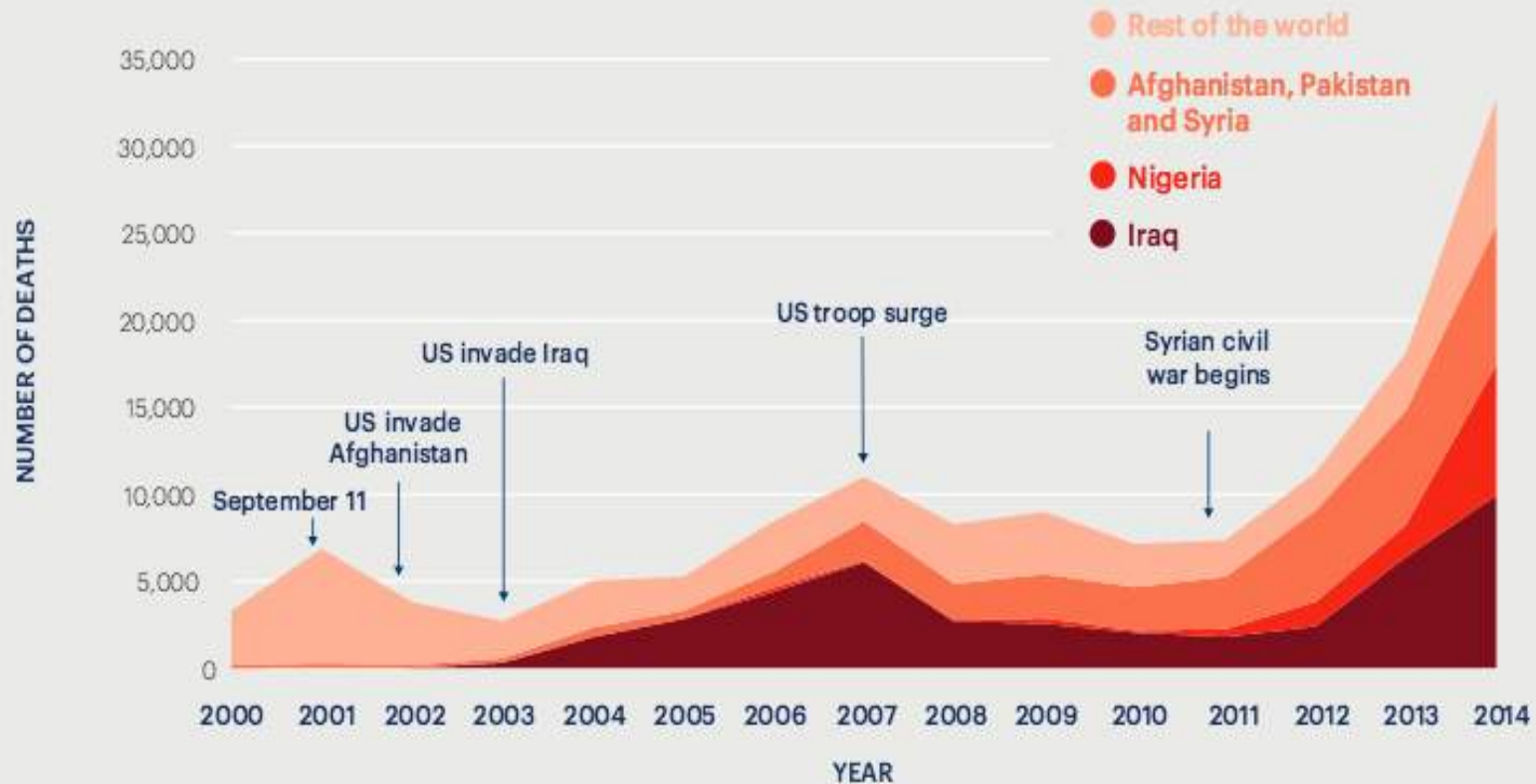
## Afghanistan- Fatalities



Source: START Global Terrorism Database, National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism, U.S. Department of Homeland Security, <http://www.start.umd.edu/gtd/>

# Deaths from Terrorism: 2000-2014

Deaths from terrorism have increased dramatically over the last 15 years. The number of people who have died from terrorist activity has increased ninefold since the year 2000.

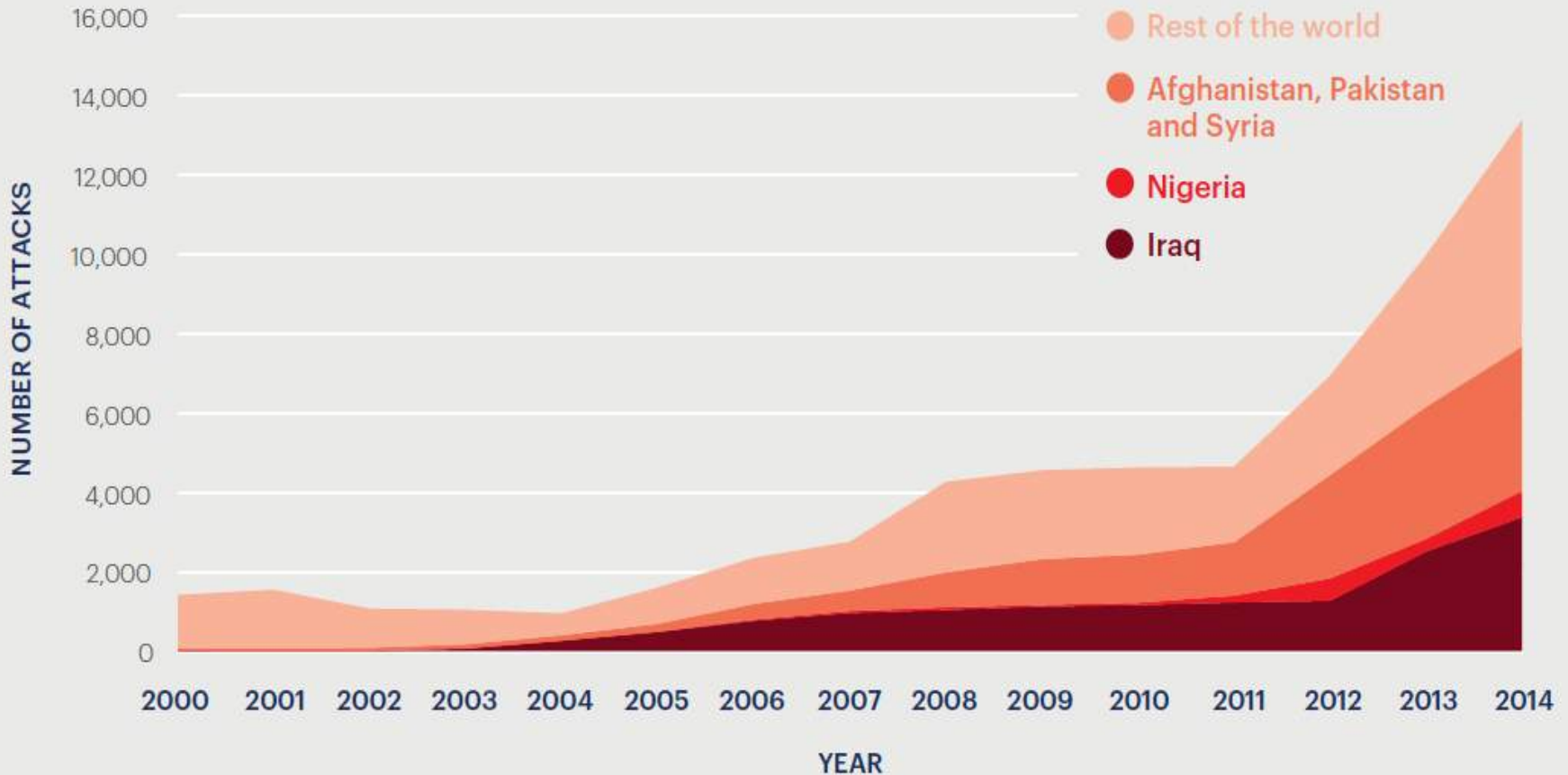


Source: START GTD

**NOTE:** In 2011 there was a change in the data collection methodology for terrorist acts. The methodology change did not materially alter the results as the increase in terrorism is verifiable. For more information on the methodology change please see Annex D in the 2014 Global Terrorism Index.

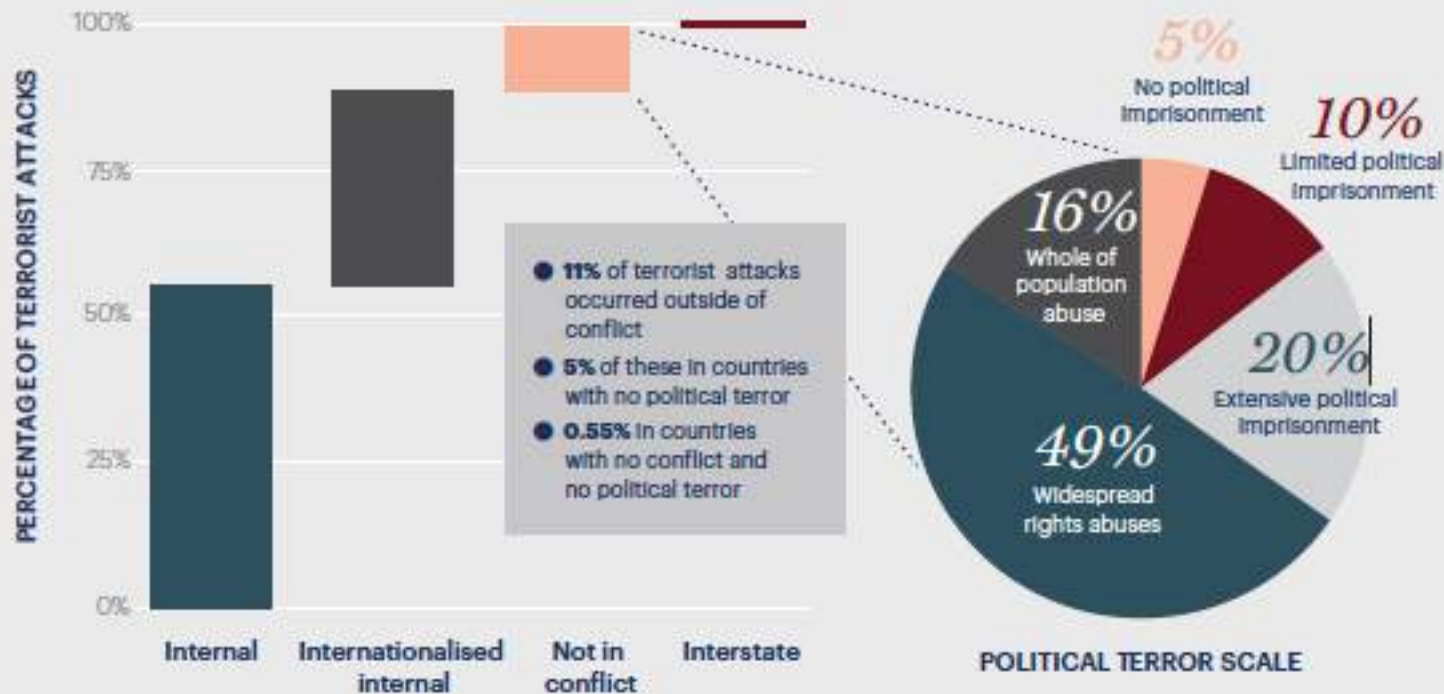
# Terrorist Attacks: 2000-2014

The majority of terrorist incidents are highly centralised. In 2014, 57 per cent of all attacks occurred in five countries; Iraq, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nigeria and Syria. However the rest of the world suffered a 54 per cent increase in terrorist incidents in 2013.



# Terror and Conflict

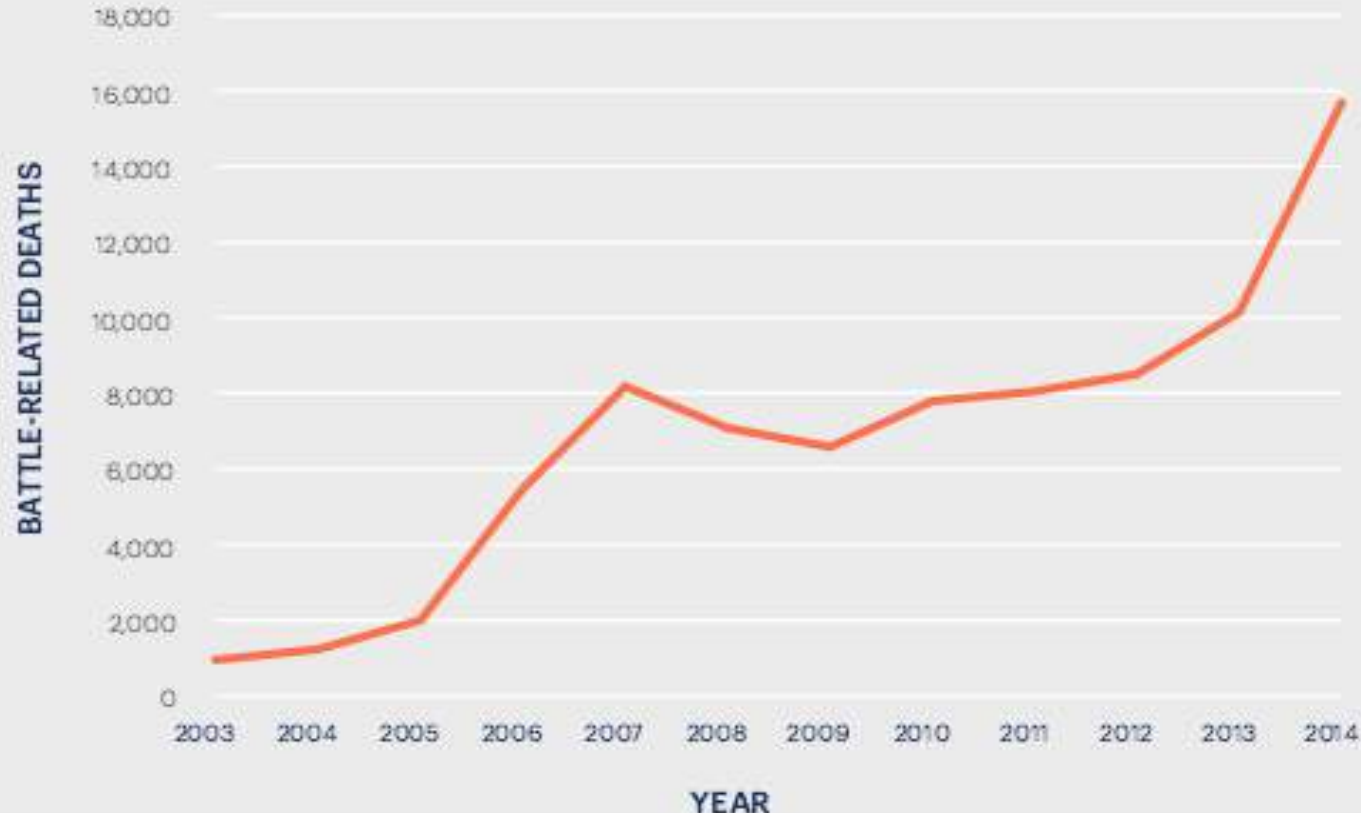
Eighty-eight per cent of all terrorist attacks occurred in countries that were experiencing or involved in violent conflicts. Eleven per cent of terrorist attacks occurred in countries that at the time were not involved in conflict. Less than 0.6 per cent of all terrorist attacks occurred in countries without any ongoing conflict and any form of political terror.



Source: START GTD, UCDP

# Afghan Government and Taliban Battle Deaths: 2014

The conflict between the Government of Afghanistan and its allies and the Taliban recorded the highest number of battle-related deaths in 2014. There were 55 per cent more deaths in this conflict in 2014 than the previous year.



Source: UCDP



# Afghan Terrorism Deaths: I





GTI RANK | **2**  
GTI SCORE | **9.233**

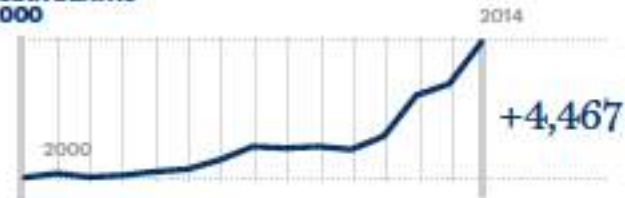
INCIDENTS   
 1,591

PROPERTY DAMAGE   
 1,869

DEAD   
 4,505

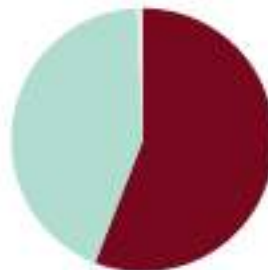
INJURED   
 4,699

INCREASE IN DEATHS  
SINCE 2000



ATTACKS BY TARGET

-  Police
-  Private citizens & property
-  Government (general)
-  Military, militia or terrorist groups
-  Other



DEATHS BY GROUP

-  Taliban
-  Unknown
-  Other



# **Afghan Terrorism Deaths: II**

Terrorism continues to increase in Afghanistan, with 38 per cent more terrorist attacks and 45 per cent more fatalities in 2014 than in 2013. The Taliban was responsible for the majority of these attacks and casualties.

The Taliban remains one of the most deadly terrorist groups in the world. In 2012, 2013 and 2014 it was responsible for around 75 per cent of all terrorist fatalities in Afghanistan. The deadliness of attacks increased in 2014 with the Taliban killing 3.9 people per attack, over 200 per cent higher than 2013.

In 2014 there were terrorist acts in 515 different cities in Afghanistan clearly highlighting the breadth of terrorism across the country. However, the areas of the country where terrorism is most intense are within 100 miles of the border with Pakistan. This is in both the south and east regions of the country with around ten per cent of attacks having occurred in the Helmand Province in the south.

The Nangarhar Province in the east experienced eight per cent of attacks and the two largest cities, Kabul and Kandahar both received seven per cent of the attacks.

Police are the main target of terrorism with 38 per cent of attacks against police. These attacks are among the most lethal with an average of 3.7 people killed per attack. In contrast, when private citizens are the target there is an average of 2.9 deaths per attack.

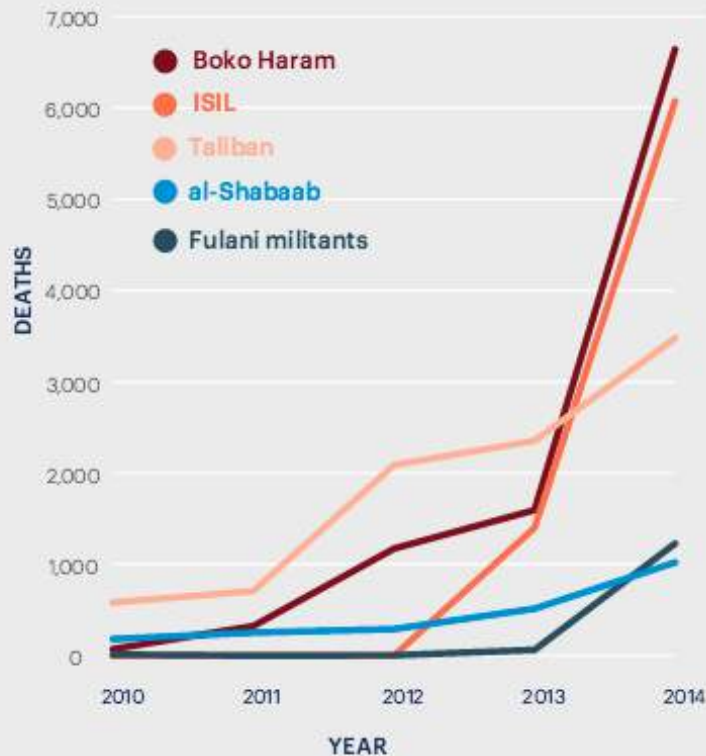
The number of people killed in an educational institution fell substantially to 13 with 34 injuries. This compares to 21 deaths and 198 injuries in the prior year. In 2013 the Taliban conducted at least seven attacks targeting girls attending school, mostly in the north, resulting in over 160 casualties.

Suicide attacks account for ten per cent of all attacks; however, they are more lethal accounting for 18 per cent of all deaths and 32 per cent of all injuries. For every suicide attack there is on average five deaths and nine injuries. The majority of these attacks are bombings, constituting 93 per cent of all suicide attacks.

The remaining suicide attacks were assassinations mainly targeting the police and hostage taking. Targets have included the United States aid organization named Roots of Peace, the Independent Election Commission, the New Kabul Bank where soldiers were collecting salaries and an NGO called Partnership in Academics and Development.

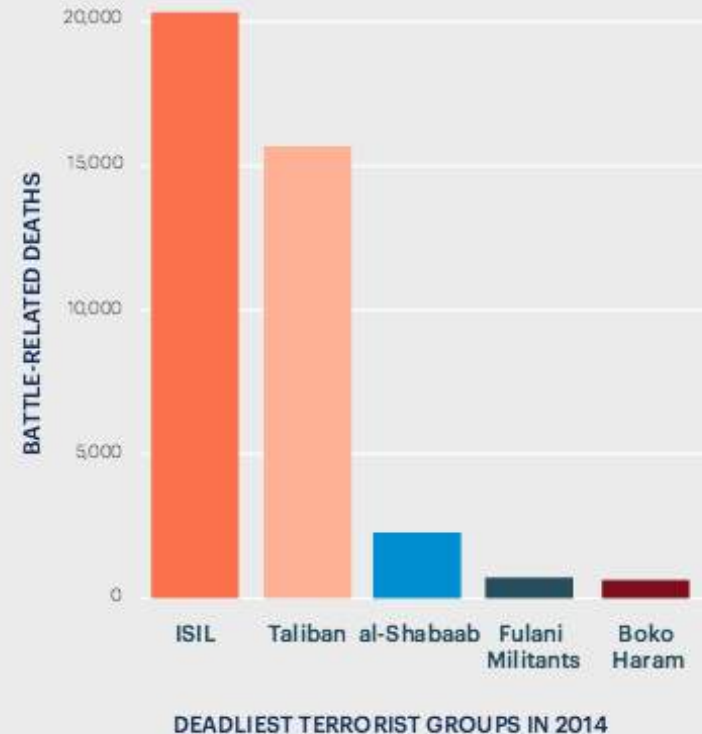
# Impact of Key Terrorist Groups: 2014

Both Boko Haram and ISIL dramatically increased their death tolls from 2013 to 2014.



Source: START GTD

The five most deadly terrorist groups are also responsible for deaths not categorised as terrorism. ISIL is the deadliest terrorist group and was in conflicts which killed over 20,000 people in 2014.



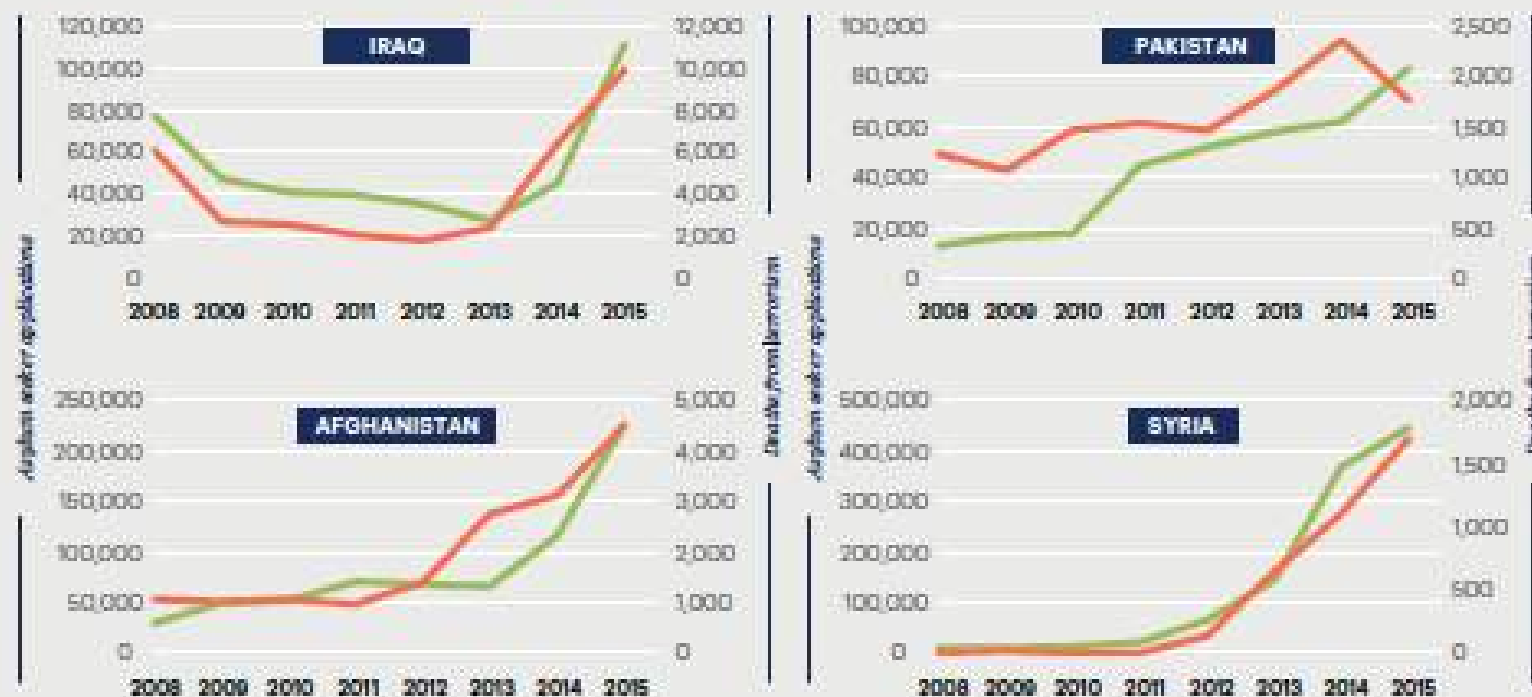
Source: UCDP

**NOTE:** There were 53,948 battle-related deaths recorded between the Assad regime and Syrian insurgents which includes ISIL amongst other groups. This means the figures of battle-related deaths for ISIL are likely to be much higher.

# Terrorism and Refugees : 2008-2014

In countries that have high levels of terrorism, there appears to be a relationship between proportional increases in terrorism and proportional increases in asylum seeker applications to Europe.

● Deaths from terrorism (1 year lagging) ● Asylum seeker applications



Source: Eurostat, START GITD

# Number of Years A country Has Been in Top Ten Affected by Terrorism

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Burundi	Angola	DRC	Nepal	Colombia	Nigeria		Somalia	Algeria			Iraq	Afghanistan	India	
CAR	Chad	Israel	Uganda	Sudan	Philippines			Russia				Pakistan		
China	Indonesia	Syria		Yemen	Sri Lanka									
Egypt					Thailand									
Guinea														
Kenya														
South Sudan														
Spain														
Ukraine														
United States														

Iraq had 25 per cent of all terrorist incidents, followed by Pakistan with 14 per cent and Afghanistan with 12 per cent. Nigeria experienced only five per cent of the incidents but had the second highest number of deaths at 23 per cent. Terrorist attacks are much more lethal in Nigeria than any other country. On average there were 11 deaths per attack in Nigeria. In contrast Iraq had an average of three deaths per attack.

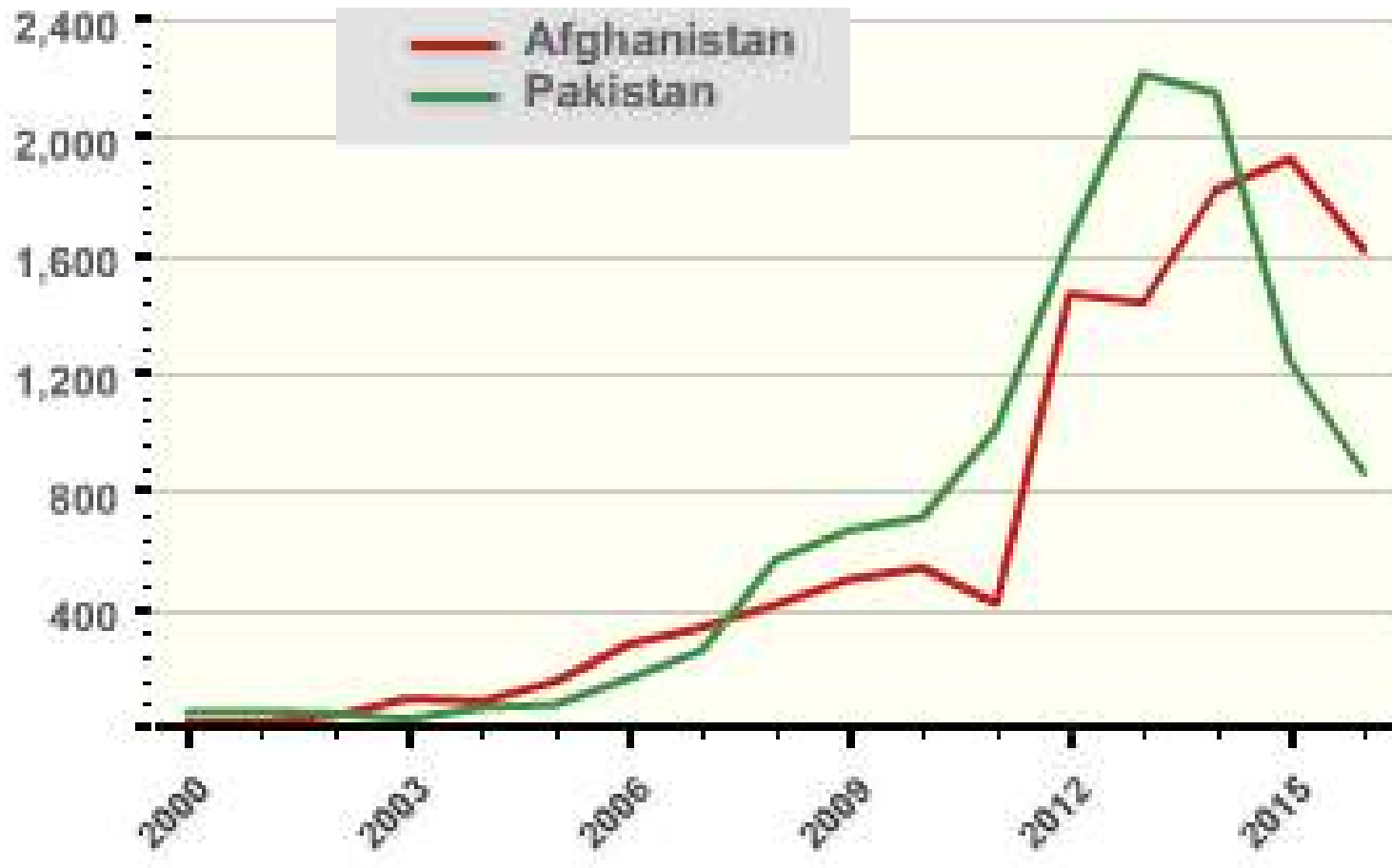
There were ten countries which were ranked as being amongst the countries with the ten highest levels of fatalities for only one year out of the last 15 years. This includes the United States, which had 44 per cent of global deaths in 2001 due to the September 11 attack. In contrast, there were 22 countries which were in the group for at least two years.

Afghanistan, Iraq and Pakistan have all been ranked in the ten countries with the highest number of deaths from terrorism for every year in the last ten years. This reflects that terrorism has remained a significant issue in these three countries ever since 2003. Somalia has featured in the ten most affected countries for the last eight years in a row.

2014 was the first time since 2000 that India has not featured among the ten countries with highest fatalities from terrorism. However, this is due to the growth of terrorism in other countries more than to an improvement in India. The number of people killed from terrorism in India increased by 1.2 per cent from 2013 to reach a total of 416.



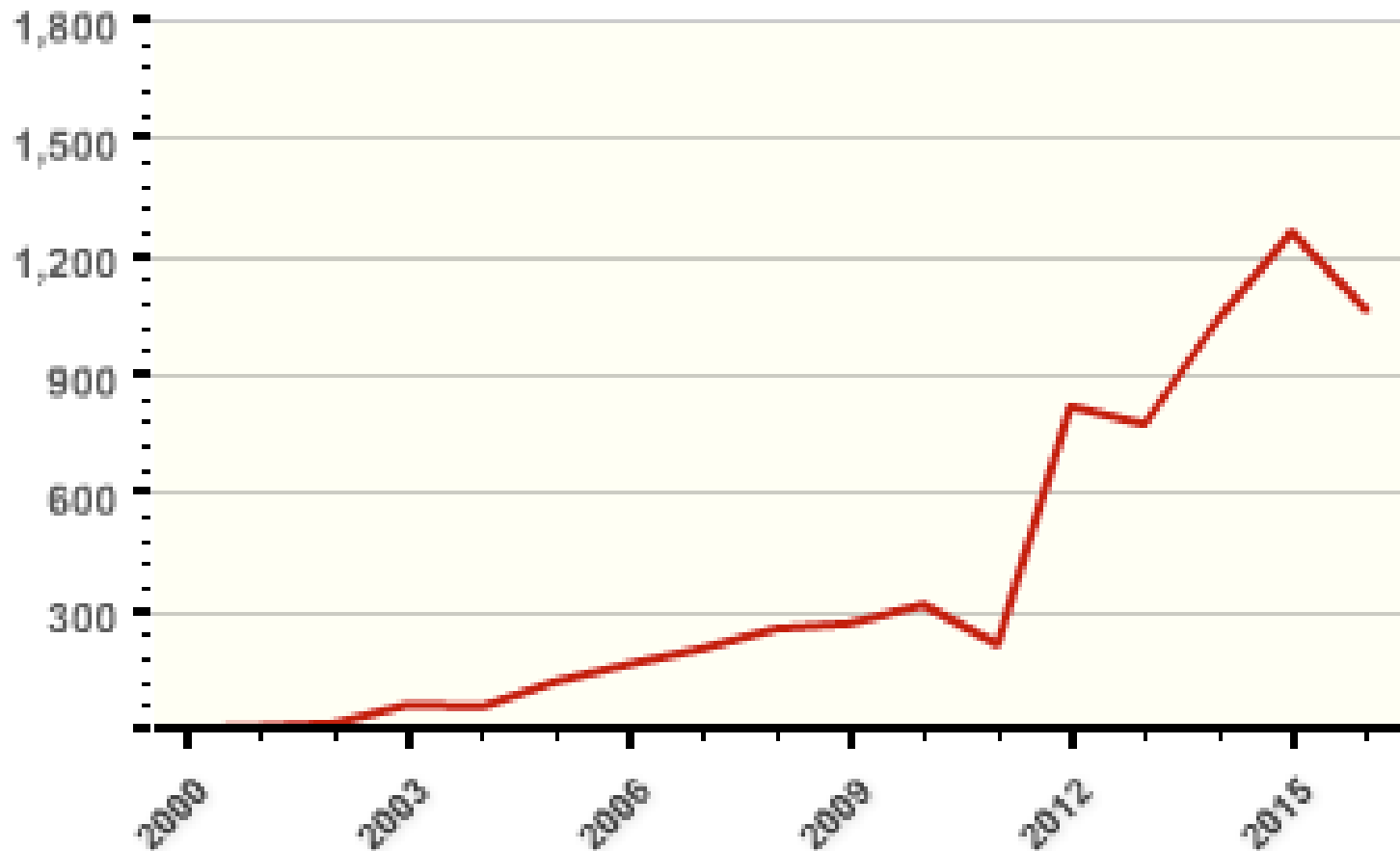
## Afghanistan and Pakistan - Terrorist Incidents: 2000-2016



**All incidents regardless of doubt.**

# Afghanistan - Terrorist Incidents: 2005-2015

Caused by Haqqani Network; Islamic State of Iraq (ISI); Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL); Al-Qaida; Taliban; Taliban (Pakistan)



All incidents regardless of doubt.

## Afghanistan – Comparative Levels of Terrorism in Top 10 Countries: 2016

	Total Attacks		Total Deaths*		Deaths per Attack*		Total Injured*		Injured per Attack*		Total Kidnapped/ Hostages	
	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015
<b>Iraq</b>	2965	2417	9764	6973	3.44	3.01	13314	11900	4.74	5.25	8586	4008
<b>Afghanistan</b>	1340	1716	4561	5312	3.58	3.24	5054	6250	4.03	3.99	1673	1134
<b>India</b>	927	798	337	289	0.38	0.38	636	500	0.73	0.66	317	866
<b>Pakistan</b>	734	1010	955	1087	1.34	1.11	1729	1338	2.43	1.37	450	279
<b>Philippines</b>	482	490	272	260	0.58	0.54	418	430	0.90	0.90	216	127
<b>Nigeria</b>	466	588	1832	4940	4.35	9.13	919	2786	2.66	7.70	265	858
<b>Syria</b>	363	387	2088	2767	6.42	7.91	2656	2830	9.16	9.63	1406	1476
<b>Turkey</b>	363	309	657	337	1.81	1.11	2282	828	6.37	2.78	18	141
<b>Yemen</b>	363	460	628	1517	1.89	3.90	793	2599	2.44	6.97	173	456
<b>Somalia</b>	359	241	740	659	2.18	3.05	943	463	2.91	2.28	373	161
<b>Worldwide</b>	11072	12121	25621	29424	2.44	2.56	33814	37419	3.32	3.40	15543	12264

**\*Includes perpetrators**

**All incidents regardless of doubt.**

U.S. State Department, Country Reports on Terrorism, 2017, Statistic Annex, p. 5.

## Afghanistan – Taliban versus Other Five Lead Threats

	Total Attacks		Total Deaths*		Total Injured*		Total Kidnapped/ Hostages	
	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015	2016	2015
<b>Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS)**</b>	1133	969	9114	6178	7671	6608	8379	4805
<b>Taliban</b>	848	1104	3615	4535	3572	4758	1498	975
<b>Maoists/Communist Party of India - Maoist (CPI-Maoist)</b>	336	347	174	177	141	156	171	707
<b>Al-Shabaab</b>	332	226	740	836	921	561	375	559
<b>Houthi Extremists</b>	267	292	374	978	568	1704	137	387

**\* Includes perpetrators**

**\*\* Excludes attacks attributed to branches of ISIS or ISIS-inspired individuals**

## Afghanistan – Summary Trends at Start of 2017

- The total number of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan decreased 22% between 2015 and 2016, while the total number of deaths decreased 14%. At the same time, perpetrator deaths declined 7%, and the percentage of total fatalities in Afghanistan that were perpetrator deaths remained especially high – 51%, compared to 26% worldwide.
- Like Iraq, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Somalia, Afghanistan also experienced a large increase (47%) in the number of people kidnapped or taken hostage in terrorist attacks in 2016.
- Information about perpetrator groups was reported for two-thirds of all attacks in Afghanistan in 2016 (67%). Nearly all of these (94%) were attributed to the Taliban.
- Attacks carried out by the Taliban in 2016 killed more than 3,500 people (including nearly 2,000 perpetrators) and wounded more than 3,500 additional people. The Khorasan branch of ISIS remained active in Afghanistan in 2016, carrying out 6% of attacks in which a perpetrator group was identified.
- Three of the 20 deadliest individual attacks in 2016 took place in Afghanistan – in Kunduz, Helmand, and Ghazni provinces. The Taliban claimed responsibility for all three attacks.
- Attacks against police targets, especially personnel, checkpoints, and police buildings, comprised 35% of terrorist attacks in Afghanistan in 2016. This represents a decrease from 2015, when 45% of all attacks in Afghanistan targeted police. However, police targets were still twice as prevalent in Afghanistan as worldwide (17%). Private citizens and property were targeted in one-third (33%) of the attacks in Afghanistan in 2016 (increased from 24% in 2015), followed by non-diplomatic government targets, which comprised 12% of attacks in 2016.
- In Afghanistan 7% of all terrorist attacks were suicide attacks in 2016. The number of suicide attacks declined from 137 in 2015 to 99 in 2016. With this latest decline, the prevalence of suicide attacks in Afghanistan is relatively consistent with the global average (6% in 2016).
- Terrorist attacks continued to occur throughout Afghanistan in 2016, taking place in 33 of the country's 34 provinces (with the exception of Panjsher province). The provinces that experienced the most attacks in 2016 were Helmand (8%), Nangarhar (8%), Kabul (7%), Kandahar (7%), and Faryab (6%).



## Terrorist Groups operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan

Terrorist Group	Estimated Ranks	Origins/Mission
AQ and AQIS	200	Formed In 1988 to establish an Islamic caliphate
Eastern Turkistan Islamic Movement	100	Uighur separatists with small Afghanistan/Pakistan presence
Haqqani Network	3,000-5,000	Formed around time of Soviet invasion, aligned with AQ and Taliban
ISIS-K	1,000	Evolved In 2014 largely from TTP and Taliban
Islamic Jihad Union	25	Splintered from IMU and targets coalition forces
Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU)	100-200	Formed to overthrow Uzbek government, turned focus to NATO troops
Jama'at ul Dawa al-Qu'ran	25	Peshawar-based group linked to AQ, Taliban, and LeT
Jamaat-ul-Ahrar	200	TTP splinter group formed In 2014
Lashkar-e Tayyiba	300	Anti-India group formed In late '80s
Tariq Gidar Group	100-300	TTP-linked group that primarily targets the Pakistani government
Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP)	7,000-10,000	Formed In 2007 to fight Pakistani military In FATA
Commander Nazir Group	*	Formed In 2006 to support AQ and target NATO In Afghanistan
Harakat-ul Jihad Islami	*	Formed In 1980 to battle USSR, shifted to India and NATO
Harakat-ul Jihad Islami/ Bangladesh	*	Formed In 1984 to fight USSR, turned focus to Kashmir
Harakat-ul Mujahidin	*	Formed In 1985 to fight USSR, turned focus to Kashmir
Hizbul Mujahidin	*	Formed In 1989 to target Kashmir
Iranian Revolutionary Guard- Quds Force	*	Formed In 1979 to support terrorist groups
Jaish-e Muhammed	*	Formed In 2000 to annex Kashmir, also targets NATO forces
Jundallah	*	Baloch separatists who have targeted Iran since 2003
Lashkar-e Jhangvi	*	Pakistani anti-Shia group formed In 1996

\* No credible estimated numbers

Sources: USFOR-A, 9/30/2017; DoS, 7/2017; Stanford University.

## **LIG Estimate of Role of Terrorist Threat - I : End 2017**

**General Nicholson and USFOR-A officials stated during the quarter that there were 21 terrorist organizations operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. The DoD's December 2017 report, "Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan" stated that the existence of those groups "requires an Afghan supported U.S. platform in the region to monitor, and respond to these threats." During the quarter, Lead IG staff asked DoD personnel in Afghanistan to provide a breakdown or ranking of the different groups and the level of threat they pose to U.S. forces and interests. Additional data about the terrorist threat in Afghanistan, including an assessment of terrorist groups monitored by the Defense Intelligence Agency, are available in the classified appendix.**

**According to the DoS, which is responsible for designating entities as FTOs, there were 13 FTOs based in Afghanistan and Pakistan in 2016. In addition to those 13, there were 8 entities that the U.S. Government considers supporters or funders of terrorism, known as "Specially Designated Global Terrorists," under Executive Order 13224. Those two categories of terrorist groups combined equal the 21 entities that the DoD stated are operating in the region. (See Table 3 for a list of these 21 entities.)**

**While some of the groups based in Afghanistan and Pakistan, such as al Qaeda and ISIS-K, have global aspirations and reach, many of the others are groups or offshoots of groups that formed in the 1980s to fight Soviet forces in Afghanistan. Some later turned their focus to terrorism aimed at reversing what they regard as the illegal Indian annexation of Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir. Other groups formed to fight the Pakistani government. Many of the groups declared U.S. and NATO forces a target after the fall of the Taliban in the 2000s. Some groups, however, exist in the region but appear to pose no direct threat to U.S. personnel or interests. For example, according to the DoS's July 2017 report, a group known as Jundallah, is an FTO that in 2016 had a physical presence in Afghanistan and Pakistan but, had engaged in terrorism against Iran to advance Balochi rights.**

**According to the DoD, the Haqqani Network, largely based in Pakistan, was the greatest threat to U.S., coalition, and Afghan forces of any of the terrorist groups in the**

## **LIG Estimate of Role of Terrorist Threat - II : End 2017**

**Although not listed among the 21 groups identified as operating in USFOR-A's area of responsibility, the DoS listed the Indian Mujahedeen as operating in Pakistan and noted that the group had links to ISIS.<sup>124</sup>**

**In 2015-2016, ISIS-K eclipsed al Qaeda as the focus of U.S. counterterrorism operations in Afghanistan. Although ISIS has a stated goal of carrying out global attacks and forming a caliphate, and ISIS has been either responsible for or the inspiration for many attacks in the West, the affiliate ISIS-K is largely focused on violence inside Afghanistan. Despite rumors that ISIS fighters have been fleeing Iraq and Syria to join ISIS-K, DoD officials have stated there is no evidence of that. Instead, ISIS-K is filling its ranks primarily with Pakistani and Afghan militants who are defecting from other terrorist or insurgent groups.<sup>125</sup>**

**Experts contend, however, that al Qaeda remains the predominant threat to the United States. Despite the fact that the United States went to war in Afghanistan in 2001 to eliminate al Qaeda and affiliated groups and supporters, 16 years later, the group still has a presence in the country.<sup>126</sup> According to estimates, there are 50-200 al Qaeda militants in Afghanistan and Pakistan. While their capability to plan and carry out attacks along the lines of 9/11 has been substantially degraded, the threat is not eliminated.<sup>127</sup>**

**Experts state that al Qaeda has been able to exploit the rise of ISIS-K to rebuild and rebrand itself as a more "moderate" terrorist group.<sup>128</sup> It has also lowered its profile and deepened ties with the Taliban according to analysts, and it continues to focus on a "long game."**