

SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE CONTENTS

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SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE

KEY ISSUES AND EVENTS

Overall security incidents in Afghanistan remain low compared to a year prior, despite a significant uptick in January 2022.

Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) attacks declined this quarter since their high point in October 2021.

The United States continues to press the Taliban on key interests including equal rights, inclusive government, and counterterrorism commitments.

SECURITY SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

According to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED), **political violence** and protest incidents under the Taliban (October 2021–March 2022) declined by 80% compared to average incidents under the former Afghan government during the same time last year (October 2020–March 2021).¹ State noted that the Taliban security forces controlling the country this year are the same forces that were warring against the Afghan government last year, and that this year’s reduced violence is a result of that change, among other reasons.² For example, of the 5,183 civilian casualties during the first six months of 2021, UNAMA attributed 39% to the Taliban and only 23% to the former Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF).³ Since the Taliban takeover and the end of war against the former ANDSF, a much greater percentage of incidents involve battles with the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) (15% of incidents compared to 2% previously) or protest events (15% of incidents compared to 1% previously).⁴

As seen in Figure S.1, overall incidents remained low compared to last year, but rose somewhat from November 2021 through January 2022; incidents involving IS-K continued a downward trend after reaching a high

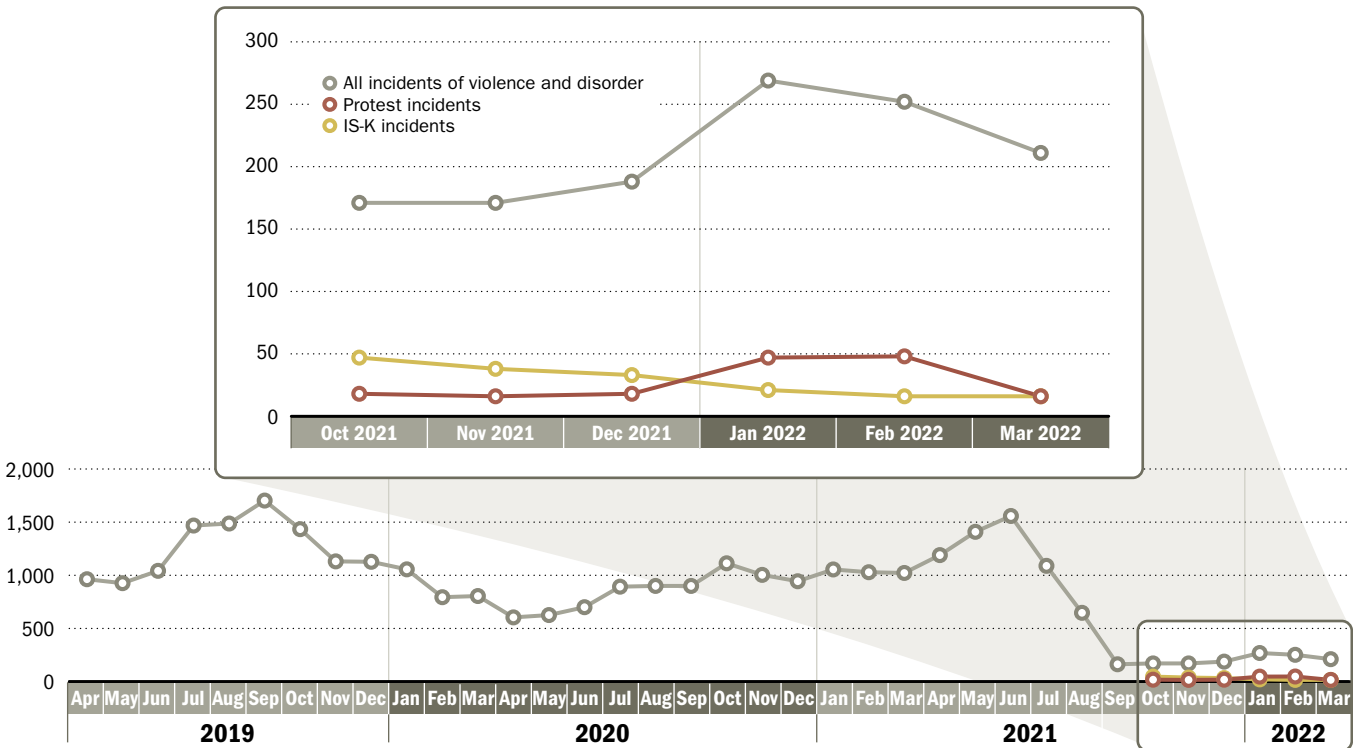
Political violence: The use of force by a group with a political purpose or motivation. Political violence is a component of political disorder, a social phenomenon that also includes precursor events, or critical junctures, that often precede violent conflict, including demonstrations, protests, and riots. Political disorder does not include general criminal conduct.

Source: ACLED, “Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) Codebook,” 2019, p. 7.

SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE

FIGURE S.1

POLITICAL VIOLENCE AND PROTEST INCIDENTS, OCTOBER 2021–MARCH 2022



Note: The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED) defines “political violence” as the use of force by a group with a political purpose or motivation.
 Source: ACLED, “Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED); www.acleddata.com,” accessed 4/2022; SIGAR analysis of ACLED data, 4/2022.

IS-K Kills or Injures Dozens in Day of Explosive Attacks

On April 24, IS-K killed or injured dozens in four explosions across Afghanistan. The first of these attacks killed at least 31 people at a Shia mosque in Mazar-e Sharif. This attack occurred only days after bomb explosions killed six at a high school in a Shia neighborhood of Kabul. Another two attacks targeted Taliban security forces in Kunduz and Nangarhar, leaving at least eight dead. The final blast occurred in Kabul and wounded two children.

Source: BBC, “Afghanistan: ‘Blood and fear everywhere’ after deadly IS blast,” 4/24/2022.

point in October 2021. State noted that it is unclear if the recent trend is due to Taliban security operations or the onset of winter,⁵ when fighting typically wanes.

ACLED is a nonprofit organization funded in part by the State Department’s Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations. Its purpose is to collect and provide publicly available data on all reported political violence and protest events around the world.⁶ ACLED notes that it had always been a challenge to collect data in Afghanistan due to its largely rural character and intimidation of subjects by militant and state forces, a situation that has not changed under the Taliban.⁷

Security levels vary across the country.⁸ The benefits of reduced violence are largely seen in rural areas, where most of the war had been fought, versus urban areas like Kabul, which traditionally had greater security. Within Kabul, crime has reportedly decreased, and Afghans can now patronize small businesses and restaurants at night.⁹ But despite general



Taliban's acting Minister of Interior Sirajuddin Haqqani attending a police graduation ceremony. (Taliban Ministry of Interior photo)

improvements, some Afghans, specifically younger women, have felt the brunt of Taliban repression against their demands for equal rights and treatment. Media groups have also had their operations disrupted and suspended (more information on these issues is found on pp. 78–79).¹⁰

Nonetheless, some broader evidence is emerging that suggests improved security is having a national impact. According to a World Bank survey conducted in fall 2021 (October–December), more Afghans report being at work, although employed workers across all sectors reported a significant decline in earnings; access to health services remains as high as in the same period in 2019; and overall school attendance is at the highest point since at least 2014 for both boys and girls.¹¹ Despite these improvements, the Taliban instituted a national policy banning girls from attending school past the 6th grade in August 2021, though it has been unevenly applied across the country.¹² The World Bank attributed overall improvements in employment and education metrics to better security (improvements were skewed towards the rural population, which started from a lower base than urban areas).¹³ The World Bank intends to continue these surveys, with the next round beginning in spring 2022.¹⁴

TALIBAN LEADERSHIP

The Taliban announced an interim cabinet in the fall of 2021, comprising many members who had been leaders during the Taliban's 1996 to 2001 period in power and members who were later a part of the Taliban's leadership council, the *Rahbari shura*, during the insurgency years.¹⁵ The United Nations (UN) deemed it a disappointment to those who wanted a more inclusive cabinet with non-Taliban members, past government figures, women, and minority group leaders. The Taliban regime's prime minister, two deputy prime ministers, and foreign minister are on the UN sanctions

list for their prior association with the Taliban.¹⁶ For more information on the interim Taliban cabinet and its political relations with the international community, see page 65.

In late March, the Taliban cabinet gathered in Kandahar Province for a three-day meeting, reportedly the first headed by supreme leader Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada and the largest cabinet meeting to date. Policy decisions from the meeting included the reversal of the Taliban's commitment to reopen secondary schools for girls on March 23.¹⁷ According to State, some schools had already reopened in anticipation that the Taliban would follow through on their commitment. Many Taliban- and non-Taliban-affiliated religious scholars, members of Taliban leadership, and members of the general public appeared shocked by the last-minute reversal.¹⁸

In response to this decision, State said:

We are watching the Taliban's actions closely in a number of areas, including following through with counterterrorism commitments; respecting the human rights of Afghans, including women, girls, and members of minority groups; building an inclusive system that gives the people a voice in their political future; and building an independent and sustainable economy. The legitimacy and support that the Taliban seeks from the international community depends entirely on their conduct. We have made it clear the Taliban decision regarding secondary school girls was a potential turning point in our engagement with the Taliban.¹⁹

At the cabinet meeting, administrators were also directed to make efforts to implement Sharia law. A press statement said the meeting "was concentrated on rules in government bodies, their activities, interaction with people, seeking a solution for ongoing economic difficulties, and absorbing all Taliban affiliates in security bodies."²⁰ Some Taliban leaders were also reportedly given specific tasks. Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Baradar, who heads the economic commission, was directed to attract local and international investors and to provide facilities for macro- and microeconomic projects, as well as to promote mining. Second Deputy Prime Minister Mullah Hanafi was instructed to prevent further bureaucracy in finance and other sectors, and to reform all government administrative systems. Supreme Leader Akhundzada also directed the cabinet to expedite efforts to treat Afghan drug addicts and to formally declare a ban on opium and other narcotics.²¹ For more information on the Taliban and counternarcotics, see p. 84.

TALIBAN GOVERNANCE AND ENGAGEMENT WITH THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Nearly all Taliban cabinet members announced last fall were Sunni Pashtuns. Non-Pashtun cabinet members, such as Uzbek Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi and Tajik Minister of Economy Qari Din Mohammad Hanif, do not represent ethnic-based or other alternative political coalitions to the Taliban. Despite internal conflicts, the Taliban cabinet appears to be a rather tight-knit group of wartime insurgent leaders, many of whom are drawn from the *Rahbari shura* or leadership council, the Taliban's highest authority throughout the insurgency years.²² Within the Taliban, it is the cabinet that has the most active engagement with the United States and the rest of the international community.²³

U.S. and International Engagement with the Taliban

To date, no country has officially recognized the Taliban as the government of Afghanistan since they seized power in August 2021. However, by early April 2022 four countries had accredited Taliban-appointed diplomats: China, Pakistan, Russia, and Turkmenistan.²⁴ The Chinese foreign minister visited Kabul in March.²⁵

In late 2021, Citibank froze the bank accounts of the Afghan embassy in Washington, DC, and of Afghan consulates in New York City and Los Angeles to avoid violating sanctions against the Taliban, according to media reports. Without the backing of a recognized government or sufficient funding, the embassy and consulates shut down operations in March 2022, whereupon State took over maintenance and security for the three properties.²⁶

Nevertheless, the United States has engaged with Taliban representatives on a wide range of issues relevant to U.S. national interests and has closely observed Taliban actions in a number of areas.²⁷ According to State, these policy priorities include:²⁸

- the welfare and safety of U.S. citizens abroad
- the release of U.S. hostage Mark Frerichs (taken hostage in February 2020)
- addressing the humanitarian and economic crises in the country
- ensuring the Taliban abide by commitments to permit the departure from Afghanistan of U.S. citizens, lawful permanent residents, Special Immigrant Visa holders, and Afghans of special interest to the United States
- supporting the formation of an inclusive government that reflects the country's diversity
- ensuring the Taliban upholds their counterterrorism commitments, including those stated in the February 29, 2020, U.S.-Taliban agreement
- encouraging the Taliban to respect human rights in Afghanistan, including those of religious and ethnic minorities, women and girls, civil society leaders, former administration-affiliated officials, and individuals who were formerly affiliated with the U.S. government, U.S. military, and U.S. NGOs or media institutions

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHT

KEY FIGURES IN THE TALIBAN CABINET



**Sheikh
Haibatullah Akhundzada**

Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
Leader/"Commander of the Faithful"

Shura: Rahbari

Took command of the Taliban in 2016, following the death of Akhtar Mohammad Mansour. A reclusive figure, he has begun to make more appearances in Kandahar and is the final authority on Taliban policies.



Mohammad Hassan Akhund

Office of Prime Minister
Prime Minister

Shah Wali Kot, Kandahar Province

One of the Taliban's founding members; more a religious and political authority than a military commander.



Abdul Ghani Baradar

Office of Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister

Deh Rawood, Uruzgan Province

One of the Taliban's founding members, he was released from a Pakistan prison in 2018 and led negotiations in Qatar.



Abdul Salam Hanafi

Office of Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister

Darab, Faryab Province

Part of the Taliban from its earliest days, generally known amongst the Taliban as the "scholar of the faith."



**Maulavi Mohammed
Abdul Kabir**

Office of Prime Minister
Deputy Prime Minister

Paktiya Province

Military commander who helped the Taliban expand into eastern Afghanistan in the early 2000s, one-time shadow governor of Nangarhar Province.



**Muhammad Yaqoob
Mujahid**

Defense
Defense Minister

*Deh Rawood,
Uruzgan Province*

Eldest son of late Taliban founder Mullah Omar, Yaqoob was put in charge of the Taliban's military commission in 2016.



Abdul Haq Wasiq

Intelligence
Director

Khogyani, Ghazni Province

Served as the deputy director of intelligence during the Taliban's first regime. Reportedly, he has not wielded considerable influence within the Taliban, but is a capable and trusted Taliban official.



Sirajuddin Haqqani

Interior
Minister

*Childhood spent in Miram Shah,
North Waziristan, Pakistan*

Leader of the Haqqani Network since late 2012, a designated terrorist organization with ties to al-Qaeda. Served as the first deputy to Sheikh Akhundzada from 2016.



Amir Khan Muttaqi

Foreign Affairs
Minister

Helmand Province

Joined the Taliban shortly after it emerged in the 1990s and served in the Ministry of Information and Culture. During the insurgency, he systematized the Taliban's media publications.

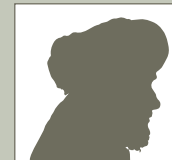


Khairullah Khairkwa

Information and Culture
Minister

Kandahar Province

Allegedly involved in drug trafficking, possible connections to AQ (according to Gitmo docs). May have had command responsibility in connection to a 1997 civilian massacre. Generally considered to be a moderate.



**Mullah
Noorullah Noori**

Borders and Tribal Affairs
Minister

Zabul Province

Served as governor of Balkh and Laghman Provinces in the previous Taliban regime.



Abdul Hakim Ishaqzai

Supreme Court
Chief Justice

Panjwai, Kandahar Province

One of the founding members of the Taliban, an Afghan Islamic scholar, Ishaqzai served as chief justice in the previous Taliban government.



Noorudin Azizi

Commerce and Trade
Minister

Panjshir Province

A prominent investor from northeastern Afghanistan.



Qalandar Ebad

Public Health
Minister

Sarhawza, Paktika Province

A graduate of Nangarhar University's Faculty of Medicine, where he received his M.D. Further training at the Pakistan Institute of Medical Sciences, Islamabad.



Hidayatallah Badri

Finance
Minister

Maiwand, Kandahar Province

Leader of the Taliban's financial commission during the insurgency, Badri was a childhood friend of Taliban founder Mullah Omar.



**Mullah Abdul Latif
Mansur**

Energy and Water
Minister

Gerda Serai, Paktiya Province

A member of the negotiating team in Qatar, Mansur served in the agriculture ministry under the former Taliban regime, commanded the Mansur network, and was a governor of Nangarhar Province.



**Maulvi Shahabuddin
Delavar**

Mines and Petroleum
Minister

Kandahar Province

Helped the Taliban's insurgent Leadership Council establish cadres in western Afghanistan and incorporate independent insurgents.



**Qari Din Mohammad
Hanif**

Economy
Minister

Yaftali Sufia, Badakhshan Province

Reportedly joining the Taliban along with hundreds of other students from northern Badakhshan Province, Hanif was a minister of higher education under the former Taliban regime.

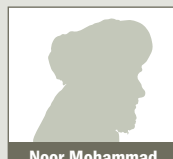


Abdul Manan Omari

Public Works
Minister

Uruzgan Province

The stepbrother of Taliban founder Mullah Omar, Manan is a Taliban senior leader and was a member of the Qatar office's negotiating team.



**Noor Mohammad
Saqib**

Haji and Religious Affairs
Minister

Deh Sabz, Kabul Province

Chief justice under the former Taliban regime, Saqib is a renowned legal scholar who studied at the Darul Uloom Haqqania madrasa in Pakistan.



Abdul Hakim Shara'i

Justice
Minister

Maiwand, Kandahar Province

Headed the Taliban's shadow court system during the insurgency, undermined the authority of the previous regime by resolving disputes in rural areas.



**Mullah Mohammad
Abbas Akhund**

Disaster Management
Minister

Spin Boldak, Kandahar Province

A close associate of founder Mullah Omar, Kandahar governor under the former Taliban regime, and briefly the governor of Kabul until November 2021.



Mullah Shirin Akhund

Governor
Kabul Province

Kandahar Province

Long-time Taliban member and close associate of Taliban founder Mullah Omar, after Omar's death in 2013, Akhund took on greater leadership responsibilities including overseeing war efforts in 19 provinces.

To facilitate regular communication on these issues, State formed the U.S.-Taliban Issues Solution Channel in early September 2021 in order for the Afghanistan Affairs Unit to engage with the Taliban political commission in Doha, Qatar.²⁹

In addition, the U.S. government, in coordination with the international community, held direct, high-level meetings with Taliban representatives this quarter, and participated in multilateral meetings such as U.S. Special Representative Thomas West's meeting with the Taliban on December 19 on the sidelines of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Islamabad.³⁰ On January 23–24, 2022, Taliban representatives met with representatives of U.S. and European governments in Oslo, Norway, including Special Representative West and U.S. Special Envoy for Afghan Women, Girls, and Human Rights Rina Amiri.³¹ The Taliban also met with participants from various Afghan NGOs and other civil society leaders to serve as a basis for “further contact to explore reconciliation and ways of creating a more stable and inclusive Afghanistan,” according to Norway's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³²

According to a joint statement released by the U.S. and Norwegian governments, U.S. and European representatives stressed to Taliban representatives: the urgency in addressing the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan and importance of ease of access for both male and female humanitarian workers; the need to protect human rights and for an inclusive and representative political system; the need for the Taliban to halt the increase in various human rights violations, respond to the concerns of Afghan civil society, and allow female students to access all levels of education; the Taliban's commitments on counterterrorism and drug trafficking; and the development of a transparent, sound strategy to restore confidence in Afghanistan's financial sector and prevent the collapse of social services.³³ The U.S. and Norwegian governments made clear that this meeting did not constitute a recognition or legitimization of the *de facto* authorities in Afghanistan.³⁴

On March 17, 2022, the UN Security Council voted (with Russia abstaining) to renew the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) mandate for one year, continuing UN engagement with the Taliban in Afghanistan. Under its new mandate, which does not mention the Taliban by name, UNAMA's priorities include: to coordinate and facilitate the provision of humanitarian assistance; facilitate dialogue between relevant Afghan political actors and promote an inclusive, representative, participatory, and responsive government respectful of the rule of law at the national and subnational levels; engage with all stakeholders at the national and subnational levels, including civil society and international NGOs for the protection and promotion of the human rights of all Afghans, including the protection of the rights of women and children; support regional cooperation on Afghanistan to promote stability and peace within the country; and, within its mandate, support existing mechanisms to improve the overall security situation in Afghanistan. The resolution also provides UNAMA with a “strong mandate” to engage with all actors in Afghanistan, including the Taliban, on relevant matters.³⁵

In early March, the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative for Afghanistan, Deborah Lyons, acknowledged the distrust between the Taliban and the international

QUARTERLY HIGHLIGHT



U.S. and European representatives meet with a Taliban delegation in Oslo, Norway. (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs photo)

community, but told the UN Security Council that it would not be possible to “truly assist the Afghan people without working with the de facto authorities.”³⁶

According to UNAMA, the Taliban have continued to push for greater acknowledgment from the international community of the decline in violence throughout Afghanistan. The Taliban claim progress in generating domestic revenues absent international assistance, and also reopened schools in an effort to bolster their political legitimacy.³⁷ Taliban representatives also continue to push for unfreezing the Afghan central bank’s assets held in U.S. financial institutions. This quarter, these calls to unfreeze assets have been echoed by China, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, and several international aid groups, according to media reports.³⁸ For more information on Afghan assets held in U.S. financial institutions and the February 2022 Executive Order on Protecting Certain Property of Da Afghanistan Bank for the Benefit of the People of Afghanistan, see p. 102.

However, following the decision of Taliban authorities to block girls’ access to secondary education when schools reopened on March 23, U.S. officials cancelled several meetings with Taliban representatives. A State Department spokesperson said, “Their decision was a deeply disappointing and inexplicable reversal of commitments to the Afghan people, first and foremost, and also to the international community. We have cancelled some of our engagements, including planned meetings in Doha, and made clear that we see this decision as a potential turning point in our engagement.”³⁹

TALIBAN SECURITY FORCES AND RECONSTITUTED ANDSF EQUIPMENT

The United States remains concerned over the threat from terrorist organizations in Afghanistan and the region, including remnants of IS-K and al-Qaeda, that harbor aspirations to attack the United States. U.S. Central Command commander General Kenneth F. McKenzie told the Senate Armed Services Committee this quarter that IS-K and al-Qaeda “are seeking to exploit a reduction of U.S. [counterterrorism] efforts in Afghanistan to reinvigorate their adherents and increase their ability to plot and direct external attacks.”⁴⁰

McKenzie said the Taliban would attempt to destroy IS-K, despite Taliban mistakes in releasing prisoners just prior to their takeover, but noted that as “the economic situation and humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan worsens ... vulnerable populations will potentially become increasingly susceptible to [IS-K] recruitment.”⁴¹ He said the Taliban were less likely to take a firm stance against al-Qaeda, with whom they have historically enjoyed a relationship of convenience. The U.S. relies heavily on Pakistan for intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance missions in Afghanistan to observe these developments.⁴²

Taliban Security Forces

In mid-January, Taliban chief of staff Qari Fasihuddin Fitrat announced that Afghanistan has at least 80,000 army personnel stationed in eight corps throughout the country and will attempt to build this force to 150,000 members. That target strength would approach the 182,071 reported strength of the former Afghan National Army in spring 2021.⁴³ This fledgling force appears to be adopting many of the same organizational components as the former Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), including an air force, an army that includes special forces known as Red Units (*Sareh Kheta*), a variety of police elements including traffic police and mosque security, and an internal security directorate known as the General Directorate of Intelligence.⁴⁴

Many new recruits joining the Taliban security forces appear to have come from the cohort of Afghans who took up arms during the spring and summer of 2021, as Taliban gains inspired Afghans living or studying in Pakistan to join the insurgency.⁴⁵ Some veteran Talibs refer to this new cohort as the “21-ers,” who joined the Taliban opportunistically in 2021 after U.S. and Coalition forces committed to withdrawing from Afghanistan.⁴⁶ This cohort of approximately 5,000 to 10,000 fighters was about 10 times higher than the normal influx of Taliban recruits to Afghanistan during other regular fighting seasons.⁴⁷

Once Kabul was captured, the Taliban also began calling on educated Taliban members and supporters in Pakistan to join Taliban governing structures. According to the *Washington Post*, Islamic schools and military

Open-source reporting: Relevant information derived from the systematic collection, processing, and analysis of publicly available information in response to known or anticipated intelligence requirements.

Source: DOD, "DOD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms," 11/2021, p. 159.

DOD Conducting Full Assessment of ANDSF Equipment

The Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy (OUSDP) said DOD is conducting a full accounting of the types, numbers, and value of all military equipment the U.S. provided to Afghanistan since 2005, including an estimate of how much of that equipment may have remained in the ANDSF inventory before the forces' disintegration, how much was reduced by battle losses, as well as an inventory of worn-out equipment and equipment outside Afghanistan when the Taliban took over. DOD told SIGAR that open-source information on this is incomplete and inaccurate, and that DOD is working on a full assessment to be shared with SIGAR once completed.

Source: OUSDP and DSCMO-A response to SIGAR data call, 8/26/2021; OUSD-P response to SIGAR vetting, 10/15/2021.

training centers in Pakistan that had earlier served as key components of the Taliban recruitment pipeline have begun to move into Afghanistan.⁴⁸

According to the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) based on **open-source reporting**, some ANDSF and civilians have joined Taliban security forces at lower levels, likely for personal gain. Other former ANDSF personnel have joined anti-Taliban forces such as IS-K or the National Resistance Front (NRF), a small Tajik-dominated, anti-Taliban militant resistance movement active in several Afghan provinces. DIA said it is unknown how many ANDSF have joined the Taliban, joined anti-Taliban militant organizations, or fled Afghanistan for neighboring countries.⁴⁹ State noted that former ANDSF personnel who have joined Taliban security forces are not permitted to serve in leadership. State also said some former ANDSF had joined anti-Taliban groups, but that most former ANDSF personnel have returned to civilian life and many others have departed the country.⁵⁰

ANDSF Equipment Left Behind

The Taliban possess substantial stores of U.S.-funded equipment captured when the ANDSF collapsed. However, DOD noted that without the technical maintenance and logistics support that the U.S. had been providing to the ANDSF, the operational capability of the equipment will continue to degrade.⁵¹

According to DOD, \$18.6 billion worth of ANDSF equipment was procured through the Afghan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) since 2005—not the \$80 billion reported by some media—and much of that equipment was destroyed during combat operations. DOD estimates that \$7.12 billion worth of ANDSF equipment remained in Afghanistan in varying states of repair when U.S. forces withdrew in August 2021.⁵²

DOD said the ANDSF abandoned their locations and left much of their major pieces of equipment, such as Humvees and aircraft, in a non-operational condition.⁵³ DOD-provided ANDSF maintenance data, and former ANDSF officers interviewed by SIGAR also suggest that much of this abandoned equipment was not operational.⁵⁴ DOD further noted that there “currently is no realistic way to retrieve the materiel that remains in Afghanistan given that the United States does not recognize the Taliban as a government.”⁵⁵ More information on the current status of former ANDSF equipment and the Taliban’s ability to use it appears in the Classified Supplement to this report.

DOD notified Congress in December 2021 that it had exercised “disposition authority” for ASFF and was treating all materiel located outside of Afghanistan procured using ASFF as DOD equipment. DOD is evaluating final options for this equipment and could transfer the equipment to other U.S. government departments and agencies or to foreign partners. On January 19, DOD notified Congress that it intended to transfer five U.S.-procured former Afghan Mi-17 helicopters that had been undergoing

maintenance in Ukraine to the Ukrainian government. Ukraine accepted these excess defense articles on March 11, 2022. In mid-April, President Biden announced a military assistance package to Ukraine that included an additional 11 Mi-17 helicopters that had been scheduled for Afghanistan. DOD also transferred nearly 16 million rounds of varied nonstandard munitions, originally procured for Afghanistan, to Ukraine.⁵⁶

Taliban Air Force

The Taliban are attempting to rehabilitate the former Afghan Air Force (AAF) with aircraft and personnel remaining in Afghanistan. As of August 15, 2021, the former AAF had 131 usable aircraft available and the Afghan Special Security Forces' (ASSF) Special Mission Wing (SMW) had 39 aircraft of unknown status available (helicopters included 18 Mi-17s and five UH-60s; airplanes included 16 PC-12 single-engine passenger and light-cargo aircraft).⁵⁷

According to DIA open-source analysis, the Taliban claim to have successfully repaired several former AAF airframes and are continuing to consolidate and account for captured equipment this quarter. As of January 2022, the Taliban claim to have repaired seven former AAF airframes.⁵⁸

In February, acting Minister of Defense Mohammad Yaqub said that the Taliban were not allowing captured equipment to leave Afghanistan and were instead giving it to Taliban security forces. That same month, Taliban officials announced that 10,000 troops were being sent to the Tajikistan border equipped with the “modern technology of the NATO and U.S. system” and would soon be supported by combat aircraft. Further, the Taliban have asked Tajikistan and Uzbekistan to return former AAF airframes that former ANDSF pilots landed there in August 2021, and are actively seeking the return of other former ANDSF equipment that was removed from Afghanistan.⁵⁹ DOD said the final disposition of these aircraft in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan has not been settled and is subject to diplomatic discussions.⁶⁰

According to the Taliban air force commander and former AAF personnel, about 4,300 members, half of the former AAF, have joined the Taliban's air force, including 33 pilots.⁶¹ Some of these men spoke to the *New York Times* and said they had not been harmed or threatened, but also that they had not been paid. Only a fraction of the 81 aircraft at the Kabul military airport are functional, including six repaired UH-60 Blackhawks.⁶²

Congressional Committee Reports Seek an Accounting of Why the ANDSF Failed and What Equipment Was Lost in Afghanistan

House committee report H. Rept. 117-118 accompanying S. 1605, the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for Fiscal Year 2022 (Pub. L. No. 117-81) directed SIGAR to address:

- why the ANDSF proved unable to defend Afghanistan from the Taliban following the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel
- the impact the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel had on the performance of the ANDSF
- elements of the U.S. military's efforts since 2001 to provide training, assistance, and advising to the ANDSF that impacted the ANDSF's performance following the U.S. military withdrawal
- current status of U.S.-provided equipment to the ANDSF
- current status of U.S.-trained ANDSF personnel
- any other matters SIGAR deems appropriate

Source: House Report 117-118, excerpt, “SIGAR Evaluation of Performance of Afghan National Defense and Security Forces,” 9/10/2021.

ONGOING SECURITY EFFORTS IN AFGHANISTAN

Taliban Security Operation Targets Criminal Elements, IS-K

According to DIA analysis based primarily on open-source reporting, the Taliban continues to prioritize targeting IS-K, but have been unable to preemptively disrupt most IS-K attacks against schools, healthcare institutions, journalists, and NGOs, likely because they lack the intelligence capability. On February 25, IS-K likely carried out an attack on polio workers in northern Kunduz and Takhar Provinces, killing eight vaccinators.⁶³ For more information on attacks on civilian infrastructure, see page 77.

DIA added that the Taliban likely struggles to counter IS-K attacks on critical infrastructure. In October 2021, IS-K operatives surveilled and targeted power infrastructure using improvised-explosive-devices (IED). Since August 2021, the Taliban regime's financial challenges have hindered its ability to pay salaries to its members, which will likely contribute to the further degradation of counterterrorism capabilities and a decreased ability to disrupt IS-K attacks on infrastructure.⁶⁴

As of mid-February 2022, the Taliban increased counterterrorism operations by establishing checkpoints and conducting house-by-house searches to deny IS-K the capability to target critical infrastructure.⁶⁵ In late February, the Taliban carried out their largest security operation since August, featuring dozens of daytime checkpoints setup across Kabul and initially focused on areas seen as resistant to Taliban rule. According to the *New York Times*, the operation was led by Taliban Deputy Defense Minister Mullah Fazel Mazloom.⁶⁶

DIA also said the Taliban's counterterrorism focus on IS-K is likely enabling other militant organizations affiliated with the Taliban to maintain their presence in Afghanistan.⁶⁷ At Pakistan's behest, the Taliban pledged to prevent cross-border attacks by Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP), while refraining from direct military action against the group. In February, TTP claimed responsibility for 22 attacks targeting Pakistani security forces, down from 42 attacks in January and 45 in December 2021.⁶⁸

State noted that it is difficult to determine what motivates Afghans to join IS-K, and it is unclear if economic difficulties or incentives had a direct influence on IS-K recruitment. According to State, IS-K "promotes itself in part by impugning the Taliban's Islamic credentials, especially by accusing the Taliban of complicity with western governments."⁶⁹ Although IS-K currently operates in mostly urban clandestine cells—especially in areas where the Taliban lack a strong presence—IS-K may brand itself as an alternative to Taliban rule.⁷⁰ More information on Taliban security operations and IS-K activities appears in the Classified Supplement to this report.



Police graduation ceremony is held in Paktiya Province. (Taliban Ministry of Interior photo)

Policing Efforts and Protests

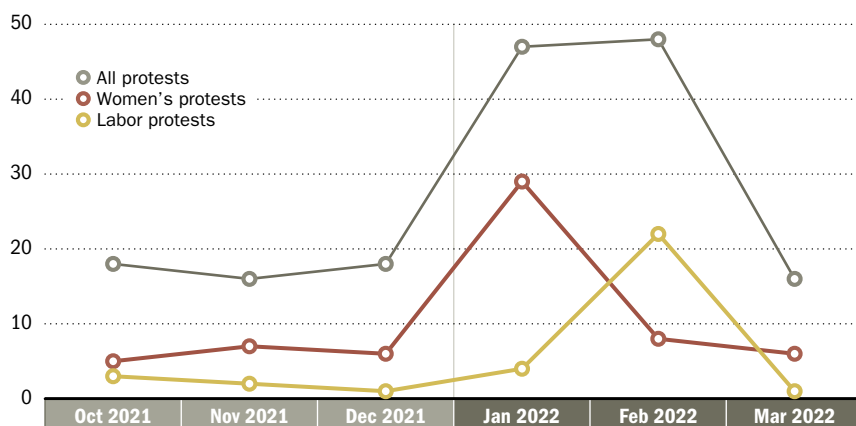
According to DIA, some Taliban policing efforts are targeting specific individuals whom they see as a threat to the current governing structure or public. During early 2022, Taliban local commanders arrested Afghan civilians including journalists and civil society activists.⁷¹ Taliban security operations also coincided with a crackdown on women's rights protests in January.⁷² The house-to-house searches and inspections in multiple provinces that began in February included the arrests of former ANDSF members and Afghan government officials.⁷³

Women's rights activists and labor groups organized the greatest number of protests early in this quarter. Women's protests, taking on a national character, peaked in January 2022 before declining in February and March, as seen in Figure S.2 on the following page. The decline followed the Taliban's dispersal of a January 16 protest at Kabul University with pepper spray. Days later, some women were arrested at their homes. These Taliban efforts against women's rights activists appear to have intensified throughout January and into February, despite a late-January meeting in Oslo where envoys pressed the Taliban on human rights issues.⁷⁴

In mid-February, the character of Afghan protests changed when labor groups took to the streets following President Joseph R. Biden's February 11 executive order that blocked from transfer, payment, export, or withdrawal of all assets belonging to Afghanistan's central bank that are currently held in U.S. financial institutions, transferring the monies instead into a consolidated account held at the Federal Reserve Bank of New York. Although it appears that this order was widely interpreted as excluding Afghans from these monies, a court filing stated the intent to use \$3.5 billion of the \$7 billion in assets to address economic and humanitarian issues in

FIGURE S.2

PROTEST INCIDENTS BY TYPE, OCTOBER 2021-MARCH 2022



Source: ACLED, "Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project (ACLED); www.acleddata.com," accessed 4/2022; SIGAR analysis of ACLED data, 4/2022.

Afghanistan; however, the final disposition of all \$7 billion remains contingent on court decisions.⁷⁵

Numerous media outlets have reported that Afghan public sentiment has been turning against the United States and the West over the ongoing sanctions and the \$7 billion in central bank assets held in the United States. Reports also indicate that former Afghan partners are becoming highly critical of the United States even as Taliban leaders continue to emphasize their desire to cooperate with the United States.⁷⁶

Local Reprisals, Revenge, and the Commission of Purification

According to DIA, Taliban leadership has likely not been targeting former ANDSF personnel, and instances to the contrary are "localized small-scale reprisal killings, violence, and intimidation against former ANDSF and Afghan government employees."⁷⁷ In fall 2021, amidst concerns that the Taliban was losing control over its rank and file members, Taliban leaders, including the Taliban Defense Minister Mullah Mohammad Yaqoob, attributed these abuses in part to the influx of Taliban recruits that joined the insurgency during the spring and summer of 2021.⁷⁸ Furthermore, a recent investigative report by the *New York Times* discovered that at least some Taliban continue to be involved in revenge against former Afghan government and security forces personnel, to include killings and disappearances.⁷⁹

In November, the Taliban established a "Commission of Purification" under the Ministry of Defense to remove Taliban members who have violated the rights of others or committed ethnic, religious, and personal

animosity crimes. In February, the chief inspector of the de facto Defense Ministry and chairman of the Commission of Purification claimed 4,350 members were identified and expelled from the Taliban.⁸⁰

Some prominent Afghans who have remained in the country, such as the pir of the Qadiriyyah Sufi order, Sayed Hamed Gailani, and former president Hamid Karzai, as well as one long time western scholar of Afghanistan, have expressed guarded optimism that the Taliban have not resorted to systematic revenge, as is often the case amongst revolutionaries, according to these sources.⁸¹ Additional information on reprisals against former ANDSF members and former Afghan government officials appears in the Classified Supplement to this report.

U.S. Support for Governance and the Former Afghan National Defense and Security Forces

As of March 31, 2022, the United States has provided more than \$36 billion to support governance in Afghanistan. Most of this funding, nearly \$21.2 billion, was appropriated to the Economic Support Fund (ESF) administered by the State Department (State) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID).⁸²

In August and September 2021, the U.S. government reviewed all non-humanitarian assistance programs in Afghanistan. During this time, in accordance with the interagency review, State and USAID paused the majority of development assistance programs to assess the environment, including the safety and ability of implementing partners to operate. Since then, more than a dozen State and USAID programs in Afghanistan have restarted with a focus on addressing critical needs of the Afghan people in several key sectors—health, education, agriculture, food security, and livelihoods—as well as supporting civil society, with a focus on women, girls, and human rights protections more broadly. These efforts are implemented through NGOs, international organizations, or other third parties, minimizing benefit to the Taliban to the extent possible.⁸³

The ANDSF have dissolved and U.S. funding obligations for them have ceased, but disbursements will continue until all program contracts are reconciled.⁸⁴ The U.S. Congress appropriated more than \$89.5 billion to help the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan provide security in Afghanistan, as of March 31, 2022. This accounts for 61% of all U.S. reconstruction appropriations for Afghanistan since fiscal year (FY) 2002.⁸⁵

The Defense Security Cooperation Management Office-Afghanistan (DSCMO-A) remains headquartered in Qatar at Al Udeid airbase, administering the final disposition of efforts in Afghanistan, such as the service contracts funded by the Afghan Security Forces Fund (ASFF, 2005–2021) as seen in Table S.1 and S.2 on the following page. DSCMO-A noted that ASFF may take years to close due to the possibility of future claims and litigation by contractors.⁸⁶ As of March 16, 2022, DSCMO-A is led by a U.S. Army

ONGOING SIGAR AUDIT

An ongoing SIGAR audit is reviewing DOD's efforts to ensure the accountability for funds which were provided to the former Ministry of Defense. This audit will determine the extent to which DOD, since the beginning of FY 2019, ensured: (1) the accuracy and completeness of data used in Afghan Personnel and Pay System (APPS), and (2) the funds it provided to the Afghan government to pay Ministry of Defense salaries were disbursed to intended recipients.

SECURITY AND GOVERNANCE

TABLE S.1

INFRASTRUCTURE CONTRACTS FOR FORMER ANDSF ELEMENTS			
Contracts/Projects	Current Contract Value	Remaining Balance	Estimated Close-Out Date
Power Infrastructure Contracts			
ANA AEI Phase 3 2/205th FOB Eagle	\$2,106,579	\$1,096,010	9/15/2022
ANA AEI Ph3 4/203rd HQ FOB Shank (T4C)	5,387,068	2,217,069	8/15/2023
ANA AEI Ph3 1/205th Camp Hero/ACC (T4C)	4,033,634	2,749,373	8/15/2023
ANA AEI 1/203 Brigade Garrison Camp Clark (T4C)	5,055,670	1,144,953	9/15/2022
ANA AEI MoD HQ (2) Electrical Interconnect (T4C)	2,465,980	148,953	9/15/2022
ANA NEI MeS Air Ops Detachment (T4C)	3,296,427	2,505,981	8/15/2023
ANA NEI Pul-e Khumri Reprocurement (T4C)	4,799,430	2,669,752	8/15/2023
Vertical Infrastructure Contracts			
ANA AAF Aviation Enhancement MeS	\$29,839,741	\$1,925,571	6/19/2022
ANP KSS Camera and Security Upgd & Expan (T4C)	49,858,076	26,680,546	9/5/2023
ANA KAF Barracks Renovation	1,173,064	23,449	6/9/2022
ANA SMW HKIA SOAG Ramp Exp. (Ph 1)	3,591,944	2,058,520	6/25/2022
ANA Bldg 501 Simulator Renovation	139,325	0	6/10/2022
ANA Presidential Air Wing HKIA	3,139,479	0	2/28/2022
ANA GSK-W 8th CSK FOC Expansion, Shindand (T4C)	1,024,306	1,024,306	5/31/2022
ANA AAF Aviation Enhance KAF Ops (T4C)	5,993,752	5,612,782	5/31/2022

Note: Numbers have been rounded. Items in litigation could potentially remain open for up to 11 years. Contractors have six years after contract completion to submit a claim.

Source: DOD, response to SIGAR data call, 3/16/2022.

TABLE S.2

TRAINING CONTRACTS FOR FORMER ANDSF ELEMENTS			
Training Contracts	Total Contract Value	Total Obligations	Estimated Close-Out Date
Gender Occupational Opportunity Development (ANA)	\$3,157,006	\$1,118,216	8/25/2022
Gender Occupational Opportunity Development (ANP)	3,157,006	3,157,006	8/25/2022
ASSF Training Program (ASSF)	119,211,117	84,562,777	9/28/2021
Initial Entry Rotary and Fixed Wing Pilot Training (AAF)	146,029,919	114,163,825	TBD
AAF Maintenance Development and Training (AAF)	38,314,286	30,065,998	10/29/2022
Training Support Services (ASSF)	74,613,302	73,586,286	8/25/2022
A-29 Pilot and Maintenance Training (AAF)	114,440,745	111,440,745	9/14/2022
C/AC-208 Contractor Logistics Support (AAF)	62,860,105	11,940,591	9/15/2022
English Language Training (AAF)	13,079,327	12,864,110	8/25/2022
Mentors and Advisors Support (AAF)	10,773,338	10,773,338	8/25/2022
Kabul Security and Surveillance System	49,608,076	49,608,076	TBD

Note: Numbers have been rounded. Items in litigation could potentially remain open for up to 11 years. Contractors have six years after contract completion to submit a claim.

Source: DOD, response to SIGAR data call, 3/16/2022.

colonel and has three additional servicemembers and two DOD civilians (but no U.S. contractors). DSCMO-A is scheduled to close June 1, 2022, and is transitioning its activities to other DOD entities and NATO.⁸⁷

SECURITY THREATS TO HUMANITARIAN AID

According to USAID, NGOs and relief actors have indicated a significant decrease in physical harassment or violence from authorities toward aid organizations since the cessation of conflict in August 2021. Although militant organizations have not directly threatened control, access, or implementation of the activities and services under the UN's 2022 Humanitarian Response Plan, isolated security incidents, carried out by Taliban members, unidentified attacks, or harm as a result of civil unrest, have affected humanitarian organizations and social service providers.⁸⁸ See p. 98 for more on the UN's Humanitarian Response Plan.

On January 12, a neurosurgeon at the Jamhuriat Hospital in Kabul was kidnapped on his way home from work. Two days later, the head of the neurosurgery department at Kabul's Aliabad Hospital was abducted from his clinic by armed men in military uniforms. On January 17, in Herat, members of the Taliban reportedly opened fire on a car at a checkpoint, killing a local pharmacist and his driver.⁸⁹

On February 24, eight polio health workers, including four women, were shot and killed in three separate attacks in Kunduz and Takhar Provinces. Following these attacks, UNICEF and the WHO suspended the vaccination program, which was on its final day, in these two provinces.⁹⁰ This was the first attack on polio workers since the nationwide polio vaccination campaign resumed in November 2021. There was no claim of responsibility for these killings, and Taliban leadership condemned the attack.⁹¹ DIA judged that IS-K most likely carried out the attacks against the polio workers.⁹²

On January 23, a UN partner of USAID temporarily suspended distribution of aid to recipient families in Kabul following an unspecified security incident involving the Taliban's Ministry of Refugees and Repatriation and a local NGO partner. The affected organization met with Taliban authorities, including the Ministry of Interior, which apologized for the incident and provided assurances that future distributions in the city would be safe. After receiving written security guarantees for humanitarian staff, aid distributions resumed on February 13.⁹³

Amid widespread protests against President Biden's executive order concerning access and use of the approximately \$7 billion in U.S.-based assets of Afghanistan's central bank, aid organizations also reported increased security risks for their leadership and staff. On February 15, a USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance implementing partner in Balkh Province temporarily paused activities and ordered staff to work remotely due to street demonstrations and resultant safety concerns.⁹⁴

NGO activities and the provision of humanitarian support have been further hampered by the increasing levels of criminality across Afghanistan amid the humanitarian and economic crises. In January 2022, USAID implementing partners reported that the increase in criminal activity, such as targeted killings, theft, armed robbery, and carjacking, resulted in “collateral risks” to social service delivery and humanitarian work across the country.⁹⁵

RESTRICTIONS ON AFGHAN MEDIA CONTINUE

This quarter, Taliban authorities continued their efforts to restrict the media, such as detaining journalists and reportedly taking international news programs such as Voice of America and BBC’s Pashto, Persian, and Uzbek broadcasts off the air in Afghanistan.⁹⁶ In mid-September 2021, the Taliban introduced restrictive guidelines for Afghan media, including: restrictions against publishing topics contrary to Islam or insulting national personalities; requirements to coordinate their reports with Taliban authorities prior to publication; prohibitions against referring to the Taliban as a terrorist organization, promoting a religion other than Islam, or encouraging young Afghans to leave the country.⁹⁷ In November, the Taliban’s Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and Prevention of Vice announced further restrictions on films deemed to be “against Islamic or Afghan values,” including shows or films featuring female actors. The Ministry also made the hijab compulsory for female television journalists.⁹⁸

According to Human Rights Watch, Afghan journalists have reported receiving death threats from the Taliban and have been detained and beaten as a means of further controlling and censoring their activities. The situation for journalists is reportedly worse outside of Kabul than in the capital.⁹⁹ The Afghan Independent Journalists Association (AIJA) reported in February 2022 that Taliban authorities had detained at least 40 journalists since their August takeover.¹⁰⁰ The following month, officials from the Taliban’s General Directorate of Intelligence (GDI) reportedly detained another three journalists due to a news broadcast discussing the Taliban banning foreign drama series on Afghan TV.¹⁰¹ On March 28, the GDI raided the offices of four radio stations in Kandahar for violating a ban on playing music and detained six journalists, who were released after promising not to broadcast music.¹⁰²

A survey conducted by Reporters Without Borders and the AIJA found that by the end of 2021, 231 media outlets out of a total of 543 had closed and the number of individuals working in media had dropped from 10,790 (8,290 men and 2,490 women) to 4,360 (3,950 men and 410 women). In particular, women journalists have reported severe repression by Taliban authorities, with an estimated 84% of women in media having lost their jobs or left their positions since the Taliban takeover.¹⁰³

The Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) reported that the GDI has increasingly shifted its focus to handling this active suppression of Afghan media and suppressing the activities of civil society activists. By early March, CPJ warned, “In every respect, Afghanistan’s once thriving media ecosystem is declining rapidly under Taliban rule.”¹⁰⁴

Support for Afghanistan’s media industry was a focus of U.S. reconstruction efforts. The numerous media organizations, as well as various civil society groups, that emerged in Afghanistan over the past two decades were lauded as one of reconstruction’s success stories. From 2001 to 2021, USAID spent at least \$220 million on media- and civil society-focused programs. Beyond these initiatives, other USAID programs also invested in media, such as \$2.2 million in start-up funding for what would become Afghanistan’s largest media company, Moby Media Group.¹⁰⁵



UN Special Representative Deborah Lyons meets with the Taliban’s Acting Deputy Prime Minister Abdul Kabir in Kabul in early February 2022 to discuss the well-being of “disappeared” women activists. (UNAMA photo)

TALIBAN CONTINUE TO LIMIT WOMEN’S RIGHTS

Following their takeover, the Taliban introduced varying restrictions and barriers on women’s access to secondary and tertiary education, health care, freedom of movement without an accompanying male guardian (known as a *mahram*), the right to work, ability to choose their clothing, and freedom of speech. These restrictions are often enforced through inspections and intimidation, contributing to a broader sense of insecurity. This is compounded by the Taliban’s decision to dismantle institutions intended to assist women, such as the Ministry of Women’s Affairs. However, the enforcement of such restrictions has not been uniform throughout the country and some reported instances contradict the stated policy of senior Taliban leadership in Kabul.¹⁰⁶

In January 2022, a group of UN special rapporteurs and other UN human rights experts stated, “Taken together, these policies constitute a collective punishment of women and girls, grounded on gender-based bias and harmful practices. We are concerned about the continuous and systematic efforts to exclude women from the social, economic, and political spheres across the country.”¹⁰⁷

Women have been able to work in certain sectors of the economy, especially in positions where they are expected to interact exclusively with women and girls such as in health care and primary education.¹⁰⁸ However, local Taliban authorities require women to have a male guardian escort them to the office and during other work activities, to wear hijab, and to work in a separate room from their male colleagues.¹⁰⁹ A USAID implementing partner working in Afghanistan’s health care sector reported that they supported allowing male guardians to accompany female staff members to facilitate their continued presence at work. Still, some women have been apprehensive about continuing to go to work. Anecdotal reports

also suggest that some women are reluctant to seek health services due to uncertainties about the general security situation for women.¹¹⁰

Days after female students were blocked from attending secondary schools, Taliban authorities introduced additional restrictions on women and girls. According to media reports, these included restrictions on women boarding flights without an accompanying male guardian and the gender segregation of any Kabul venues with rides and games.¹¹¹

Demonstrations in support of women's rights have continued this quarter, with reports that Taliban authorities quickly dispersed the protests with beatings and the use of chemical irritants.¹¹² According to media and UN reports, six women's rights activists involved in these demonstrations have disappeared, with no information provided by Taliban authorities about their current well-being or location.¹¹³

Remaining Women's Advancement Program Restarts Activities

This quarter, USAID's Office of Gender informed SIGAR that its one remaining active program, the Women's Scholarship Endowment (WSE), has been able to renew activities as a result of the new license issued in December 2021 by the Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC).¹¹⁴ Recruitment for the fourth WSE cohort was suspended after the Taliban takeover and the imposition of the restrictions on women's access to higher education. Prior to that, WSE had a total of 232 scholars in three cohorts; 10 graduated, 51 departed Afghanistan, and 29 either paused their studies, dropped out, or are on probation.¹¹⁵ Following the reopening of public universities in provinces in cold climate zones on February 26, 2022, nine out of the 12 WSE students in public universities rejoined classes.¹¹⁶

USAID DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAMS RESUME

Following the Taliban takeover, USAID suspended all USAID-funded development assistance activities in Afghanistan, including all contact with the Taliban regime. Under this suspension, USAID told their implementing partners not to carry out any agreement-specified activities, but to maintain staff and operational capacity, and to incur only reasonable, allocable, and allowable recurrent costs. USAID continued to disburse funds to implementing partners to maintain staff and sustain operational capacity.¹¹⁷

By February 2022, USAID had authorized three democracy and governance activities to restart operations. The Supporting Transformation for Afghanistan's Recovery (STAR) and Conflict Mitigation Assistance for Civilians (COMAC) programs resumed in December 2021. USAID also permitted the U.S. Institute of Peace's Strengthening Peace Building, Conflict Resolution, and Governance in Afghanistan program to resume in February 2022. This program focuses on supporting Afghan women's

issues and conducted research to inform U.S. government policy pre-Taliban takeover.¹¹⁸

Conflict Mitigation Assistance for Civilians

On November 22, 2021, after Treasury issued OFAC licenses authorizing the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan, USAID’s COMAC program gradually began to resume its activities in Afghanistan under a modified scope of work, according to the project’s most recent quarterly report. The project had previously temporarily suspended its field activities on August 16 following the Taliban takeover to ensure personnel and operational safety.¹¹⁹

COMAC is a \$50 million, five-year, nationwide program that began in March 2018, as seen in Table S.3. It was established to provide assistance to Afghan civilians and their dependent family members who experienced loss of life, injury, or lack of economic livelihood because of military operations, insurgent attacks, unexploded ordnance including land mines and improvised explosive devices, and cross-border shelling. This support includes tailored assistance (TA), such as physical rehabilitation, counseling, economic reintegration, medical referrals, and immediate assistance (IA) in the form of in-kind goods, such as essential food and household sanitary items for up to 60 days.¹²⁰

Project personnel conducted a series of coordination meetings with various Taliban authorities at the national and subnational levels to explain the project and request their cooperation in order to ensure smooth implementation of project activities. According to COMAC’s quarterly report, the Taliban authorities were “supportive and pledged to cooperate.” The Ministry of Economy provided 34 official project introduction letters to provincial-level authorities, and the Ministry of Martyrs and Disabled Affairs issued 154 letters to ensure the safety of each COMAC staff member.¹²¹

COMAC resumed victims’ assistance distribution in December 2021 and prioritized the backlog of 1,185 IA and 371 TA cases created by the

TABLE S.3

USAID REMAINING DEMOCRACY AND GOVERNANCE PROGRAMS				
Project Title	Start Date	End Date	Total Estimated Cost	Cumulative Disbursements, as of 4/13/2022
Conflict Mitigation Assistance for Civilians (COMAC)	3/12/2018	3/11/2023	\$49,999,873	\$33,094,765
Supporting Transformation for Afghanistan’s Recovery (STAR)	2/18/2021	2/17/2023	19,997,965	4,031,104
Strengthening Peace Building, Conflict Resolution, and Governance in Afghanistan	7/1/2015	6/30/2022	16,047,117	13,750,562
Survey of the Afghanistan People	10/11/2012	4/29/2022	7,694,206	6,173,074
Total			\$93,739,161	\$57,049,505

Source: USAID, response to SIGAR data call, 4/14/2022.

suspension of field activities. In December, the project distributed 354 IA packages to 219 victims' families, benefiting a total of 1,721 Afghans. COMAC also distributed 134 TA packages (43 income generation kits, 41 medical assistance cases, and 50 psychosocial referrals), assessed 63 households, and registered a further 67 eligible victims for assistance. Most of the packages were distributed in the south (209) and the north (106), with only three packages distributed in the western region and none in the east.¹²² By February 17, 2022, the number of distributed IA packages had increased to 1,495, and the number of distributed TA packages increased to 383.¹²³

Under the modified scope of work, COMAC suspended any joint project activities with, and capacity-building activities for, governing institutions, and removed indicators in its monitoring and evaluation plan for measuring Afghan government-related activities.¹²⁴

Project personnel have faced several challenges since resuming activities. Due to problems with Afghanistan's banking system following the Taliban takeover, COMAC has had to rely on *hawaladars* (money exchangers) to process outstanding payments and staff salaries.¹²⁵ Additionally, in mid-January 2022, COMAC temporarily halted project activities in Badghis Province due to local Taliban officials restricting the activities of female employees and threatening them with violence for noncompliance with Taliban directives; other NGOs operating in the province similarly halted their activities there.¹²⁶

As of April 13, 2022, USAID had obligated approximately \$40 million and disbursed \$33.1 million for the COMAC program.¹²⁷

Supporting Transformation for Afghanistan's Recovery

The STAR program likewise began to resume some activities in late November and early December 2021 without interference from Taliban authorities, except in Nangarhar Province where female staff were unable to report to the field.¹²⁸

STAR is an approximately \$20 million program that began in February 2021 and operates in nine provinces (Herat, Ghor, Nangarhar, Kunar, Ghazni, Paktiya, Khost, Jowzjan, and Sar-e Pul), as seen in Table S.3. The program focuses on supporting food and livelihood security for conflict-affected families through cash assistance, resilience-focused agricultural and livestock support, market skills and linkages, rehabilitation or construction of critical water sanitation and hygiene infrastructure, with a particular focus on women, girls, and other vulnerable groups.¹²⁹

Once USAID authorized program activities to resume, program personnel focused on introductory meetings with provincial de facto government offices and community leaders.¹³⁰

Implementing partners reported several challenges during the reporting period. These included learning how to navigate a new de facto government structure; the country's liquidity crisis and bank restrictions on cash

withdrawals forcing NGOs to rely on the local system of money exchanges for staff salaries; winter weather limiting access to rural areas; and Taliban restrictions on female activities; and other Taliban interference in NGO operations.¹³¹

As of April 13, 2022, USAID has obligated \$10 million and disbursed \$4 million for the STAR program.¹³²

Strengthening Peace Building, Conflict Resolution, and Governance in Afghanistan

USAID's program Strengthening Peace Building, Conflict Resolution, and Governance in Afghanistan was authorized to resume activities in February 2022.¹³³ As seen in Table S.3 on page 81, this is a \$16 million program launched in July 2015 to support good governance, rule of law, anticorruption, credible and transparent elections, civil society, and independent media. Prior to the Taliban takeover, its primary activities included:¹³⁴

- helping civil society organizations understand the critical elements of the Afghan peace process while also ensuring negotiations included Afghan citizens' perspectives
- organizing local dialogues that gave Afghans an opportunity to share information, learn about the peace process, and explore their own role in creating and maintaining peace in their communities
- promoting peace messaging and encouraging local communities to get involved in nonviolent activities
- sharing best practices in nonviolence and peacebuilding with young people, women, and activists

Now, the program will focus on: creating a forum for engagement between women leaders outside Afghanistan and women inside the country and engagement with U.S. government actors; assessing how best to promote women's rights; producing analysis and advisory work on alleviating Afghanistan's economic crisis; and resuming research activities on key governance and security issues, and on lessons learned from the failed effort to achieve a political settlement to the conflict.¹³⁵

As of April 13, 2022, USAID has obligated \$16 million and disbursed \$13.8 million for this program.¹³⁶

Removing Unexploded Ordnance

The Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (PM/WRA) in State's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs manages the conventional-weapons destruction program in Afghanistan to protect victims of conflict, provide life-saving humanitarian assistance, and enhance the security and safety of the Afghan people.¹³⁷ Although direct assistance to the former Afghan Directorate for Mine Action Coordination (DMAC) was suspended on September 9, 2021, remaining humanitarian mine-action projects and

implementing partners have continued on-the-ground mine and explosive-remnants of war (ERW) clearance activities.¹³⁸ PM/WRA is one of the few State-funded programs authorized to continue operations in Afghanistan.¹³⁹

PM/WRA currently supports four Afghan nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and four international NGOs to help clear areas in Afghanistan contaminated by ERW and conventional weapons (e.g., unexploded mortar rounds).¹⁴⁰

Since FY 2002, State has allocated \$440 million in weapons-destruction and humanitarian mine-action assistance to Afghanistan (an additional \$11.6 million was obligated between 1997 and 2001 before the start of the U.S. reconstruction effort). The current situation in Afghanistan has delayed the usual approval process of funding via the operations plan. However, as of March 4, 2022, PM/WRA was seeking to approve \$8 million of FY 2021 funds for Afghanistan.¹⁴¹

Although some information on ordnance cleared is still available, due to the dissolution of DMAC, PM/WRA is not able to provide quarterly data on minefields cleared, estimated hazardous areas, contaminated areas, and communities affected.¹⁴²

Counternarcotics

The Taliban and Opium Poppy Cultivation

Reports indicate that opium-poppy cultivation surged in the southern Afghan provinces of Kandahar and Helmand in preparation for the 2022 harvest. Opium is reportedly sold in open markets in these southern provinces and farmers continue to insist that they have no economic alternative, at least for the time being.¹⁴³

On April 3, the Taliban officially banned the production of opium and other narcotics. In a press conference, deputy Prime Minister Abdul Salam Hanafi said that “the supreme leader ... Haibatullah Akhundzada has issued a decree prohibiting the cultivation, trafficking, and use of any kind of narcotics in Afghanistan.”¹⁴⁴

Earlier, on August 17, 2021, the Taliban informed international media that the production of opium or other narcotics would not be allowed, but the Taliban did not enforce this edict at the time.¹⁴⁵ This latest announcement came after the late-March three-day cabinet meeting in Kandahar wherein all Taliban administrations were directed to make greater efforts to enforce Sharia law, including expediting efforts to treat drug addicts.¹⁴⁶ (For more information on the outcome of the three-day cabinet meeting in Kandahar, see page 64). During the April 3 press conference, Deputy Minister of the Interior Noor Jalal Jalali and Deputy Minister for Counternarcotics Abdul Haq Hamkar said 3.5 million Afghans, or roughly 10% of the estimated Afghan population, are addicted to drugs. Abdul Haq reported that 20,000 people have been collected in Kabul and other provinces for drug

treatment and that the Ministry of Interior intends to expand its drug treatment facilities.¹⁴⁷

Although the UN Security Council expressed concern over the cultivation, production, trade, and trafficking of illicit drugs in Afghanistan,¹⁴⁸ the international community has been fairly quiet on the question of the Taliban and counternarcotics. The Taliban had also offered very little information concerning a counternarcotics policy until this latest announcement. This new policy comes as the opium-poppy harvest proceeds in southern Afghanistan, and follows a cold winter of rising food prices and an economic crisis. As a result, there are few economic alternatives for opium-poppy farmers who have already invested in the harvest. Given these circumstances, enforcing this ban during the 2022 harvest seems unlikely, according to David Mansfield, an expert on the Afghanistan opium economy.¹⁴⁹

Status of the State Department's Counternarcotics Programs

The State Department's current policy prohibits direct assistance to the Taliban.¹⁵⁰ While some programs remain active indirectly—administered through implementing partners and NGOs—other programs have been terminated or paused following the Taliban takeover in August 2021.¹⁵¹

According to INL, the “Taliban has not impacted the ability for alternative development partners to implement projects,” citing ongoing activities by the UN Office on Drugs and Crime through its Afghanistan Opium Survey and its Afghan Opiate Trade Project (AOTP). The State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL) has disbursed \$24.2 million since 2006 for Afghanistan Opium Surveys.¹⁵² The AOTP publishes occasional reports on trends in the global Afghan opiate trade to support international counternarcotics efforts. INL has obligated and disbursed \$10.3 million for AOTP since 2011.¹⁵³

REFUGEES AND INTERNAL DISPLACEMENT

On March 31, 2022, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) hosted the 2022 High-Level Pledging Conference for Afghanistan, where nearly \$204 million was announced in new U.S. assistance for the humanitarian response in Afghanistan and neighboring countries. Of this funding, State's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) announced more than \$133 million to support the humanitarian response inside Afghanistan and services for Afghan refugees and new arrivals in neighboring countries. This funding includes:¹⁵⁴

- more than \$80 million to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Afghanistan for assistance to voluntary returnees, cash assistance to people with specific needs, protection monitoring,

LESSONS LEARNED REPORT ON COUNTERNARCOTICS

SIGAR's 2018 Lessons Learned report, *Counternarcotics: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, examined U.S. counternarcotics efforts from 2002 through 2017. It found that despite the U.S. spending \$8.62 billion in that time, Afghanistan remained the world's largest opium producer, and that opium poppy was Afghanistan's largest cash crop.



UN workers from the International Organization for Migration distribute humanitarian relief items to displaced Afghans. (IOM photo)

gender-based violence and psychosocial support services, livelihoods support, and assistance for reintegration

- nearly \$36 million to UNHCR to support multisectoral assistance to Afghan refugees, undocumented Afghans, Afghans of other status, and host community populations in neighboring countries
- more than \$16 million towards activities under the Refugee Regional Response Plan serving vulnerable Afghan migrants and host communities provided by the International Organization for Migration (IOM), United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Pakistan.

The United States remains the top humanitarian donor in Afghanistan and, with the most recent announcement, has provided nearly \$512 million to the humanitarian response in Afghanistan and neighboring countries in FY 2022, as of April 14, 2022.¹⁵⁵

Afghan Refugees

As of March 15, 2022, UNHCR recorded 174,460 Afghans who may be in need of international protection after arriving in neighboring countries since the beginning of 2021. Among Afghans crossing into Iran and Pakistan, approximately 53% were children and 22% adult women; in Tajikistan, newly arrived Afghans included 40% children and 31% adult women. The majority of individuals interviewed by UNHCR personnel reported leaving Afghanistan due to security-related issues.¹⁵⁶ UNHCR estimated that approximately 2.6 million Afghans were refugees outside of Afghanistan in 2021.¹⁵⁷

During the quarter, UNHCR recorded 132 registered refugees returning to Afghanistan as of April 5, 2022, bringing the total number to around 1,400 since January 2021.¹⁵⁸ Returned refugees said their main reasons for leaving Iran and Pakistan were the high cost of living, lack of employment opportunities, and fear of COVID-19. They further cited the UNHCR's assistance package, reunification with family, land allocation by the Taliban regime, and perceived employment opportunities as reasons to return to Afghanistan.¹⁵⁹

In February 2022, the UN OCHA reported over 57,000 undocumented Afghan migrant returnees from Iran and 5,800 migrant returnees from Pakistan since the beginning of the year.¹⁶⁰

The number of Afghans leaving the country is likely even higher than official figures indicate. UNHCR reported that many Afghans crossing into neighboring countries do so through unofficial border crossings and with the help of smugglers. Official border crossings with Iran, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan require individuals to have valid passports and visas. However, Afghans requiring urgent medical care and

accompanied by a caretaker can enter Pakistan through the Torkham and Chaman border crossings on humanitarian grounds.¹⁶¹

This quarter, IOM noted that the movement of Afghans into Central Asia remains relatively small. But IOM warned that “the risk of a complete economic collapse in Afghanistan and a further deteriorating humanitarian situation in the country may drive larger numbers of Afghans to seek refuge in the region and beyond.”¹⁶²

According to State, the Taliban have not systematically restricted cross-border migration at overland crossings, although personnel at Taliban checkpoints regularly inspect vehicles.¹⁶³ However, in late February 2022, the Taliban announced that Afghans would not be permitted to leave the country “unless their destinations are known,” with women being unable to travel abroad for education unless accompanied by a male guardian, according to media reports.¹⁶⁴ Following this announcement, the Taliban appeared to be working to stop Afghans trying to flee by road. On the main highway from Kabul to Pakistan, Taliban fighters stopped all cars at several checkpoints and sometimes pulled aside families with suitcases, according to State.¹⁶⁵ After U.S. and UK diplomats shared their concerns, however, a Taliban spokesperson later stated that Afghans “who have legal documents and invitation can travel abroad,” and asserted that his earlier comments were directed towards Afghans departing the country without legal documents or traveling with smugglers.¹⁶⁶

Conflict-Induced Internal Displacement

UNHCR estimates 736,889 individuals have been internally displaced by conflict within Afghanistan since January 1, 2021, bringing the total estimate of internally displaced persons to more than 3.4 million as of December 2021.¹⁶⁷ Balkh and Nangarhar Provinces hosted the highest estimated numbers of IDPs (between 100,000 and 154,000 individuals each) by the end of 2021.¹⁶⁸ Approximately 170,000 IDPs have returned to their previous places of residence since January 2021, with around 900 returning to their previous places of residence since January 2022 as the security situation has stabilized across the country.¹⁶⁹

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