



Armed Conflicts Report

Afghanistan (1978 - first combat deaths)

Update January 2009

Summary

Type of Conflict

Parties to the Conflict

Status of the Fighting

Number of Deaths

Political Developments

Background

Arms Sources

Economic Factors

Summary:

2008 Fighting increased substantially this year as attacks escalated by 31 per cent, resulting in the highest violence rate in the operation's seven-year history. Coalition forces also suffered their highest annual combat casualties in 2008 as nearly 270 foreign soldiers were killed. In addition, the largest single loss of foreign forces occurred in August when 10 French soldiers were killed in an ambush just outside the capital Kabul. An increase of coalition deaths has been attributed to the sharp rise of the use of roadside bombs, up an all-time high of 31 per cent from the previous year. Civilian fatality estimates range widely depending on the source. Military estimates tend to be in the hundreds while international bodies and human rights agencies put civilian deaths in the thousands. The UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported 2,118 civilian casualties during the year, an increase of 39 percent compared to its 2007 reporting. The overall 2008 death toll is reported to be more than 6,340 which is similar to the approximately 6,500 that were killed in 2007. Political mediation remained at a standstill as reports of peace talks between the Afghan government and Taliban representatives were later refuted by alleged Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar. Due to security and logistical instability, presidential elections that were scheduled for May 2009 have been postponed until August 20th. The U.S. administration under President Barak Obama has pledged to increase its personnel strength in Afghanistan by surge of 20,000 to 30,000 soldiers during 2009.

2007 This year saw the worst fighting since the Taliban were removed from power in 2001. Upwards of 6,000 deaths were reported with approximately a third of those being civilian. President Hamid Karzai appealed to both foreign troops and the Taliban to exercise more caution when fighting in civilian-populated areas. Requests for peace talks with the Taliban were dismissed by the group, and kidnappings and suicide attacks reached an all time high. Opium production was the highest ever recorded, with Afghanistan providing 93 percent of the world's opium in 2007. The U.S. has committed \$2.5 billion to a program that will train Afghan police, after more than 900 officers were killed this year due to a lack of training and ongoing issues with corruption.

2006 Fighting between the Taliban and Afghan and foreign security forces escalated dramatically, as the number of monthly attacks increased fourfold, resulting in between 3,700 and 4,000 deaths, the highest number of annual deaths since the Taliban was ousted in 2001. NATO deployed more troops and expanded its command to all areas of the country. The "Afghanistan Compact," a five-year plan for cooperation between the government, the UN, and the international community on issues of security, development and narcotics was signed by 60 countries and organizations early in the year, though local resentment to foreign forces on the ground continued to rise as issues of poverty and development continue to be unaddressed.

2005 Fighting escalated dramatically as Taliban and al-Qaida militants launched numerous attacks on Afghan

and foreign forces who responded with several large-scale military operations. At least 1,200 civilians and combatants were killed this year.

2004 The year was largely free of major fighting although inter-factional clashes, clashes with NATO troops, attacks on NGO workers, and attacks on civilians all occurred with regularity. At least 250 people were killed by the violence. In early January Afghanistan's Loya Jirga adopted its first post-conflict constitution and after October elections Hamid Karzai was declared President. His new cabinet included two women. Although the government declared plans to combat and eventually eradicate poppy and opium production, Afghanistan remained a leading supplier.

2003 In spite of continued fighting between US-led coalition forces, assisted by the newly formed Afghan army, and Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters, as well as clashes between rival militias in the north, some gains towards stabilizing Afghanistan were made in 2003. Efforts to disarm and reintegrate militia fighters began across the country and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which came under NATO control in August, was authorized to expand its operations beyond Kabul. By the end of the year, members of the Loya Jirga (Grand Council) appeared set to adopt a national constitution, establishing a political system in preparation for 2004 elections. Approximately 1,000 people were killed as a result of the conflict in 2003.

2002 Fighting continued between rival militia leaders in western and eastern Afghanistan. The US and coalition countries launched a number of missions against the Taliban and al Qaeda, including Operation Anaconda in south-eastern Afghanistan, the largest ground battle of the war. President Hamid Karzai was re-elected by the Loya Jirga or Grand Tribal Council to serve as leader of the traditional government until the 2004 elections. At least 1,500 people died as a result of the fighting this year, most of them Taliban and al Qaeda fighters.

2001 Fighting between Taliban and Northern Alliance forces was fierce in early 2001, escalating again after a major US-led bombing campaign against the Taliban began in October. In December, following a rout of Taliban forces, a new interim government was agreed by Northern Alliance factions. The death toll for the year was difficult to assess but certainly exceeded 1,000 people.

2000 Taliban forces made considerable territorial gains to extend control to more than 95 percent of the country. By October, the Taliban captured the key northern city of Taloqan and a series of northeastern towns, advancing to the border with Tajikistan. It is likely that hundreds of people were killed this year in the ongoing fighting or as a result of widespread human rights abuses.

1999 Following spring gains, the Taliban used quickly-trained Pakistani and other foreign recruits to launch a successful July offensive which was reversed a week later by the Northern Alliance. Fierce fighting left hundreds, likely thousands, of civilians and combatants dead.

1998 The Taliban made major advances against opposition forces in 1998, extending control to all but four of Afghanistan's 32 provinces. Estimates of civilian deaths ranged upward from 3,000, most of whom were Hazari residents of the regional centre of Mazar-e-Sharif reported deliberately killed by the Taliban during the recapture of the city in August.

1997 A Taliban militia advance into the northeast early in 1997 ended in major defeat and renewed opposition alliance forces' bombing and shelling of the capital Kabul. Despite higher combatant deaths -- some reports claimed over 3,000 -- the year ended as it began, with the Taliban controlling two-thirds of the country.

1996 The Taliban "student" militia captured Kabul in September, killing the former Communist president. By the end of 1996 the group controlled over two-thirds of the country. Hundreds of civilians and combatants were reported killed in rocket attacks on the capital and clashes in surrounding areas.

1995 By the end of 1995 the Taliban "student" militia had overcome rivals to control over half of the country and besiege the government-controlled capital, Kabul. Periodic intense fighting killed thousands, possibly as many as 10,000.

Type of Conflict:

State control/Failed state

Parties to the Conflict:

1) Government of Afghanistan:

Hamid Karzai was elected president of Afghanistan in 2004 in the country's first presidential election since the enactment of its January 2004 constitution. In September 2005 the first parliamentary elections in more than three decades were held, and while they did not meet international standards for free and transparent elections, they were generally considered successful by the international community and the citizens of Afghanistan.

There was no universally-recognized government until December 2001 when, after negotiations in Germany, an interim government was formed by "Northern Alliance" factions under Hamid Karzai, who has presided over the country since then. Previously, although the Taliban controlled over 90 percent of the country, the nominal president was a Taliban opponent, Berhanuddin Rabbani. In 1997 forces opposed to the Taliban were joined in a loose Northern Alliance led by Ahmed Shah Massoud (commander of Rabbani's troops who was assassinated in September 2001), General Rashid Dostom, a Uzbek leader, Abdul Malik Pahlawan, a rival Uzbek leader who routed the Taliban in Mazar-i-Sharif in May 1997 (and a former deputy of Dostom), and Karim Khalili, a Shi'ite leader. These forces controlled the nine (or ten) provinces not controlled by the Taliban. By 1998 their control had been reduced to four provinces.

Progress has been slow in creating the Afghan National Army (ANA), which, by the end of 2003 only consisted of several thousand soldiers. As a result, the government of Afghanistan has relied upon the US-led coalition and NATO forces to provide security throughout the country. A further obstacle for the Afghan ministry of defence is the ethnic imbalance within the ANA, which consists primarily of Tadjik fighters due to the reluctance of most Pashtuns to enlist.

The new Afghan army had major problems with desertion in 2003 and 2004, losing more than one quarter of its 10,000 troops. The Afghan government remains committed to growing the army into a 70,000 troop force to replace the militias believed to total around 100,000 personnel. In 2006, the ANA was comprised of 30,500 troops. Despite past struggles, it is hoped that the Afghan government's goal of raising the number of Afghan army troops to 70,000 will be reached in the first half of 2008.

"Citizens elected Hamid Karzai president in October 2004 in the country's first presidential election under its January 2004 constitution. The September 2005 parliamentary elections--the first in more than three decades--did not fully meet international standards for free and fair elections, but citizens perceived the outcomes as acceptable, and the elections established the basis for democratic development at the federal and local levels." [U.S. Department of State, *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices 2007, Afghanistan*, March 11, 2008]

"The Afghan army is expected to reach 70,000 troops in the first half of this year." [*Associated Foreign Press*, January 15, 2008]

"Afghanistan's army will reach a targeted strength of a trained force of 70,000 within four months, but that will be insufficient to stand against internal and external threats, a government spokesman said on Sunday." [*Reuters*, December 2, 2007]

2) Groups allied with the Afghan Government against the Taliban and other insurgency groups:

a) US-led coalition forces involved in "Operation Enduring Freedom" consisting of 18,000 US soldiers and 1,500 soldiers from other coalition countries. In 2006, the U.S. had 22,000 troops in Afghanistan, over half of which came under NATO control in September, leaving approximately 10,000 American troops under American control. In 2007 the number of US troops was increased to 26,000 with President George W. Bush committing another 3,200 troops in early 2008.

b) North Atlantic Treaty Organization: In August 2003, NATO took control of the United Nations-mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) created in accordance with the Bonn Agreement of December 2001. At its inception, the ISAF was mandated to assist the Afghan Transitional Authority in creating a stable and secure environment in and around Kabul. However, as a result of the insecurity which persisted throughout much of the country the NATO-led force has gradually expanded in numbers and scale, reaching 10,000 troops by 2005 and expanding operations throughout southern Afghanistan. . In 2006 NATO took control of military operations in all of Afghanistan, and the total number of troops under NATO control has now reached 58,390 (As of April 3, 2009). 42 countries have contributed troops to the mission, including:
US – 26,215 troops

UK – 8,300 troops
Canada – 2,830 troops
Germany – 3,465 troops
France – 2,780 troops
Australia – 1,090 troops
Italy – 2,350 troops
Netherlands – 1,770 troops
Poland – 1,590 troops

Countries contributing smaller numbers of troops include: Albania, Austria, Azerbaijan, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Georgia, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Jordan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, New Zealand, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, and Ukraine.

Source: [ISAF Website, ISAF Troops (Placemat), http://www.nato.int/ISAF/docu/epub/pdf/isaf_placemat.pdf, April 3, 2009]

“Currently there are 26,000 US troops in Afghanistan, most of them under the 40,000-strong NATO-led International Security Assistance Force.” [*Associated Foreign Press*, January 15, 2008]

“The North Atlantic Council, NATO’s highest decision-making body, has approved the expansion of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to eastern Afghanistan, which will place it in control of the entire country... The stage 4 expansion of the force will increase its size by 10,000 troops and bring capabilities such as airlift with it... This will increase ISAF’s strength to 30,000 making it NATO’s largest operation. The force will also take control of 12 additional provincial reconstruction teams currently being run under the US-led Operation ‘Enduring Freedom’ (OEF), bringing the total to 25 teams. Even after ISAF takes full control of Afghanistan, OEF will continue to search for Taliban and Al Qaeda members.” [Nicholas Fiorenza, *Jane’s Defense Weekly*, October 4, 2006]

c) Pakistan: In 2003, Pakistani armed forces went on the offensive against insurgents based on either side of the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. In 2006, the Pakistani government and pro-Taliban militants signed a peace accord aimed at ending violence in the tribal border region.

3) Groups fighting against the Afghan government and other allied security forces:

a) The Taliban: Islamic, traditionalist “seminarians,” led by Maulavi Muhammad Omar. Prior to September 2001, the Taliban were backed by Pakistan and possibly Saudi Arabia. There is growing evidence that the Taliban use Pakistani volunteers and that certain elements within the Pakistani government and security forces remain sympathetic to the Taliban. As of 2007 there is still no definitive number of Taliban members with numbers ranging from 2,000 to 20,000.

“The size of the Taliban force was unknown, but estimates ranged from 2000 to 20,000.” [*Herald Sun*, January 19, 2008]

“No one knows for sure exactly how many militants there are in the country. U.S. officials refuse to provide even a rough estimate. Afghan authorities say it could be anywhere between 4,000 and 40,000.” [Benjamin Sand, *VOA*, August 22, 2006]

b) Al-Qaeda: Al-Qaeda is a transnational terrorist organization that was operating in Afghanistan during the Taliban’s reign. According to US military sources, by 2003, the majority of al-Qaeda’s top-ranking officials had been either captured or killed; however, hundreds and possibly thousands of fighters remain in the country.

“The Taliban should not be blamed for all the violence in Afghanistan, which was also being perpetrated by al-Qaeda remnants and criminals, Nato’s top commander said yesterday.” [Richard Norton Taylor, *Guardian*, September 15, 2006]

c) Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, leader of Hizb-i-Islami (Islamic Party), a militant group which allegedly joined forces

with Taliban fighters in order to counter the U.S.-led forces in Afghanistan:

“As leader of Hezb-i-Islami, one of the seven mujaheddin factions that fought the Russian occupation of Afghanistan from 1979 to 1989, Hekmatyar ... was once the pivotal figure in America’s war against the Russians. ... Hekmatyar re-emerged on the Afghan scene after being expelled from Iran a year ago, offering rewards for those who killed US troops. ... Hekmatyar has been able to whip up unrest among Afghanistan’s largest tribal grouping, who feel they do not have enough say in the new government. He is also supported by extremist elements in Pakistan’s military intelligence.” [*The Sunday Times*, February 2, 2003]

4) United Nations: The UN provided the original authorization for ISAF, which has since come under NATO control, though ISAF was never a UN operation. The UN has had a continued presence in Afghanistan through the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which was developed in 2002 as part of the Bonn Process. UNAMA is concerned with both political matters and development issues and is renewed annually. In September 2007, at a high-level meeting co-chaired by Secretary-General Ban-Ki moon and President Hamid Karzai, the central and impartial role of the UN in leading the efforts of the international community was confirmed and a call made to strengthen UNAMA’s coordination capacity. For 2009, the General Assembly has agreed to a 91.5 per cent increase in budget for UNAMA to US\$ 168 million. This includes an increase in the number of international staff by 115, national Professionals by 57, national support staff by 249, and United Nations Volunteers by 16. [UNAMA Website]

“UNAMA’s key role is to promote peace and stability in Afghanistan by leading the efforts of the international community. Together with the Government of Afghanistan the Mission supports the rebuilding of the country and the strengthening of the foundations of peace and a constitutional democracy. The UNAMA mandate from 2008 to 2009 remained defined by the previous resolutions 1662 (2006) and 1746 (2007). The 2008 resolution charged UNAMA and Kai Eide, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, to lead civilian efforts to:

Strengthen cooperation with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF);

Provide political outreach through a strengthened and expanded presence throughout the country;

Provide good offices in support of Afghan-led reconciliation programmes;

Support efforts to improve governance and the rule of law and to combat corruption;

Play a central coordinating role to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian aid;

Monitor the human rights situation of civilians and coordinate human rights protection;

Support the electoral process through the Independent Election Commission of Afghanistan;

Support regional cooperation in working for a more stable and prosperous Afghanistan.”

[UNAMA Website, Mandate section. See <http://unama.unmissions.org/Default.aspx?tabid=1742>]

Status of Fighting:

2008 Reports of violent attacks rose sharply in 2008 resulting in the highest violence rate recorded during the seven year operation. An influx in the number of roadside bombs was also recorded as an all time high up by 31%. A failed assassination attempt on President Hamid Karzai in April has led observers to believe insurgent activities remain committed to high priority targets. Insurgent surface-to-air attacks were also up by 67%, putting coalition forces at a more serious risk due to their reliance on airmobile transport.

“Violence in Afghanistan soared by nearly a third last year, the highest rate since coalition operations in the troubled country began more than seven years ago. According to new NATO statistics obtained by the Observer, violence rose by 31%, taking levels of fighting to a new peak of intensity. In 2007 there were around 5,000 “violent incidents” in the 20 worst-affected districts of the country. Last year that total rose to around 7,000.” [*The Guardian*, 31 January, 2009]

“The Taliban have regrouped and, despite the presence of nearly 70,000 international troops, in the past year have increased both the scope and scale of their attacks. Meanwhile, U.S.-led airstrikes that have killed civilians have provoked anger among Afghans and resentment against the presence of foreign troops.” [*Radio Free Europe*, 3 February, 2009]

“NATO spokesmen stress that the most intense violence has remained largely within the same

10% area of Afghanistan as in previous years and still only effects an estimated 6% of the population. The NATO statistics do however show a sharp drop in violent incidents in Kabul itself and the province around the capital, though officials admit that crime in the capital has risen" [*The Guardian*, 31 January, 2009]

"Roadside bomb attacks against coalition forces in Afghanistan hit an all-time high last year, killing more troops than ever and highlighting an "emboldened" insurgency there, according to figures released by the Pentagon." [*USA Today*, 26 January, 2009]

"Titled Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, it predicted the insurgents would attempt more high-profile strikes, such as the failed assassination attempt on President Hamid Karzai last April. Insurgent surface-to-air fire rose 67 per cent, the report said, without specifying which weapons were used. Increased attacks on aircraft represent a potentially serious development for stretched international troops that rely heavily on helicopters to operate across rugged terrain." [*The Age*, 4 February, 2009]

2007 This year saw record high numbers of both military and civilian casualties as fighting intensified in southern Afghanistan. Suicide bombings became the Taliban's newest strategy, with over 140 attacks recorded. Taliban influence increased dramatically, with a reported 54 percent of the country showing a permanent presence. Kidnappings of foreigners have become a new bargaining tool for the Taliban. Over twenty South Korean mine-clearing workers were kidnapped with the Taliban demanding that all foreign troops leave Afghanistan or the civilians would be killed. Similar threats were made when a German photographer was kidnapped. The US has committed thousands of additional troops in an attempt to reduce the growing violence. Of particular concern to the Afghan Government was the increased occurrence of civilian deaths as a result of US and NATO combat operations. In addition, tens of thousands of civilians were displaced during the year.

"U.S. military deaths, suicide bombings and opium production hit record highs in 2007. Taliban militants killed more than 925 Afghan police, and large swaths of the country remain outside government control. But U.S. officials here insist things are looking up. The Afghan army is assuming a larger combat role, and militants appear unlikely to mount a major spring offensive, as had been feared a year ago. Training for Afghan police is increasing." [*Associated Press*, December 31, 2007]

"Afghan President Hamid Karzai has repeatedly pleaded with international forces to do all they can to prevent civilian casualties. Arbour (Louise, a former Supreme Court of Canada judge) also strongly condemned the Taliban's frequent deliberate targeting of civilians, including teachers and humanitarian workers, as well as its use of ordinary Afghans as human shields by taking shelter in civilians' homes after firing on ISAF soldiers." [*CBC News*, November 20, 2007]

"Some 14 months later, the security situation has reached crisis proportions. The Taliban has proven itself to be a truly resurgent force. Its ability to establish a presence throughout the country is now proven beyond doubt; research undertaken by Senlis Afghanistan indicates that 54 per cent of Afghanistan's landmass hosts a permanent Taliban presence, primarily in southern Afghanistan, and is subject to frequent hostile activity by the insurgency. The insurgency now controls vast swaths of unchallenged territory including rural areas, some district centres, and important road arteries. The Taliban are the de facto governing authority in significant portions of territory in the south, and are starting to control parts of the local economy and key infrastructure such as roads and energy supply. The insurgency also exercises a significant amount of psychological control, gaining more and more political legitimacy in the minds of the Afghan people who have a long history of shifting alliances and regime change." [*The Senlis Council*, November 21, 2007]

"It also noted a 'disturbing' use of child as combatants – both child soldiers and suicide bombers – by the Taliban. While there are not thought to be many underage fighters at present, UNICEF said increasing numbers may be attracted to the Taliban which offers better pay than joining the Afghan army. 'When the security situation deteriorates, there is a real danger that young people – vulnerable and unable to use their new skills in the marketplace – will again be recruited into armed groups that can offer them protection,' the report said." [*Reuters*, October 25, 2007]

"The Taliban and their allies say they are ready to accept President Hamid Karzai's invitation to peace talks, but with tough conditions that show the insurgents' rising confidence about bargaining with the embattled Afghan government. The Taliban demands include an immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops and a rewrite of the Afghan constitution, according to interviews The Globe and Mail had conducted with key figures who would be integral to any political statement." [*theglobeandmail.com*, September 12, 2007]

"A senior British commander in southern Afghanistan said in recent weeks that he had asked that the American Special Forces leave his area of operations because the high level of civilian casualties they had caused was making it difficult to win over local people. In just two cases, airstrikes killed 31 nomads west of Kandahar in November last year and another 57 villagers, half of them women and children, in western Afghanistan in April. In both cases, United States Special Forces were responsible for calling the airstrikes." [*New York Times*, August 9, 2007]

2006 Violence escalated further this year after the Taliban announced a new "Spring offensive" in March, resulting in the bloodiest year since the Taliban was ousted in 2001. The number of monthly attacks by Taliban militants rose to 600, a fourfold increase from an average of 130 monthly attacks in 2005, as suicide bombings and clashes between militants and Afghan and foreign security forces continued to rise. Fighting took place mostly in the southern provinces, though fighting also occurred in the east under a new U.S. Mission called "Operation Mountain Fury" in response to a perceived increase in military activity in the east after militants signed a peace accord with the Pakistani government. Control of military operations continued to be transferred to NATO, increasing the size of NATO's force to 30,000 and extending its command over the entire country by year's end. The intensity of fighting subsided near the end of the year with the approaching winter.

"Overall, this has been Afghanistan's bloodiest year since 2001, when U.S.-led forces ousted the hard-line Islamist regime for harboring top al-Qaida terrorists." [Benjamin Sand, VOA, August 22, 2006]

2005 Fighting escalated significantly as the Taliban increased attacks on Afghan, US and NATO-led ISAF troops employing tactics that included roadside bombs, suicide bombings, and rocket attacks. International and Afghan troops responded with large military operations including air-strikes. In December, NATO leaders agreed to send an additional 6,000 troops to Afghanistan to operate in the volatile south of the country. The separate US forces continued to operate mainly in east Afghanistan where Taliban forces have been most active.

"In the most violent year of their insurgency to date, the Taliban have gone on the offensive launching more pitched battles in an effort to persuade the international community and Afghans that this remains very much a nation at war, says Mullah Gul Mohammad, affront-line commander for Jaish-e Muslimeen, a recently reconciled Taliban splinter group...In the four years since the fall of the Taliban government, there have been many moments when it appeared that the Taliban insurgency had breathed its last breath. But this year was different. The Taliban have launched a series of attacks that has raised this year's death toll – 1,200 civilians and military personnel so far – to a war time high. Their attacks show increasing sophistication, US and Afghan officials says, and a UN report now warns that the Taliban may be receiving tactical training from jihadists returning from Iraq." [Scott Baldauf and Ashraf Khan, *The Christian Science Monitor*, September 28, 2005]

2004 Sporadic inter-factional clashes, clashes with NATO troops, attacks on NGO workers and attacks on civilians all occurred with regularity in 2004. The year appeared to be largely free of major violence although there was little information available from some conflict areas. Despite some improvement, the security situation in Afghanistan remained unstable.

2003 Fighting continued unabated across Afghanistan in 2003. In the south, the conflict intensified when US-led forces conducted major operations against Taliban and al-Qaeda forces. Taliban fighters joined members of the Hezb-i-Islami movement against the newly formed Afghan National Army (ANAZ) and the US-led coalition, and the Taliban also targeted Afghan "collaborators", civilians, members of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), and non-military international workers. Incidents of factional fighting between

ethnically-based militias, primarily in northern Afghanistan, also persisted.

"Fighting between Uzbek warlord General Abul Rashid Dostam's Junbish and the Jamiat of his rival, Tajik General Atta Mohammad, has claimed dozens of lives this year. A UN Security Council mission described last month's clashes near the northern city of Mazar-i-Sharif as 'the heaviest factional fighting since the start of the Bonn process' after the fall of the Taliban two years ago." [Agence France Presse, November 16, 2003]

"Afghanistan's new national army backed by US-led forces has launched its first major anti-Taliban combat operation [Operation Warrior Sweep] in the southeast of the country, a US military spokesman said on Wednesday." [Agence France Presse, July 23, 2003]

2002 Fighting between feuding militia leaders continued. Despite efforts by the US, the Northern Alliance, and the coalition forces to eliminate al Qaeda, a report by UN Security Council panel of experts indicated that al Qaeda had constructed new training camps throughout Afghanistan.

"Al Qaeda continues to command an extensive network of well-financed terrorist operatives in 40 countries and has reopened new training camps in remote eastern Afghanistan to prepare a new generation of Islamic extremists for attacks against the West, according to a United Nations report." [washingtonpost.com, December 17, 2002].

2001 Fighting between Northern Alliance and Taliban forces was fierce during Taliban offensives in early and mid 2001, and in September, Northern Alliance leader Ahmed Massoud was assassinated. Following accusations of Taliban support for September 11 terrorist attacks in October attributed to the al-Qaeda network, the United States began a major bombing campaign to oust the Taliban regime from Kabul and to capture al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden, while providing military support to the Northern Alliance. In heavy fighting from late September to November, Northern Alliance troops routed the Taliban and took Kabul. In December, following a series of battles, the Taliban were forced out of Kandahar.

"Northern Alliance troops have taken control of Kabul amid scenes of chaos and jubilation. In a dramatic overnight advance, Northern Alliance units entered the Afghan capital after Taleban fighters fled towards their southern stronghold, Kandahar." [BBC, November 13, 2001]

2000 The Taliban made considerable territorial gains after June, extending control to more than 95 percent of the country. By September, Taliban forces cut opposition (led by General Massoud) supply lines and captured the key northern city of Taloqan. By the end of October, they captured a series of northeastern towns, advancing to the border with Tajikistan. Meanwhile, neighbouring states Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and Kyrgystan faced violent uprisings from rebels they suspected were linked to the Taliban. In October Russia indicated it intended to take steps to prevent the spread of fighting to the territory of the former Soviet Union.

1999 After recapturing a regional centre in the spring, the Taliban used quickly trained Pakistani and other foreign recruits to launch a July offensive to push opposition forces out of the plain north of Kabul. Fierce fighting resulted in rapid Taliban gains which were reversed a week later by the Northern Alliance after heavy Taliban casualties.

1998 The Taliban made major advances against opposition Northern Alliance forces in 1998, capturing the regional centre of Mazar-i-Sharif in August and extending control to all but four of Afghanistan's 32 provinces.

1997 A Taliban advance into the northeast early in the year ended in a major defeat in the regional centre of Mazar-i-Sharif in May. By July alliance forces led by Massoud again were within miles of Kabul bombing and shelling the city. Fighting continued elsewhere, and the year-ended as it began, with the Taliban controlling about two-thirds of the county including Kabul.

1996 The Taliban continued their advance in 1996 and, against little resistance, captured Kabul in September, where they killed the former Communist president, Mohammed Najibullah. By year-end the Taliban controlled about two-thirds of the country despite the opposition of all other major protagonists under an alliance struck in October.

1995 The dominant factor in the conflict during 1995 was the dramatic advance of the Taliban militia. By year

end the Taliban had captured more than half of Afghani territory (including the important western centre of Herat in October) and were laying siege to the capital, Kabul. With Hekmatyar's Hizb-i-Islami troops removed from south of Kabul by the Taliban in February, troops loyal to the government of President Rabbani attacked Wahdat and Taliban opponents and forced them from Kabul and its immediate surroundings in March. During this period of intense fighting the Taliban killed Hizbe Wahadat leader, Abdul Ali Mazari. The subsequent few months of relative peace in Kabul was broken in September by renewed Taliban attacks, including air bombings of the city in November and December.

Number of Deaths:

Total: Some one-and-a-half to two million people, two-thirds of them civilian, have died in the 1978-2000 period. Since the American-led Operation "Enduring Freedom" beginning in 2001, and subsequent NATO-led operations, an estimated 16 to 19 thousand have died.

"Recent reports suggest that from 1.5 million to more than two million war deaths have occurred in Afghanistan since 1978" [Goodson, Larry P., *Afghanistan's Endless War: State Failure, Regional Politics, and the Rise of the Taliban*, University of Washington Press, 2001. Pg. 93]

"Afghanistan has been at war for more than twenty years. During that time, it has lost a third of its population. Some 1.5 million people are estimated to have died as a direct result of the conflict. Another 5 million fled as refugees to Iran and Pakistan; others became exiles elsewhere abroad." [Human Rights Watch, *Fueling Afghanistan's War: Press Backgrounder*, December 15, 2000]

1,500,000 between 1978 and 1992 [*World Military and Social Expenditures*, Ruth Leger Sivard, 1993]

2008 Due to increased violence in 2008, coalition forces suffered their highest combat casualties since the creation of the mission in 2001. A sharp rise in the death toll of foreign troops in Afghanistan saw nearly 270 casualties, almost half of which were American soldiers. Civilian fatality estimates range widely depending on the source. Military estimates tend to be in the hundreds while international bodies and human rights agencies put civilian deaths in the thousands. The UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported 2,118 civilian casualties during the year, an increase of 39 percent compared to its 2007 reporting. The overall 2008 death toll is reported to be more than 6,340 which is similar to the approximately 6,500 that were killed in 2007.

"During the year more than 6,340 persons died as a result of the insurgency, including deaths by suicide attacks and roadside bombs, in contrast to 2007, when more than 6,500 persons died. The majority of the casualties were insurgent fighters killed in combat. Taliban and anti-government elements continued to threaten, rob, attack, and kill villagers, government officials, foreigners, and nongovernmental organization (NGO) workers. UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported 2,118 civilian casualties during the year, an increase of 39 percent compared to 2007, when there were 1,523 reported civilian conflict-related deaths." [2008 *Human Rights Report: Afghanistan*. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, U.S. Department of State, 2009]

"Nearly 270 foreign soldiers, 127 of them Americans, were killed in combat in 2008, versus 169 foreign combat deaths in 2007, according to figures compiled by Reuters. Hundreds more foreign soldiers were wounded in Taliban attacks last year, mostly involving roadside bomb blasts, which according to the U.S. ambassador, doubled to some 2,000 in 2008 from the previous year." [Reuters, 1 January, 2009]

"In the first seven months of 2008, at least 540 Afghan civilians were killed in fighting related to the armed conflict. Of those, at least 367 died during attacks by the various insurgent forces and 173 died during US or NATO attacks. At least 119 were killed by US or NATO airstrikes." [Human Rights Watch, 7 September, 2008]

"Nearly 1,500 Afghan civilians were killed in the first eight months of this year, many in attacks on schools, medical clinics, bazaars and other crowded areas." [Reuters, 16 September, 2008]

"The Nato-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) has said that just over 200 civilians were killed by foreign troops last year - but the UN says the real figure amounts to roughly 2,000 civilians killed throughout 2008." [*BBC News*, 20 January, 2009]

"Nearly 4,000 Afghan civilians were killed in insurgency-linked unrest in Afghanistan last year, more than two-thirds in rebel attacks and about 1,100 by foreign forces, a rights group said Tuesday. The figures released by an independent Kabul-based group called Afghanistan Rights Monitor (ARM) are far higher than those from the United Nations and international military forces. The report, entitled "The Plight of Afghan Civilians" says 3,917 civilians were killed, more than 6,800 were wounded and around 120,000 were forced out of their homes in 2008." [*AFP*, 21 January, 2009]

2007 Media reports claim that 5,000 to 6,500 people were killed in 2007. Approximately 2,000 of these were civilian deaths caused by both NATO and foreign troops as well as insurgents. An escalation in suicide attacks is largely responsible for the increase in civilian deaths, as well as the Taliban's use of civilian dwellings for protection.

"Ordinary Afghans are desperate for an end to a wave of violence that has surged to new heights – more than 5,000 deaths in 2007, many of them civilians – but terrified of a return to the medieval punishments and harsh repression that characterised the Taliban government." [*Guardian Unlimited*, December 27, 2007]

"About 1980 civilians were killed in 2007 – half by insurgents and the rest almost equally by soldiers or criminal groups, the group [Afghanistan NGO Safety Office] said." [*Herald Sun*, January 19, 2008]

"Afghanistan in 2007 saw record violence that killed more than 6,500 people, including 110 U.S. troops – the highest level ever in Afghanistan – and almost 4,500 militants, according to an Associated Press count. Britain lost 41 soldiers, while Canada lost 30. Other nations lost a total of 40." [*Associated Press*, December 31, 2007]

2006 An estimated 3,700 to 4,000 people were killed this year. Of these deaths, NATO reports that around 1000 militants were killed, while over 100 foreign troops died. 70 to 100 people continue to die monthly from landmines. The death toll in 2006 was by far the highest the country has seen since the U.S.-led ousting of the Taliban in 2001.

"[O]ver 1,400 civilians died as a result of terrorist activities, including suicide attacks, roadside bombs, and gun assassinations." [*Country Reports on Human Rights Practices (Afghanistan)*, U.S. State Department, March 6, 2007]

"A new report released five years after Kabul's citizens celebrated the fall of the fundamentalist Taliban regime paints a bleak picture of the rising insurgent violence that has claimed 3,700 lives across Afghanistan in 2006. Militants launch more than 600 attacks a month, a fourfold increase from the monthly average of 130 last year." [*Edmonton Sun*, AP, November 14, 2006]

"Officials say that already this year nearly 1,800 people have been killed, including more than 100 foreign troops." [Benjamin Sand, *VOA*, August 22, 2006]

"Mines and unexploded ordnance (UXOs) are killing at least 100 people per month in Afghanistan, UK-based demining agency, the Halo Trust, has said... 'The number of mine victims ranges from 70 to 100 each month, down from an estimated 150 to 300 per month in 2002 but still far too high... With no official statistics, authorities believe that 1.5 million people have either been killed or maimed in mine explosions over the past 25 years of war and civil strife.'" [*IRIN*, April 15, 2006]

2005 Over 1,200 people including nearly 100 US soldiers, the most since the US-led campaign began, were killed as violence escalated drastically following a renewed Taliban and Al-Qaida insurgency. Hundreds of civilians, including aid workers, were killed.

"This year has been the deadliest for US troops in Afghanistan since the war began in late 2001, as more American soldiers have died than in each of the previous three years, according to military figures...In the first half of this year, at least 54 Americans lost their lives, compared with 52 in all of last year, according to official statistics reviewed by the [Boston] Globe." [Bryan Bender, *The Boston Globe*, July 3, 2005]

2004 At least 250 people -- a mixture of NATO soldiers, international aid workers, civilians and combatants -- were reported killed this year in Afghanistan. An accurate number is impossible due to the inconsistency of casualty reports, the lack of domestic media, and the remote nature of many conflict regions.

2003 Independent media reported approximately 1,000 people killed in the conflict in 2003. Most fatalities were due to fighting between Taliban fighters and Afghan/U.S.-led coalition forces, and included at least 100 civilian deaths. Factional fighting in northern Afghanistan accounted for approximately 200 additional deaths.

2002 At least 1,500 people were killed in the fighting this year. Most of those killed were Taliban and al Qaeda soldiers. However, civilians also fell victim to fighting between rival factions, and between the coalition forces and Taliban and al Qaeda combatants.

2001 At least 1,000 conflict-related deaths occurred during the year. Prior to the beginning of the US bombing campaign, there were reports of at least 300 deaths. After the bombing began, estimates of civilian deaths ranged from 600 to 5,000. Likely hundreds of Taliban soldiers were also killed.

"The Associated Press, after studying fatalities reported by Afghan hospitals and tracking down families named in casualty reports, has come up with a civilian death toll of 600 or more. It also quotes Afghan spokesmen who say the Taleban required them to exaggerate numbers. Reuters estimates 1,000. The Project for Defense Alternatives reckons somewhere between 1,000 and 1,300. Even Professor Herold has revised his figures, abandoning his total of 4,050 and now placing the total between 3,000 and 3,600.

Estimates of Civilian Deaths:

Associated Press: 600

Reuters: 1,000

Human Rights Watch (New York): 1,000

Project for Defense Alternatives: 1,000—1,300

Professor Marc Herold (UNH): 3,000-3,600

The Spectator (Stephen Glover): 4,000

The Mirror (John Pilger): 5,000" [*The Spectator*, February 23, 2002]

2000 It is likely that hundreds died this year in the ongoing fighting or as a result of widespread human rights abuses.

1999 Spring and summer fighting left hundreds, likely thousands, of civilians and combatants dead.

"The Taliban summer offensive to crush northern opposition forces has turned into one of the bloodiest campaigns Afghanistan has seen in years. A little over one week's fighting has left some 3,000 military and civilians dead and wounded, while displacing well over 100,000 civilians."

[*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 11 August 1999, p3]

1998 With estimates ranging upward from 3,000, there was a sharp increase in civilian deaths in 1998. Most who died were Hazari residents of Mazar-e-Sharif reported deliberately killed by the Taliban during its recapture of the city. Opposition rocket attacks also killed nearly 200 people in Kabul in September.

"Afghanistan's ruling Taliban militia has been accused of massacring 'thousands' of ethnic Hazara civilians within three days of taking over the northern city of Mazar-e-Sharif last month.... Cited figures range from around 7,000 up to 16,000, although he thought the latter figure 'far too high'. He said the information was based on interviews conducted on the ground and elsewhere with survivors and eyewitnesses." ["Amnesty Alleges Taliban 'Massacred Thousands,'" Dipankar De Sarkar, *IPS*, September 3, 1998]

1997 There were reports of as many as 3,000 Taliban killed during and after a May battle.

"According to Mawlawi Turkestani, Dostum's representative in Pakistan, about 1,632 Taliban supporters were massacred in the Layli Desert after having been imprisoned in the northern town of Shibergan. About 700 people in Mazar-i-Sharif and more than 300 others in Faryab were also killed, Turkestani reported. Dostum has offered to grant access to U.N. investigations to those sites." ["Massacre Underlines Problems for Taliban in Afghanistan," by Farhan Haq, *IPS*, 24 November 1997]

1996 Rocket attacks and troop clashes killed hundreds in 1996. In addition, malnutrition and disease arising from war shortages may have killed 250,000 children.

"The Taliban killed approximately 325 civilians in Kabul in 1996 by indiscriminately firing rockets into the city. Approximately 675 civilians in Kabul were injured during the year because of the civil war. The Taliban reportedly conducted aerial bombing raids in October around Kalakan, approximately 12 miles north of Kabul, and caused the deaths of 16 to 20 civilians..."
[*Afghanistan Report on Human Rights Practices for 1996*, Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, US Department of State, January 30, 1997]

1995 "Since April 1992 when Mujahideen groups seized power, over 25,000 people have been killed in Kabul alone in attacks by rival factions apparently aimed deliberately and arbitrarily against residential areas."
[*Amnesty International* release, November 29, 1995]

1994 "This year alone, 8000 Kabulis have been killed and 100,000 more have been injured. The Red Cross estimates that more people are dying here than in any other war in the world, yet the country's plight has been all but forgotten, particularly by the UN which pulled out in January". [*The Observer*, 20 November, 1994]

Political Developments:

2008 Late 2008 and early 2009 saw a shift in policy by the U.S. administration under Barak Obama. The newly formed Obama administration has pledged to focus its efforts on Afghanistan by surging its personnel strength in Afghanistan with 20,000 to 30,000 soldiers. Due to security and logistical problems that have existed in 2008, presidential elections that were scheduled for May 2009 have been postponed until August 20th. Corruption has remained a problem within the Afghan government according to President Karzai who claims that there is even more corruption regarding international aid. Instability and wavering support for coalition forces have resulted from the increased number of civilian casualties throughout the year. Negotiations between the Afghan government and representatives of the Taliban have remained at a standstill. Reports of peace talks between the alleged Taliban leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar, and the Afghan government were later refuted by Omar. Conditions proposed by both sides for peace talks have yet to be agreed to.

"The US president, Barak Obama, has pledged to refocus efforts on Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan rather than Iraq and to "surge" between 20,000 and 30,000 extra soldiers into the battle against the Taliban over the next 12 to 18 months." [*The Guardian*, 31 January, 2009]

"We admit that there is corruption in our administration. But there is even more corruption regarding international aid. If we can stop this kind of corruption, God willing, our administration will soon become free from corruption." -Afghan President Hamid Karzai [*BBC News*, 20 January, 2009]

"The issue of civilian casualties is sensitive in Afghanistan and has eroded support for international forces. President Hamid Karzai said Tuesday the deaths were a main source of instability in the country." [*Reuters*, 21 January, 2009] "

The Afghan president has for years pushed for peace talks with the Taliban as a way to end the violence, which this year has been the bloodiest since the invasion in 2001. However, he has always insisted that his government would only consider talks with "Afghan Taliban" who do not have ties with al-Qaeda, agree to lay down their weapons and accept the country's constitution. The Taliban...have said they would only agree to negotiations if the 70,000 foreign troops supporting the government pull out." [*Aljazeera*, 23 December, 2008]

"Mullah Mohammad Omar, the Taliban leader, has refuted reports of talks between his movement

and the Afghan government. Karzai said last month he would go to "any length" to protect Omar in exchange for peace, even if that meant defying Kabul's international partners." [*Aljazeera*, 23 December, 2008]

2007 President Hamid Karzai spent the year pleading with foreign troops to exercise more caution with regards to civilian casualties, and trying to appeal to Taliban leaders to open up discussions about their ongoing insurgency. The 'Peace Convoy' was created by provincial governors, tribal chiefs and lawmakers with the aim of including Taliban members in government in an effort to get them involved in peace talks. Police corruption remained rampant and the US military is carrying out a \$2.5 billion overhaul of the police force in an effort to improve the quality of officers and lower the number of police fatalities due to lack of training. Increased fighting has led to the closure of numerous schools. In May, top Taliban operational commander Mullah Dadullah was killed. Conflict arose between Afghanistan and Iran as the latter began to forcefully deport tens of thousands of Afghan refugees back over the border. As a result, Afghanistan's parliament ousted foreign minister Rangeen Dadfar Spanta. Iran has agreed to slow deportation.

"The Afghan government is also divided, but along ethnic and political lines. About 5,000 mostly low-level insurgents – disparaged as 'cannon fodder' by one western official – have swapped sides under a long-running 'national reconciliation' programme. But government officials of the former Northern Alliance, which helped topple the Taliban in 2001 and is dominated by Tajiks, remain hostile to any moves to bring more senior Taliban commanders into power in Kabul." [*Guardian Unlimited*, December 27, 2007]

"American military officials are carrying out a sweeping \$2.5 billion overhaul of Afghanistan's police force that will include retraining the country's entire 72,000-member force and embedding 2,350 American and European advisers in police stations across the country. Improving the police force is a key to defeating the Taliban and salvaging the credibility of the central government, which is widely viewed as corrupt, according to Western officials." [*The New York Times*, October 18, 2007]

"At least 300 schools in Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul and Uruzgan provinces will not open because of insecurity," Asiddiq Patman, deputy minister of education, told IRIN in Kabul." [*IRIN*, Sept 7, 2007]

"In the past three weeks, Iran has forcefully deported 85,000 Afghan refugees back over Afghanistan's southern and southeastern borders, where fighting between the Taliban and coalition forces is escalating. And in neighbouring Pakistan, security forces yesterday killed four Afghan refugees during an eviction drive at a camp in Balochistan, according to reports from Agence France Presse (AFP) and other news outlets. On Saturday, Afghanistan's parliament, outraged by Iran's expulsions, ousted the Afghan foreign minister, Rangeen Dadfar Spanta, citing his gross mishandling of the situation. Mr. Spanta's dismissal followed Repatriation and Refugee Minister Mohammad Akbar Akbar's ouster by lawmakers last Thursday. Iran responded by agreeing to slow the rate of deportations, AFP reported." [*Christian Science Monitor*, May 17, 2007]

2006 Following the formal end of the Bonn Process in 2005, the "Afghanistan Compact" was introduced as a result of collaboration between the Government of Afghanistan, the UN, and the international community. The compact set out a framework for cooperation over the next five years on issues of security, governance, counter-narcotics and development, and was promised \$10 billion by the 60 countries and organizations that signed the compact. NATO-led ISAF continued to deploy more troops, and took over the command from U.S.-led coalition forces in the south and the east, expanding military control over the entire country by the end of July. NATO Commander Lt. Gen David Richards pledged to be more "people friendly" in the wake of rising local resentment to U.S. led offensives. In September, pro-Taliban militants and the Pakistani government signed a peace accord, in which militants agreed to stop attacking Pakistan's semiautonomous region of North Waziristan and eastern Afghanistan, in return for an end to Pakistan's military campaign in the region.

"The Pakistani government and pro-Taliban militants announced that they signed a peace accord Tuesday aimed at ending five years of violent unrest in a tribal region bordering Afghanistan... Under the peace deal, the militants are to halt attacks on Pakistani forces in the semiautonomous

North Waziristan region and stop crossing into nearby eastern Afghanistan to attack U.S. and Afghan forces hunting Qaeda and Taliban forces. It came as Pakistan's president, General Pervez Musharraf, was set to visit Kabul on Wednesday in a move aimed at improving strained relations between the United States' two key allies in the fight against terrorism. The accord calls for Pakistani troops to stop their hugely unpopular military campaign in the restive Pakistani region, in which more than 350 soldiers have died, along with hundreds of militants and scores of civilians." [*International Herald Tribune*, AFP/AP, September 5, 2006]

"NATO took over command of insurgency-wracked southern Afghanistan from the United States on Monday, and the top general warned that he will 'strike ruthlessly' against Taliban rebels when necessary. ... NATO's International Security Assistance Force deployed to Afghanistan three years ago and has gradually expanded its presence to the country's north and west. Its new mission—considered the most dangerous and challenging in the Western alliance's 57-year history—coincides with the deadliest surge in fighting in Afghanistan since the fall of the Taliban." [Fisnik Abrashi, *Associated Press*, July 31, 2006]

"NATO will double the number of soldiers in southern Afghanistan when it takes over security there from U.S. troops next month, seeking to quash the worst rebel violence since the Taliban's ouster, the NATO force commander said Sunday. Lt. Gen. David Richards also said NATO troops will be more 'people friendly' in an effort to win the support of the local population amid rising resentment over what many Afghans see as overly aggressive tactics by the separate U.S.-led coalition force." [Daniel Cooney, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, June 4, 2006]

"The Compact is the result of consultation between the Government of Afghanistan, the United Nations and the international community, and represents a framework for co-operation for the next five years. The agreement affirms the commitment of the Government of Afghanistan and the international community to work towards conditions where the Afghan people can live in peace and security under the rule of law, with good governance and human rights protection for all, and can enjoy sustainable economic and social development. The Compact follows the formal end of the Bonn Process in September 2005, with completion of the the Parliamentary and Provincial elections, and will establish an effective mechanism for co-ordinating Afghan and international efforts over the next period." [*London Conference on Afghanistan Website*]

2005 Afghanistan's first parliamentary elections were held in September after months of delays amid escalating violence. Parliamentary seats were won by a diverse group (the elections were held on a non-party basis) including former warlords, former Taliban officials, women activists and former officials of the old communist regime. The UN Security Council extended NATO-led ISAF force's mandate for another year. Earlier ISAF began expanding operations to western Afghanistan in an effort to cover half of the country. NATO and UN officials expressed concern over Afghanistan's thriving opium production saying it threatened Afghanistan's future stability and the democratic process. Over 415,000 Afghan refugees returned this year.

"Millions of Afghans turned out to vote in the first parliamentary elections in more than 30 years. At least 14 people were killed in violence but voting was held in all districts." [*Reuters*, September 19, 2005]

2004 In January, Afghanistan's Loya Jirga adopted its first post-conflict constitution setting the stage for elections later in the year. In November, interim president Hamid Karzai was declared winner of presidential elections and his appointment of a new cabinet included two women. A major UN program to demobilize child soldiers achieved half its goal of 4,000 demobilized child soldiers in 15 provinces and a disarmament program backed by the UN reportedly disarmed tens of thousands of ex-combatants towards a goal of 100,000 disarmed fighters.

"Nearly 4,000 child soldiers have been demobilised in 15 provinces of Afghanistan under a UN-backed programme, a United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) spokesman told IRIN on Thursday." [*IRIN*, December 16, 2004]

"Hamid Karzai the interim president of Afghanistan, was officially declared the winner on Wednesday of historic presidential elections held last month. Karzai, who won 55.4 percent of

more than eight million ballots cast, secured the required simple majority in the first round of voting, according to the UN-government Joint Electoral Management Body (JEMB).” [IRIN, November 3, 2004]

“Afghanistan took another step towards democracy and representative government on Sunday when the first post-conflict constitution was finally concluded. The grand council voted to adopt the new constitution following 21 days of heated and sometimes acrimonious discussion at the historic 502-member Constitutional Loya Jirga (CLJ).” [IRIN, January 5, 2004]

2003 Combatant demobilization and disarmament began in Kabul and in northern Afghanistan where rival warlords also retained private militias. Both the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), which came under NATO control in August, and the United Nations - through the UN Development Programme - assisted disarmament programs. In December, the Loya Jirga (grand council), following weeks of negotiations, appeared close to adopting Afghanistan’s new constitution. This would reinforce the power of the presidency, enshrine Afghanistan’s status as an Islamic state, and call for elections in 2004. The ISAF mandate expanded in October when the UN Security Council authorized a move beyond Kabul to assist the Afghan Transitional Authority to maintain security across the country. An October ceasefire signed by the two most powerful warlords in the north, Abdul Rashid Dostum and Atta Mohammad, failed when factional violence in the city of Mazar-i-Sharif resumed in November. The Pakistan arrest of Khalid Shaikh Mohammed, a high-ranking al-Qaeda official, was declared a significant advance in the US-led “war on terror”.

“The Security Council ... authorizes expansion of the mandate of the International Security Assistance Force to allow it ... to support the Afghan Transitional Authority and its successors in the maintenance of security in areas of Afghanistan outside of Kabul and its environs ... [and also] decides to extend the authorization of the International Security Assistance Force ... for a period of twelve months ...” [UN Security Council Resolution S/RES/1510 (2003), October 13, 2003]

“A \$120 million United Nations plan to disarm and demobilise 100,000 troops still loyal to Afghan warlords that was due to begin on Tuesday has stalled, because of the reluctance of Kabul’s defence minister, Gen Mohammed Fahim, to carry out reforms. ... “As the biggest warlord with the largest army, Gen Fahim has been reluctant to see his power whittled away.” [telegraph.co.uk, July 4, 2003]

“NATO will take over the International Security Assistance force (ISAF) in Afghanistan Aug, 11, the U.S. ambassador to the alliance said May 30.” [Defense News, June 2, 2003]

2002 President Hamid Karzai was reelected by the Loya Jirga (the Grand Tribal Council) to serve as interim leader of Afghanistan until the 2004 elections. However, as demonstrated by an attempt of the leader’s life in September, Karzai’s leadership was not widely accepted and the transitional government claimed little authority outside of Kabul. The transitional government made several attempts to end fighting between feuding militia leaders and brokered a ceasefire between rival factions in the north. Programs were initiated to disarm militias throughout Afghanistan and several donor countries pledged to rebuild an army to operate under the control of the central government.

“Northern Afghanistan, like most of the country outside the capital, Kabul, is controlled by powerful warlords who rule their own patches of territory with nominal regard for the central government. President Hamid Karzai’s administration’s authority is largely limited to Kabul, which is patrolled by a 4,800-strong multinational peacekeeping force.” [boston.com, November 27, 2002]

2001 With the fall of Kabul in November, and after tortuous negotiations, a December agreement among Afghan factions created an interim government in Kabul under Hamid Karzai.

“After negotiating through a final, fitful night, four Afghan factions signed an agreement early today creating an interim government for their war weary and brutalized country. A 30 member executive council will be headed up by Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun tribal leader.” [The Washington Post, December 5, 2001]

2000 With control of 95 percent of the country, the Taliban demanded Afghanistan's UN seat, still held by the ousted government of President Berhanuddin Rabbani (exiled in Tajikistan). The US opposed the demand saying the Taliban must first make significant policy changes. Meanwhile, "the UN Security Council expressed concern over the growing spread of the Afghan conflict beyond the country's borders and its destabilizing effect on neighbouring countries." There were reports that the sweeping Taliban offensive threatened to unleash a refugee crisis throughout central Asia.

"With the fighting now confined to the extreme north east, the Taliban are turning their attention to the outside world and, in particular, their more difficult struggle for international recognition... Only three countries recognize the Taliban - Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates." [*Reuters*, 1 October 2000]

"The United States, another leading opponent of the Taliban, says the group should not receive recognition until it improves its human rights records, removes restrictions against women and hands over suspected terrorist Osama bin Laden." [*The Times of India*, 27 September 2000]

1999 UN-brokered peace efforts in the spring and July talks involving the Six-plus-Two group (Afghanistan's neighbouring states plus Russia and the US) were unsuccessful and the UN Special Envoy resigned in the fall. In October the UN imposed sanctions aimed at freezing Taliban assets and travel.

"The UN decided to impose sanctions on Oct. 15 following the Taliban's refusal to turn over Saudi dissident Osama Bin Laden... All UN member states are committed to freeze Taliban assets in their countries, and prohibit the arrival or departure of aircraft owned, leased or operated by or on behalf of the Taliban." [*InterPress Service*, 15 November 1999]

1998 Following an April cease-fire obtained by a US envoy, UN- and Organization of Islamic Conference-sponsored peace talks between the Taliban and the Northern Alliance collapsed in early May. UN talks among neighbouring states were held in September. In response to Taliban killings of nine Iranian diplomats in August, Iran held military exercises and massed 200,000 troops on the Afghanistan border. These were "the first face-to-face peace talks between the Taliban Islamic militia and the northern opposition alliance." [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 13 May 1998]

1997 Despite intense effort, UN peace initiatives failed again in 1997. By year-end three Arab states recognized the Taliban as the legal Afghanistan government.

1996 Peace initiatives, by Iran beginning in late 1995, by the US in the Spring, and by the UN through its special mission in Afghanistan, had little influence on the conflict in 1996. Meanwhile, neighbouring countries, including Pakistan, Uzbekistan, and Iran, as well as more distant countries (India, Russia and the US), continued to play out the "great game" in Afghanistan by covertly backing the faction of their choice.

1995 Based on talks with all parties, UN Secretary General special peace envoy, Mahmood Mestiri, supported by a European Union mission, [*Jane's Defence Weekly*, 11 February 1995, p.22] proposed a hand-over of power from Rabbani to a ruling council. Initially postponed, the hand-over did not occur and the UN peace process was suspended by March. Peace efforts by Russia and Saudi Arabia during the year also provided no results.

Background:

In 1978 Muslim Mujahideen rebel groups, supported by the United States, Saudi Arabia, China, and Pakistan, began attacks on the secular, communist government of the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA). The USSR intervened militarily to support the government in 1979. UN-mediated talks led to the withdrawal of Soviet troops in 1989 and to an interim government that Mujahideen groups continued to oppose. In 1992 Mujahideen rebels captured the capital, Kabul, but soon split into rival factions battling for control of the city. In mid-1994 a strict Islamic student group, the Taliban, emerged as a new force backed by Pakistan, advancing to capture Kabul by 1996 and 90 percent of the country by 1998. Following the attacks on the United States in September 2001, a US-led coalition invaded Afghanistan and dislodged the Taliban from power, due to the latter's support for the al-Qaeda terrorist network, which was alleged to have been responsible for the attacks on the US. A Northern Alliance of Mujahideen groups opposed to the Taliban

regained control of Kabul in late 2001 after an intense US bombing campaign. By 2003, two foreign forces operated in Afghanistan: a US-led coalition seeking remaining Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters, and a NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) authorized by the UN Security Council. In 2006, NATO took full control of military operations in all of Afghanistan, though half of the US's 22,000 troops remain under American control and continue to search out Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters. The UN also established the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in March 2002. Hamid Karzai, previously interim president, was declared Afghanistan president following popular elections in October 2004 and in September 2005, the first parliamentary elections in more than three decades were held.

Arms Sources:

The newly formed government of Afghanistan is now a major recipient of military equipment and training primarily from the US, but also from France, Germany, India, Pakistan, Russia, Albania, Bulgaria and other countries. Prior to 2001, the Taliban received volunteers and equipment from Pakistan, funds from Saudi Arabia, and aircraft from Ukraine and Belarus. In recent years the United Nations Security Council has passed several resolutions imposing embargoes upon the delivery of arms and funds to the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and associated individuals and entities. These embargoes have made some impact within Afghanistan but continue to be violated due to the porous nature of the borders surrounding the country.

(Sources: *SIPRI Yearbook 2005*; *The Military Balance 2004/2005*)

In 2007, an increased flow of weaponry from Iran to Afghanistan has had devastating results for NATO and foreign troops. While Iran denies providing Afghan insurgents with weapons, it is believed that Iranian-made rockets, sophisticated bombs and, most dangerously, EFPs (explosively formed projectiles) which are able to pierce military armour are finding their way to the militants.

"The mountains of Nuristan are among the highest and most inaccessible in the country, providing smuggling routes across to north-west Pakistan for drugs going out and arms and men coming in, our correspondent adds. The Taleban have been able to operate there freely in recent years, although there has been heavy fighting during 2007 as US-led forces try to reassert control."
[*BBC News*, November 28, 2007]

"Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, billions of dollars worth of firepower have been funnelled to successive regimes and armed groups such as the Mujahedeen and the Northern Alliance. Arms dealers have sought and found thriving markets there. Suppliers ranged from the Soviets, the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency, and the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence, to China, Iran, and Central Asian states. Since 2003, Croatia, Italy, Poland and the United States have transferred still more arms. Today, a resurgent Taliban is reportedly receiving military support from Pakistan and private benefactors in the Gulf. These weapons have long lives. The Geneva-based Small Arms Survey estimates that Afghanistan is home to as many as 10 million arms, including thousands of U.S.-made FIM-92 Stinger missiles. Unexploded ordnance and mines littering the countryside also attract enterprising Afghans who fashion them into the improvised explosive devices that currently wreak havoc among NATO troops. Several years ago the Afghan government, together with the UN, began focussing on reducing gun violence. The centrepiece of their strategy included a massive disarmament and demobilization initiative called Afghanistan's New Beginnings Programme. The \$142-million (U.S.) scheme focussed on the Afghan military force – itself a loose assemblage of militias that were formerly affiliated with the Northern Alliance and came to power in the wake of the Taliban's collapse. Within three years, more than 57,000 assault rifles were surrendered and more than 56,000 ex-soldiers received financial assistance. Other programs yielded a similar harvest. More than 100,000 tonnes of ammunition and more than 200,000 anti-personnel and anti-tank mines have been destroyed since 2004."
[*Canada.com*, Sept 06, 2007]

"U.S. and European officials are expressing concern that increased shipments of Iranian-made weapons are reaching Shi'ite insurgents in Iraq and Taliban militants in Afghanistan. The officials say the weaponry includes rockets of the same type that Hezbollah has used to attack Israel plus sophisticated explosive devices, believed to originate in Iran, which have already killed many U.S. soldiers in Iraq. Iran strenuously denies the accusations." [*Radio Free Europe*, June 4, 2007]

"Potentially the deadliest development for the U.S.-led coalition forces and the NATO-led forces in Afghanistan is the apparent arrival of powerful roadside bombs of the type that has claimed the lives of many U.S. soldiers in Iraq. Known as the explosively formed projectile, or EFP, the device is able to pierce armor. The type is thought to be of Iranian design." [*Radio Free Europe*, June 4, 2007]

"The discovery of Iranian-made weaponry in Afghanistan has led US and British officials to accuse Iran of arming the Taliban militias now battling US and coalition forces. The find raises new and troubling questions about the state of American-Iranian relations. Iranian officials have denied the allegations, while outside experts speculate that Iranian splinter groups are more likely candidates than the Iranian government. Dealing arms to the Taliban would be a step outside the norm for Iran. In 1998, Iran nearly went to war with Afghanistan, then controlled by the Taliban regime, after it killed eight Iranian diplomats and a journalist. Additionally, the Taliban, a Sunni organization, has traditionally avoided dealing with Shiites. Iran is a predominately Shiite nation and seeks support mostly from other Shiites." [*Christian Science Monitor*, June 1, 2007]

"Here [Darra Adam Kheil, a town in eastern Pakistan], small, storefront operations churn out knockoff versions of weapons at cut-rate prices, providing a key source of hardware for the Taliban, who are locked in an increasingly deadly battle with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization forces across the border in Afghanistan. The Taliban, most of whom are Pashtun and native to the region, were once completely dependent on Darra for their weaponry. And while the militant Islamist group has developed other sources of supply, the town remains the cheapest, easiest place for foot soldiers to equip themselves before joining the insurgency. While gun running has a long history in the region, the arms bazaar is the legacy of the proxy Cold War showdown between the mujahedeen and the Soviet Union." [Sonya Fatah, *The Globe and Mail*, September 10, 2006]

Economic factors:

Poppy cultivation and opium exporting as well as emerald mining provide income to combatants. In spite of efforts by the Afghan government to outlaw poppy cultivation, a policy championed by the US, the crop of 2005 was predicted to be only slightly below the 2004 total, the country's largest ever, and the 2006 harvest was expected to be 59% higher than in 2005. In response to U.S. led eradication projects, the Taliban has also forged new relationships with drug dealers and warlords to help protect opium crops, the revenues of which continue to buy weapons and vehicles, pay new recruits, and even to compensate the families of suicide bombers. The conflict also has a history of "cheque-book victories" when faction leaders were paid to switch sides. Faced with increasing isolation, deterioration of the economy and greater poverty, the Taliban found it increasingly difficult to maintain control over the population even before the US-led attacks of 2001. However, extreme poverty, underdevelopment, combined with unpopular American efforts to eradicate opium production resulting in dissatisfied farmers have recently made it easy for the Taliban to recruit members in refugee camps and in areas where opium crops have been bull-dozed. A number of reports argue that foreign military operations are failing to "win the hearts and minds" of the local population, as their efforts have focused too much on military pursuits (or unpopular policies of opium eradication) and not enough on reconstruction.

In 2007, any hope that opium production was declining was negated by reports showing that about 93 percent of the world's opium was supplied by Afghanistan. In 2008, although the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) reported a 19% decrease in opium cultivation, a higher yield meant that production dropped by only 6%.

Experts worry that without another viable source of income, farmers will remain unwilling to stop producing opium, and that this will continue to fuel conflict throughout the country. While reconstruction and development plans have been successful throughout much of the country, the south remains impoverished which has kept Afghanistan in the bottom five countries on the United Nations Human Development Index. An increased commitment to the Afghanistan Compact is looked to as a way of speeding up progress in both economic and government development in the coming years.

"UNODC's Afghanistan Opium Survey 2008 shows a 19 per cent decrease in opium cultivation

to 157,000 hectares, compared to the record harvest of 193,000 in 2007. Owing to a higher yield of 48.8 kg/ha (up from 42.5 kg/ha in 2007), opium production has dropped less dramatically, down 6 per cent from 8,200 to 7,700." [UNODC, 26 August, 2008]

"In his address to MPs, President Karzai also accused foreign powers of not doing enough to curb the drugs trade - pointing out that opium poppy production was highest in areas with heavy deployments of international troops." [BBC News, 20 January, 2008]

"According to UN figures the populace is getting even poorer. A combination of drought, soaring food prices, scarce jobs and meagre wages has meant that about 5 million Afghans – far more than in any recent year – are due to receive emergency food aid. Many families spend up to 80 per cent of their income on food." [Irish Times, 14 January, 2009]

"Lack of productive alternatives has driven farmers to turn to growing poppies. Drug-traffickers support farmers by advancing credit and sharing some of the risks of production. Some farmers can survive only by selling their crops in advance. If the crops fail, they become in debt to the traffickers, creating a vicious circle. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime reckons Afghanistan is now growing about 93 percent of the world's total poppy production and converting 90 percent of its 8,000 tonnes of raw opium into heroin." [FT.com, January 2, 2008]

"Warlords have been left to control a large percentage of customs revenues collected at the borders. Furthermore, donors channel a large part of their aid - up to 75 per cent at times - outside the government budget or control. As a result, the Karzai government has been unable to provide basic services and lawful employment. Un-fulfilled expectations of better living conditions and the thriving drug business have put the Taliban back into control of large parts of the territory." [FT.com, January 2, 2008]

"One hundred and ninety-three thousand hectares of opium poppies were cultivated this year, and the resultant crop is estimated by the United Nations drugs office at a record 8,200 tons. That's one-third higher than last year. The drug-based economy is half the size of the country's official gross domestic product." [Radio Free Europe, November 16, 2007]

"Economic and social conditions in Afghanistan have improved dramatically since the fall of the Taliban, despite continuing problems with security, corruption and the drug trade, according to the World Bank's top official responsible for the country. Mr. McKechnie, in Canada for meetings with officials in Ottawa and a speech in Toronto, pointed to a series of positive indicators, including double-digit economic growth, an expanding road network, a surge in school attendance – particularly by girls – and a drop in infant mortality from 165 per 1,000 live births to 135 in 4 ½ years. He said it was easy to get a negative view of Afghanistan if one focuses on the south and east of the country, where the insurgency is strongest. In two-thirds of the country, there is no insurgency and conditions are improving more quickly." [The Globe & Mail, October 16, 2007]

"The Senlis Council yesterday released a policy paper, Losing Hearts and Minds in Afghanistan, that recommends Canada introduce a food aid program as a central plank in a radical new strategy. The Canadian mission, the report concluded, has focused too narrowly on a military strategy and 'has not tackled the root causes of the current security crisis: extreme poverty, under-development and an almost complete dependence on opium poppy cultivation.' ... The current situation has made it easy for the Taliban to recruit fighters from the refugee camps and from farm villages that have suffered because of crop eradications. Many poppy crops have been bulldozed in the region as part of the forced eradication policy championed by the U.S." [Andrew Duffy, The Ottawa Citizen, October 25, 2006]

"Poppy cultivation in Afghanistan expected to soar by 59% this year, providing 92% of the world's supply of opium, the United Nations says. The UN Office on Drugs and Crime predicted a 6,100-tonne harvest of opium, with much of the rise coming in Taleban strongholds in the south. The US is the main backer of a huge drive to ride Afghanistan of opium. But a top US drugs official warned on Saturday Afghanistan could be 'taken down by this whole drug problem'. The \$2.7bn drugs trade accounts for about a third of Afghanistan's economy... Only six of the country's 34 provinces are opium-free, the report says." [BBC News, September 5, 2006]

"The Senlis report claims that counternarcotics policies pursued in Afghanistan by the international community have been largely ineffective and contribute to a worsening of relations with local communities. As the eradication of poppy crops continues, it has led to support for the Taliban and Al-Qaeda insurgents among dissatisfied farmers instead of helping to 'win their hearts and minds.'... '[B]ecause they offer protection to the farmers, they offer compensation to the farmers [who] have [had their crops] eradicated, [and the] Taliban [is] actually gaining the hearts and minds of the local population.'" [Jan Jun, *Radio Free Europe*, April 12, 2006]

"The Taliban has forged an alliance with the drug mafia that could quickly jeopardize the West's reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. To ensure that farmers are able to continue cultivating their poppy fields, the Taliban has hired warlords and drug dealers to serve as a sort of security service against foreign military personnel. The income generated from opium production helps the Taliban and al-Qaida pay for weapons and vehicles, and drug dollars are apparently even being used to compensate the families of suicide bombers.... All of this has very little to do with a religious war against infidel occupiers. Instead, the Taliban and their allies are protecting a lucrative business. The sale of Afghan opium generates annual revenues of about \$2.7 billion, and experts estimate that hundreds of millions of that income goes directly to funding terrorists." [Susanne Koebel, *Spiegel Online*, April 20, 2006]

"Western countries should buy opium from Afghanistan and use it for medicinal purposes rather than soldiering on in a futile bid to destroy the poppy crop, a think-tank specialising in drugs policy said on Monday. Western powers are wasting millions of dollars trying to stamp out the illegal opium trade, international think-tank The Senlis Council said. Instead, they should develop a licensing system to allow Afghans to sell opium legally for use in painkillers like morphine and codeine. [*Reuters*, November 21, 2005]

"Mr. Costa [Executive Director, United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)] saw close links between the elimination of opium cultivation and freedom for the Afghan people: 'Democracy may never come of age in Afghanistan as long as violence remains the tool in dispute resolution, resource allocation depends on corrupt officials, and half of the national income is generated by opium,' stated the UNODC Executive Director. Production of Afghan opium in 2005 stands at 4,100 tonnes, only slightly less than the 4,200 tonnes produced in 2004. In 2005, favourable weather conditions also led to increased agricultural productivity, from 32 kg/ha in 2004 to 39kg/ha in 2005. As a result, Afghanistan remains the largest supplier of opium to the world, accounting for 87 per cent of world supplies. In terms of opium cultivation, however, Afghanistan's share in the global total dropped from 67 per cent in 2004 to 63 per cent in 2005." ["UNODC Announces Major Reduction in 2005 Opium Poppy Cultivation in Afghanistan" *UNODC*, August 29, 2005]

"At the Berlin conference on Afghanistan in April 2004, President Karzai called on the Afghan farmers to fight opium production with the same commitment as they would a 'jihad'- a holy war. But the subsistence farmers of Afghanistan, struggling to survive, are the primary beneficiaries of this lucrative cash crop and are unlikely to heed Karzai's call willingly. Already, violent protests and demonstrations have been recorded in different provinces against the government-led eradication programme as it is implemented by local officials. Karzai has promised the international community to eradicate 25 percent of the crop in 2004, but experts and observers consider this an optimistic aspiration when the limitations of the national eradication strategy are considered." [*IRIN*, August 24, 2004]

"In one of his first moves on taking office last year, President Hamid Karzai outlawed opium poppy cultivation, trafficking and consumption ..." [*Guardian Weekly*, November 6 -12, 2003]

"American forces in Afghanistan are planning an offensive to destroy the next opium crop, predicted to be the country's biggest yet ... The [2003] crop earned poppy farmers and traffickers some \$3.2 bn. ... 'Meanwhile we're seeing that this issue affects our counter-terrorism interests: it's become more and more clear that the principal source of financing for al-Qaida and the Taliban is Afghan drugs.'" [*Guardian Weekly*, November 27 - December 3, 2003]

"In July, the Taliban leader, Mullah Omar, issued an edict banning the cultivation of poppies. But a

UN report published in September suggests that Afghanistan is still the biggest opium-producer in the world. The Taliban argue that Afghanistan is one of the poorest countries in the world and farmers need international assistance to switch to other crops." [*BBC News*, 19 October 2000]

"The Taliban has financed its campaign through the multimillion dollar drug trade, which it largely controls." [*The Christian Science Monitor*, 25 July 2000]

"For the past two years Commander Ahmad Shah Masoud, leader of the anti-Taliban forces, has been exploiting emerald mines tucked away in the mountains overlooking his stronghold in the Panjsher Valley.... German, Italian and Polish experts have visited Panjsher, and a joint venture with a Polish company, Inter Commerce, is about to be set up to exploit this war treasure more effectively. 'Emeralds bring in \$40-\$60m a year. With the joint venture we'll be aiming for \$200m,' says Amrulla Saleh, a close collaborator of Masoud." [*The Guardian Weekly*, August 5-11, 1999]

"Defections and so-called 'check book victories' - when faction leaders are paid to switch side - are common in the 20-year Afghan conflict..." [*Reuters*, August 4, 1999]

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