Afghanistan - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 17 October 2014

Q18738 - What areas are presently under Taliban/AGF control

An *Amnesty International* report issued in August 2014 states:

> "At present, although the majority of Afghanistan's territory and population remains under some degree of Afghan government control, many districts are believed to be under the effective control of the Taliban, or are heavily contested by it. Areas with a heavy Taliban presence, like Helmand, Logar, Nuristan and Kunar Provinces…" (Amnesty International (11 August 2014) *Afghanistan: Left in the dark: Failures of accountability for civilian casualties caused by international military operations in Afghanistan*, p.14)

This report also states that:

> "The Taliban is by far the largest of the country's armed opposition groups." (ibid)

In September 2014 an article published by the *Security Sector Reform Resource Centre* notes that:

> "Taliban forces have scaled up their military activity over the past six months, making it the deadliest period since 2001. They are no longer confining themselves to hit-and-run insurgency tactics, choosing instead to mass forces and contest whole districts. Emboldened by the gradual withdrawal of NATO forces, particularly its air power, the Taliban have launched conventional attacks against government-controlled areas across the country." (Security Sector Reform Resource Centre (30 September 2014) *The Danger of Unfinished Security Sector Reform in Afghanistan*)

This document also states:

> "In August and September alone, the Taliban threatened to take control of key districts and transportation arteries in Ghazni, Logar, Helmand, Nangarhar, and Wardak provinces exposing deep vulnerabilities in the ANSF." (ibid)

In September 2014 a paper published by the *United Nations Security Council* states:

> "Insurgent groups, international terrorists and associated networks took advantage of the protracted political and electoral crisis and uncertainty to mount major assaults around the country, notably in Hilmand Province in the south, Faryab and Ghor provinces in the west, Logar Province in the centre, Nangarhar and Nuristan provinces in the east and Kunduz Province in the north-east. There were attempts not only to capture but also to hold territory, with the use of forces several hundred strong in "swarm attacks" to overwhelm district administrative centres and security checkpoints, which resulted in considerable casualties among civilians, security personnel and insurgents. The objective appears to be an attempt to project insurgent influence greater than is actually the case. The Afghan security forces continue to demonstrate their effectiveness in countering the majority of insurgent

> offensives and recovering control of district centres and security installations, even if they lack the resources to curtail insurgent presence and freedom of movement, particularly in remote rural districts." (United Nations Security Council (9 September 2014) *Report by the UN Secretary-General on the security situation and political developments since 18 June 2014 (human rights situation; humanitarian assistance; counter-narcotics)*)

A report issued in September 2014 by *Jamestown Foundation* states:

> "Since June, the Taliban have waged four major direct assaults in four Afghani provinces. The largest operation conducted so far has been in Helmand province. Reports suggest that 800 to 1,000 Taliban insurgents were involved in major assaults on the Sangin, Nawzad, Mua Qala and Kajaki districts…The Taliban then shifted their operations to northern Afghanistan's Kunduz province where they fought for weeks to take control of the Khan Abad, Chahar Dara and Dashte Archi districts…Eastern Nuristan was another target of the Taliban in late August…After being repulsed on three fronts, more than 1,000 insurgents then launched another operation in northwestern Farayab province in a struggle for territorial control of the Qaisar and Ghormach districts." (Jamestown Foundation (26 September 2014) *Taliban Devise New Strategy in Afghanistan: Territorial Control and War on Afghan Intelligence Headquarters*)

Reuters in September 2014 notes in a report that:

> "Hundreds of Taliban fighters have stormed a strategic district in an Afghan province southwest of the capital and are on the verge of capturing it after killing dozens of people and beheading some in days of fighting, officials said on Friday." (Reuters (26 September 2014) *Taliban storm Afghan district southwest of capital, 100 killed*)

This article also states:

> "The Taliban have been focussing on regaining important opium-growing areas, such as the southern province of Helmand, and areas where they have traditionally enjoyed support, such as Kunduz province in the north." (ibid)

A report issued in September 2014 by the *New York Times* notes:

> "While a bitter electoral dispute consumed the attention of Afghanistan's political leadership over the summer, the Taliban took advantage by pressing hard into vulnerable districts, often in areas that had been vacated by foreign troops." (New York Times (28 September 2014) *Taliban Press for Advantage as Politicians Work on Maneuvers in Kabul*)

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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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