



Civil-Military Fusion Centre

Your reachback to Civil-Military resources for complex crises

14 October 2009

Afghanistan Review

This document is intended to provide an overview of relevant sector events in Afghanistan from 07 October -13 October 2009. More comprehensive information is available on the Civil-Military Overview (CMO) at www.cimicweb.org.¹

In Focus: The Extent of the Taliban Threat

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On the eighth anniversary (07 October 2009) of the first US strikes on Afghanistan in 2001, the Taliban released an English language statement designed to persuade western audiences that they [pose no international threat](#). The online message was posted on a Taliban website claiming the group does not have, and has never had, ambitions to harm other countries. According to the posting, the sole aim of the movement is the establishment of an Islamic system in Afghanistan. While US military commanders [have acknowledged](#) that the Taliban have a sophisticated information campaign at the field level, this well timed international message indicates an attempt to broaden the scope. With the submission of NATO and US Commander General Stanley McChrystal's [assessment of the situation in Afghanistan](#), and the corresponding troop requirements to carry out an enhanced counterinsurgency campaign, decision makers in Washington are [locked in a debate](#) over how much of a threat the Taliban actually pose. The oft stated goal of the US presence in Afghanistan is to [disrupt and dismantle the al-Qaeda presence](#). While the Taliban are known to cooperate with the global terrorist organization on an operational level, some believe there are elements within the Taliban who question whether it is in their best strategic interests to maintain the relationship. The Taliban held power in Afghanistan for six years and would likely have remained in power if al Qaeda had not been allowed to use the country to plan the 11 September attacks. If the Taliban can convince western powers that they do not pose a threat to international security, the need for the additional troops recommended by McChrystal would be diminished. If the current troop levels are not increased and the US instead decides to focus its efforts on drone strikes against suspected al Qaeda targets in Pakistan, as some in the US administration [are pushing for](#), the Taliban will have freer rein to further increase their influence in Afghanistan. There is evidence that the Taliban are growing in number, with [intelligence reports estimating](#) a fourfold increase since 2006. Having confidence in numbers and closely following public opinion in western countries, as well as recognizing that the current political deadlock over the disputed 20 August elections has left the central government weak, the release of the English language statement appears to be an attempt to influence the debate in Washington and other NATO capitals over the international threat the Taliban pose. **(Comments? [Click here](#))**

Question of the Week

Do the Taliban, as they are currently constituted, pose an international threat?

[Click here to answer](#)

¹ A CMO user account is required to access some of the links in this document.



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Counternarcotics

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"The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has announced the first seizure under Operation TARCET II. In August 2009 while implementing national operations in preparation for future regional activities, Pakistani authorities seized 4,620 litres of acetic anhydride (AA) in the Nowshki district of Chagi, Balochistan."

The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has announced the first seizure under Operation TARCET II. In August 2009 while implementing national operations in preparation for future regional activities, Pakistani authorities seized 4,620 litres of acetic anhydride (AA) in the Nowshki district of Chagi, Balochistan. The precursor chemicals were concealed in 154 plastic cans. Another 120 cans of ammonia spirit and a large quantity of both soda ash and activated carbon were recovered at the site. The chemicals were allegedly destined for Afghanistan, to be smuggled across the Afghan/Pakistani border in small quantities. ▪ Precursor chemical seizures are also up in Afghanistan. The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) intercepted 6,196 litres of AA in various provinces of Afghanistan from January to September 2009. While this is positive news and a turnaround compared to a few years ago, the estimated 725 tonnes of heroin produced during 2008 require over 10,000 tonnes of chemicals to be converted from opium. ▪ As part of the 'Trilateral Initiative' between Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran, another successful intervention took place earlier this year from 26-28 July. The operation was coordinated through the Joint Planning Cell (JPC) based in Teheran, and was conducted by Iranian and Afghan Counternarcotics and Border Control forces. Afghan forces arrested six smugglers, seized 24 kg of opium, and 34.7 kg of heroin. On Iranian territory, the Iranian forces seized 196 kg of opium and 175 kg of crack (crystallized) heroin. A month later, on 24 & 25 August 2009, the Iranian and Pakistani authorities joined forces by coordinating through the JPC to seize 48 kg of heroin, 231 kg of opium and 385 kg of hashish.

Background: Both the AA and drug seizures reported above were conducted under the Rainbow Strategy framework, with two out of seven action components of the Strategy directly involved in the planning and implementation of these joint operations: (i) *Targeting Precursors Used in Heroin Manufacture: Operation Tarcet*, addresses the issue of smuggling in precursors used in heroin manufacture en route to Afghanistan. Striving for complementarity and synergy with existing precursor control projects in the region, the operation promotes a regional response to this problem through a systematic analysis of criminal and forensic intelligence. Its training component provides key law enforcement officers with education on how to identify and intercept chemical consignments using modern methodology; (ii) *Afghanistan, Islamic Republic of Iran and Pakistan: Border Management Cooperation in Drug Control* is designed to promote mutual trust, information and intelligence sharing, with the ultimate goal of planning and conducting joint operations. Joint training and compatibility of telecommunication equipment, intelligence sharing through the Joint Planning Cell in Tehran, posting pilot liaison offices on the borders, and holding working groups to discuss control measures within trade agreements between the countries are among the initiatives envisaged in this action outline. UNODC serves as a Secretariat to this Triangular Initiative, facilitating the delivery of technical assistance and mobilizing financial support for it. The seven action plans of the Rainbow Strategy can be downloaded by [clicking here](#). Please note that you will need a username and password to access the seven plans, as explained on the website. **(Comments? Click here)**



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Economic Stabilization

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"The sudden stop of development activities has left the economy at a standstill, making businessmen reluctant to import goods, which has in turn driven up prices."

The Afghan Daily *Arman-E Melli* (Hope of the Nation) has highlighted the importance of an [ad-hoc economic strategy](#) that starts with harnessing the actual potential of the country. Afghanistan has much of its economic strength in the agriculture sector, and it is this sector that should therefore be reinforced through infrastructure development and rehabilitation projects. An important starting point for increasing economic potential is minimizing the waste of resources such as water that is lost to other countries. Through this, Afghanistan can focus on its actual potential and develop as a leader in its areas of strength. *Arman-E Melli* also stressed the need for improvements in the education system to allow self-reliance in terms of capacity, as well as to minimize 'brain drain' which sees intellectuals leave the country for better job prospects elsewhere. ▪ In Balkh Province, political tensions have had a negative effect on the economy. Paving work on roads has suddenly stopped along with many other projects left unfinished. One possible explanation is the decision of Governor Atta Mohammad Noor to withdraw his support from President Karzai in the recent presidential election. The sudden stop of development activities has [left the economy at a standstill](#), making businessmen reluctant to import goods, which has in turn driven up prices. ▪ In Kunduz province, the Women Traders' Association has empowered females to start their own businesses selling handicrafts and dried fruit. The Association is also involved in [modernizing traditional commercial methods](#) and providing management training to the women. ▪ On World Post Day (09 October), the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology announced that the 464 post offices throughout the country [made AFN 108 million in revenue](#) this year compared to [AFN 68 million over the previous three years](#). ([Comments? Click here](#))

Governance & Participation

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"There has been speculation that the departing Mustafa Barakzai, who is widely viewed as a Karzai supporter, actually resigned to avoid being associated with a pending decision to throw out enough of Karzai's first round votes to force a second round run-off."

One of the two Afghan members of the UN-backed Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) [has resigned](#) after stating that decisions were being made by the three foreign nationals on the panel with little consultation with the other members. The five member panel consists of one Canadian, one Dutch and one American, together with two Afghans. There has been speculation that the departing Mustafa Barakzai, who is widely viewed as a Karzai supporter, actually resigned [to avoid being associated](#) with a pending decision to throw out enough of Karzai's first round votes to force a second round run-off. ▪ President Karzai's top rival for the presidency has become more amiable to the idea of a unity government once the final results of the 20 August elections are announced. Abdullah Abdullah previously made it clear that he would have no part in a Karzai government if the presidency was awarded under illegitimate means. Abdullah has now announced that the political environment will be significantly altered one way or another following the announcement of the final results, and at that point he might be open to discussing possible collaboration. ▪ Forty-two civil society groups and parliamentarians [urged the next Afghan president](#) to make serious efforts to bring stability to the country.



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Participants of a press conference in Kabul said it is the duty of the new president to appoint a clean and efficient administration that will follow the will of the Afghan people. They argued that if the present situation does not change, the achievements made in the country up to this point would be wasted. ▪ A rally involving Afghan women protested against the Independent Election Commission (IEC) for allegedly allocating [a low number of seats to women on the Provincial Councils \(PCs\)](#). The rally was organized by civil society organisations in Kabul and demanded a greater role for women at the provincial level. The IEC countered the allegations by saying that the discrepancy is due to the overall low number of women candidates who ran in the PC portion of the 20 August elections. ▪ The use of internet resources as a discussion forum is seeing steady growth in Afghanistan. Currently, internet access reaches only 5% of the Afghan population; by 2012 that number is expected to increase to 20%. This growth presents the possibility for [‘New and Emerging Media’](#) such as websites, weblogs and social networking communities, including Facebook and Youtube, to become a legitimate means of political debate and discussion among the population. In the recent elections, several candidates made use of internet tools to reach out to their supporters. [\(Comments? Click here\)](#)

Humanitarian Assistance

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"Although Tajiks and Afghans speak a similar language and the countries have historical and religious ties, there are concerns within the Tajik government that the Afghan influx could exacerbate the country's economic instability."

The UN World Food Programme (WFP) has [distributed cash vouchers](#) of USD 30 to 10,000 vulnerable households in Kabul. The assistance targets vulnerable families headed by widows or people with disabilities. Under the initiative, each family will receive a cash voucher once a month until February 2010. ▪ One hundred families in Parwan province have been given 30 chickens each along with a two-month poultry farming course. Similarly, orchard owners in Kapisa province were given fruit-collecting buckets, with 10,000 distributed in all. These [distributions targeted](#) the most vulnerable households among the population and were supported by the United Nations and the US National Guard Agriculture Development Teams respectively. The logistics were carried out by a local organisation. ▪ During a recent trip to India, the head of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) delegation in Afghanistan [highlighted India's humanitarian efforts](#) in the country. The ICRC has been active in Afghanistan for the past 24 years and is well known for its [large presence](#), with 115 expatriates and more than 1,250 local staff. The organisation is credited with expanding its operations in Afghanistan as a result of its accepted [principles of neutrality and independence](#). ▪ According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), in 2008 [1,300 Afghans requested asylum in Tajikistan](#). In the first five months of 2009, the number has almost doubled. UNHCR has reported that among those fleeing the country, many have been targeted by the Taliban because of their perceived association with western organizations. Although Tajiks and Afghans speak a similar language and the countries have historical and religious ties, there are [concerns within the Tajik government](#) that the Afghan influx could exacerbate the country's economic instability. [\(Comments? Click here\)](#)



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Infrastructure

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"The prison will accommodate detainees according to their charge, putting them in categories of political, high risk or low risk."

A new GBP 1.3 million prison [has opened in Helmand province](#) with support from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), through the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT). The facility represents part of the UK's efforts to have the Afghan government take responsibility for the country's dilapidated justice system. The prison will accommodate detainees according to their charge, putting them in categories of political, high risk or low risk. The facility is also expected to be better secured against a possible Taliban attack. ▪ Kunar PRT engineers have visited the [Lahor Dag School currently under construction](#) to inspect its progress. The school is part of the provincial government's plan to focus on increasing the number of schools while creating new job opportunities. The school cost approximately USD 500,000 and should be completed before the start of the new academic year. ▪ Pakistan International Airlines (PIA) [has introduced electronic ticketing in Afghanistan](#) to facilitate travel between the two countries. In the last few months, the number of flights has doubled while fares have been reduced by almost half. **(Comments? [Click here](#))**

Justice & Reconciliation

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"While USD 6 billion has been spent by the United States since 2001 to train and mentor the Afghan National Police (ANP), some Afghans have suggested that their police represent a greater threat to their safety than the Taliban."

Lack of an efficient and reliable Afghan police force [is cause for growing concern](#) over the country's future stability. While USD 6 billion has been spent by the United States since 2001 to train and mentor the Afghan National Police (ANP), some Afghans have suggested that their police represent a greater threat to their safety than the Taliban. ▪ The Russian Federal Drug Control Service (FDCS) has forwarded information to the United States on [175 drug cartels](#) operating in Afghanistan. Viktor Ivanov, Director of the FDCS, said they hope the US will reciprocate by providing them with information on [50 Afghan drug lords](#). Ivanov has proposed setting up a system for sharing information on drug lords, plantations and laboratories operating in Afghanistan. The two countries have thus far only reached an agreement to increase bilateral cooperation in the fight against drug trafficking including the creation of a 'hotline' to discuss current counter-narcotics efforts. ▪ Duties of the new military task force created to oversee detention operations in Afghanistan are expected to include ensuring that the military notifies the ICRC of the identities of militants being detained in secret camps by US Special Operations forces. This information has never before been provided by the American military in Afghanistan. According to a senior Pentagon official, the task force will also [advise the Afghan government](#) on ways to improve the country's detention and judicial systems as well as develop ways to reintegrate former Taliban members into Afghan society. ▪ On the occasion of Eid marking the end of Ramadan, 17 detainees from the [Jawzjan and Sar-i-Pul central jails](#) and [23 detainees from Herat central jail](#), convicted of crimes including prostitution, rape and drug trafficking, were released in compliance with a presidential decree. **(Comments? [Click here](#))**



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Social Well-Being

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"The AKTC partners with Afghan architects and artisans to restore several small cultural heritage sites in Kabul's neighbourhoods. As part of the arrangement, after the restoration the owners agree to maintain the sites."

The Afghan health sector is expected to receive a considerable boost through the support of the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the Japanese International Cooperation Agency (JICA). USAID and the Afghan Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) have signed an Implementation Letter to provide healthcare through the provision of a Basic Package of Health Services (BPHS) in 13 provinces and an Essential Package of Hospital Services (EPHS) in five provinces, in addition to the ongoing Wazir Akbar Khan Support Project (WAKH-SP). All of these initiatives will be implemented under the [Partnership Contracts for Health Services project](#). Meanwhile, the Japanese government has pledged to finance the construction of [100 health facilities](#) and has provided USD 4.5 million for polio eradication programmes through the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). ▪ An additional round of the Afghanistan Polio Eradication Campaign started on 11 October and lasted for three days, during which a portion of the [eight million targeted children under the age of five](#) were expected to be administered with polio drops. The campaign has been undertaken with technical and financial support from the World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF and other donors, and an estimated [55,000 MoPH](#) staff and volunteers have taken care of the logistics. Despite the success, the [campaign has been halted](#) in volatile Kandahar province due to security concerns. ▪ At the edge of Kabul's Old City is an area known as the *Asheqan wa Arefan*, containing numerous Afghan cultural heritage sites. The neighbourhood has been slowly restored over the past seven years with support from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), a non-profit organisation working toward the preservation of Afghanistan's heritage. The AKTC partners with Afghan architects and artisans to restore several small cultural heritage sites in Kabul's neighbourhoods. As part of the arrangement, after the restoration the owners agree to maintain the sites. ([Comments? Click here](#))