

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

On July 14, 2020, the United States closed five military bases in Afghanistan per the conditions of the U.S.-Taliban agreement. The deal, signed in February, saw the U.S. promise to withdraw all U.S. forces from the bases in the first 135 days of the deal. The evacuated bases were located in Helmand, Uruzgan, Paktika, and Laghman provinces. The larger bases—Bagram and Kandahar Airfield—located in Kabul and south Afghanistan remain open. (Source: [Fox News](#) [1])

On July 13, 2020, Taliban fighters ambushed security forces following a car bomb blast at a government compound in Samangan, northern Afghanistan. The attack killed at least 11 people and wounded over 43 others. The attack was launched close to one of the offices of the National Directorate of Security (NDS), Afghanistan's main intelligence agency. According to local officials, the Taliban also ambushed a number of other security force checkpoints in Badakhshan, Kunduz, and Parwan. Between the three attacks, 25 people were killed. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [2], [Al Jazeera](#) [3])

On June 22, 2020, Javid Faisal, the spokesman for the National Security Council, reported that the previous week was the "deadliest" in the 19-year Afghan war. Releasing the details on Twitter, Faisal alleges that the Taliban carried out over 422 attacks in 32 provinces, leading to the death of more than 291 security force personnel and injuries to at least 550 others. The Taliban's spokesman in Afghanistan, Zabihullah Mujahid, claimed the latest government figures were inflated to deter intra-Afghan peace talks. Despite the increase in violence, President Ashraf Ghani claims he will continue with a Taliban prisoner release—about an additional 2,000 Taliban inmates on top of the already freed 3,000—a condition the Afghan government must satisfy in order to begin peace negotiations with the Taliban. (Sources: [France 24](#) [4], [Gandhara](#) [5])

On May 27, 2020, the United Nations released a report claiming that the Taliban continues to work closely with al-Qaeda, despite the Taliban's peace deal with the American government. According to the report, about 400 to 600 armed al-Qaeda operatives are stationed in Afghanistan. The February 29 peace agreement saw the Taliban agree to prevent al-Qaeda from operating in Afghanistan in order for U.S. troops to gradually withdraw from Afghanistan. Despite the conditions of the negotiations, the U.N. report claims that the Taliban regularly consulted with al-Qaeda during the peace process, promising to not break its "historical ties" with al-Qaeda for any price. However, that same day, Reuters reported that two senior U.S. officials in Kabul claimed that the U.S. will significantly reduce the number of troops in Afghanistan from 13,000 to about 8,600 by early June 2020. Per the conditions of the February agreement, Taliban forces must continue to reduce violence throughout Afghanistan following U.S. withdrawal in June to ensure the complete withdrawal of U.S. troops from Afghanistan by May 2021. (Sources: [CNN](#) [6], [Reuters](#) [7], [New York Times](#) [8], [The Hill](#) [9])

Overview

Afghanistan—officially the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan—has a tumultuous history of uprisings against the government, guerilla warfare, and foreign occupation dating back to the 19th century. The country now faces violent insurgencies by the [Taliban](#) [10] and [ISIS](#) [11]. According to the United Nations, Afghanistan suffered a record number of casualties in 2015, with more than 3,500 civilians killed and almost 7,500 wounded. (Sources: [CNN](#) [12], [New York Times](#) [13])

The Soviet invasion and Afghan civil war in the 1980s and early 1990s brought thousands of Islamic fighters into the country, including al-Qaeda founder Osama bin Laden. Bin Laden used Afghanistan as a base of operations from which to build his [al-Qaeda](#) [14] network. He built alliances between al-Qaeda and local militants, and later the Taliban, to provide al-Qaeda protection from Afghan authorities and other hostile forces. The Taliban seized control of Afghanistan in 1996, capitalizing on the country's decentralized government control after the civil war. Al-Qaeda continued to use Afghanistan as a base until the United States dislodged the Taliban in 2001. Al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters fought alongside each other against the U.S.-led coalition, leading then-British Prime Minister Tony Blair to declare in November 2001 that the groups had "virtually merged." A leaked 2011 Joint Task Force Guantanamo report described a "unification" between al-Qaeda and the Taliban. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [15], [Taliban](#), Ahmed Rashid, p. 22, 90, [CNN](#) [16], [Weekly Standard](#) [17])

Since being driven from the government in 2001, Taliban insurgents have claimed responsibility for deadly bombings and other terror attacks across the country targeting foreign embassies and NATO's headquarters, as well as Afghan security forces. The Taliban have also coordinated with the [Haqqani network](#) [18] and al-Qaeda. In September 2015, the Taliban began capturing territory for the first time since it was removed from power. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [19], [Reuters](#) [20], [Bloomberg News](#) [21], [New York Times](#) [22])

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

ISIS has declared Afghanistan and Pakistan to be a singular region called the Khorasan Province. ISIS has initiated several suicide bombings and other attacks in the country, including a July 2016 double suicide bombing that killed more than 80 people. The majority of Afghan extremist groups have rejected ISIS, according to the U.S. State Department. The Taliban in particular have rejected ISIS's encroachment into their territory, and the two groups have violently clashed. (Sources: [NBC News](#) [23], [CNN](#) [24], [U.S. Department of State](#) [25], [Diplomat](#) [26], [Wall Street Journal](#) [27])

Afghan security has worked with international forces to build and maintain the country's security infrastructure and combat extremist groups. NATO ended its 13-year combat mission in Afghanistan in December 2014, but continues to support Afghan security forces. Then-U.S. President Barack Obama announced in 2015 that U.S. troops would remain in Afghanistan at least through the end of his presidency in 2017 to assist Afghan security in combatting the Taliban, ISIS, and other violent extremists. Despite Afghan successes against the insurgency, the Taliban have continued their bloody rebellion and seized new territory from the Afghan government. (Sources: [Guardian](#) [28], [New York Times](#) [29], [New York Times](#) [30], [Bloomberg News](#) [21])

Radicalization and Foreign Fighters

Radicalization

Several extremist organizations operate in Afghanistan. A 2015 study by the Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit (AREU) found extensive activity by extremist and Islamist groups within the schools. According to AREU researcher Ali Mohammad Ali, Islamist groups such as [Hizb ut-Tahrir](#) [31], Jamiat-e-Islah, and Tehrik-e-Islami recruit teachers who then recruit students. The AREU study found that high school students are turning to radical groups out of frustration with unemployment, a slow economy, and the dysfunctional Afghan educational system. The AREU recommended lifting the government ban on political activism in high schools in order to allow in non-radical groups to act as a counter balance. (Sources: [CTC Sentinel](#) [32], [Tolo News](#) [33])

Afghan authorities have cited the proliferation of unregistered mosques and madrassas (Islamic religious schools) as a cause of radicalization in the country. The Afghan government requires mosques to register with the Ministry of Hajj and Religious Affairs and the Ministry of Education. Nonetheless, only 50,000 of the country's estimated 160,000 mosques are registered. Almost two-thirds of Afghanistan's 1,500 madrassas are also not registered, according to government officials. Afghan officials have further pointed to unregistered madrassas in neighboring Pakistan as a source of militancy in Afghanistan. More than 5,000 Afghans study in the Balochistan region of Pakistan alone, and Afghan and U.S. intelligence assert that the Afghan Taliban has exerted control over unregistered madrassas in Pakistan. The U.S. State Department has identified "lack of oversight over religious activities at mosques" as a source of concern. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [34], [Voice of America](#) [35], [Rawa News](#) [36])

Former Afghan President Hamid Karzai has criticized Pakistan for not confronting radicalization within its borders, and accused Pakistani radicals of being responsible for the flow of foreign fighters into Afghanistan. According to Karzai, the 1980s war to drive out Soviet forces from Afghanistan allowed religious radicalization to flourish in Afghanistan. Islamic fighters equated "jihad" with Afghan liberation, he said. "Extremism and terrorism was one of the most important tools" used to undermine Afghan society after the Soviet withdrawal, according to Karzai. The former president has called for "sincere cooperation" between the United States, Russia, China, India, and Iran as the only way to stop the spread of extremism. (Sources: [Afghanistan Times](#) [37], [Afghanistan Times](#) [38])

Soviet-Afghan War and Afghan Civil War

The Soviet-Afghan war began in December 1979 and lasted until February 1989. The communist People's Democratic Party took control of the Afghan government during an April 1978 coup and renamed the country the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan. That December, the communist government signed a treaty with the Soviet Union, which led the Soviet Union to provide large amounts of military aid to Afghanistan the following year. Multiple Islamic resistance groups—calling themselves *mujahideen*, warriors—began to fight against the Soviet-backed government. Pakistan-based fighters fought to capture territory in Afghanistan and encouraged Afghan soldiers to defect. In September 1979, the Soviet-backed Afghan government requested Soviet troops to help combat the growing Islamic insurgency. That December, Soviet forces arrived

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

in Afghanistan to bolster Afghan forces. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [39], [New York Times](#) [40])

In the first half of 1980, the Soviet Union moved 80,000 troops into Afghanistan to fight the mujahideen, which were then receiving military and financial aid from the United States, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan. In 1982, the U.N. General Assembly called for the USSR to withdraw from Afghanistan. The United States also increased its arms supply to the mujahideen to fight the U.S. Cold War enemy. For example, in 1986, the United States provided the insurgents with Stinger missiles with which to shoot down Soviet helicopters. (Source: [BBC News](#) [39])

The Afghan conflict attracted Islamic fighters from around the world. Among them was Osama bin Laden, who arrived in Afghanistan in the early 1980s to finance and support the mujahideen—as well as directly participate in the fighting—against the Soviets. In 1984, bin Laden and Abdullah Azzam set up guesthouses in Pakistan to host incoming foreign fighters on their way to Afghanistan. Bin Laden also reportedly financed training camps in northern Pakistan near the Afghan border for Islamic foreign fighters going to Afghanistan. As many as 20,000 foreign fighters passed through bin Laden’s network, according to media estimates. Bin Laden reportedly spent \$25,000 a month to subsidize the fighters. Bin Laden reportedly described Afghanistan as where he “set up my first camp where these volunteers were trained by Pakistani and American officers.” (Sources: [PBS](#) [41], [Washington Post](#) [42], [New York Times](#) [43], [CNN](#) [44])

By 1985, more than 5 million Afghans had been displaced, and many sought refuge in Iran and Pakistan. That year, the various mujahideen factions assembled in Pakistan to form an alliance against Soviet forces. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [45], [BBC News](#) [39])

The Soviet Union began withdrawing troops in 1988 after signing a peace accord with the United States, Afghanistan, and Pakistan. Soviet forces completed their withdrawal from Afghanistan in February 1989. More than one million Afghans and 13,000 Soviet troops died during the 10-year war. The Afghan civil war, however, continued until the 1992 overthrow of formerly Soviet-backed Afghan President Mohammed Najibullah. Control of Afghanistan was divided between the mujahideen forces. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [39], [PBS](#) [41], [PBS](#) [46], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [47])

Bin Laden and other Arab and Muslim fighters from the Afghan war returned to their home countries emboldened by their perceived triumph over the Soviet forces. The “myth of the superpower was destroyed,” Bin Laden reportedly said. Bin Laden believed that the support network he had built to funnel fighters into the Afghan jihad could serve another purpose. The network reportedly kept a database of foreign fighters coming to Afghanistan in order to alert their families in case of their death. That database became an early recruitment tool for al-Qaeda. In August 1988, bin Laden and eight others met in Peshawar, Pakistan, to create al-Qaeda’s advisory council, membership requirements, and pledge of allegiance. In a 1995 interview with a French journalist, bin Laden said, “I discovered that it was not enough to fight in Afghanistan, but that we had to fight on all fronts against Communism or Western oppression. The urgent thing was Communism, but the next target was America.” (Sources: [New York Times](#) [43], [Intelwire](#) [48])

Taliban

The [Taliban](#) [10] (Pashto for “students”) are the jihadist insurgent group operating in Afghanistan against the current Western-backed government. The Taliban are the predominant umbrella group for the Afghan insurgency, including the semi-autonomous Haqqani network. (The Taliban’s offspring across the border, the Pakistani Taliban, share the ideology and objectives of its namesake but operate independently and focus on overthrowing the Pakistani government.) January 2018 estimates by Afghan and U.S. officials gauged that the Taliban included at least 60,000 fighters. These forces have allowed the Taliban to remain a credible fighting force with the ability to win and hold territory. (Sources: [NBC News](#) [49], [Voice of America](#) [50], [CNBC](#) [51])

The Taliban were founded in Kandahar, Afghanistan, in 1994 by Mullah [Mohammed Omar](#) [52]. The group soon absorbed more than 15,000 students and clerics from western Pakistan and began implementing sharia in Afghan territory. By the end of 1994, the Taliban had complete control over Kandahar and Helmand province, the center of opium cultivation. During this time, Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency secretly funneled money to the Taliban in Afghanistan. (Sources: [New Yorker](#) [53], *The Looming Tower*, Lawrence Wright, p. 259, [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [47])

Between 1995 and 1996, the Taliban gained public support in Kandahar and expand into other regions of Afghanistan. On April 4, 1996, Omar declared himself emir ul-momineen, “commander of the faithful”—the legitimate spiritual leader of

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Muslims in Afghanistan. After seizing the Afghan capital of Kabul in September 1996 and cementing their control of Afghanistan's government, the Taliban announced their aims to impose order, disarm the Afghan population (especially rival ethnic groups), enforce sharia, and defend the Islamic character of the "Emirate of Afghanistan." The Taliban banned most sporting events and forms of entertainment, from poetry and music to kites. They closed all girls' schools and prohibited women from appearing in public except under strict supervision by a male relative. Even when women were in their respective homes, the windows were painted black to prevent passersby from glimpsing women in their private quarters. (Sources: *The Looming Tower*, Lawrence Wright, p. 259, [SF Gate](#) [54], [BBC News](#) [55], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [47], *Taliban*, Ahmed Rashid, p. 22, 90)

After the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, U.S. President George W. Bush demanded that the Taliban turn over all al-Qaeda leaders in Afghanistan; release all imprisoned foreign nationals; protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers; immediately close every terrorist training camp, and hand over every terrorist and their supporters; and give the United States full access to terrorist training camps for inspection. After the Taliban refused U.S. demands, the United States and United Kingdom launched airstrikes to dislodge the Taliban from power. British Prime Minister Tony Blair said the Taliban and al-Qaeda had "effectively merged." (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [56], [CNN](#) [57], [Telegraph](#) [58], [Washington Post](#) [59], [CNN](#) [16], [Weekly Standard](#) [17], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [47], [U.S. Department of Defense](#) [60])

The U.S.-led coalition forced the Taliban to relinquish its control on Afghan territory and the government. Between late 2001 and early 2002, approximately 30,000 Taliban fighters were killed. U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld declared the end of "major combat activity" in Afghanistan in May 2003. Afghanistan held its first democratic presidential elections after the fall of the Taliban in October 2004, electing the U.S.-backed Hamid Karzai, who had been Afghanistan's transitional leader since December 2001. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [56], [CNN](#) [57], [Telegraph](#) [58], [Washington Post](#) [59], [CNN](#) [16], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [47], [U.S. Department of Defense](#) [60], [Guardian](#) [61], [New York Times](#) [62])

The Taliban have since operated as an insurgent force in both Afghanistan and Pakistan, attempting to expel NATO forces from Afghanistan and defeat the democratically-elected Afghan government. Attacks on Afghanistan's security forces have increased as Western forces have begun to withdraw from the country in recent years. As government authority has weakened, Taliban forces have sought to fill the vacuum. The Taliban captured the northern Afghan city of Kunduz in September 2015. It was the first major city to fall into Taliban hands since the United States deposed the Taliban government in 2001. By December 2015, vast swathes of Helmand Province had fallen back under Taliban control. U.S. Special Operations forces responded by covertly committing additional ground troops and air support to halt this advance. Helmand politician and television commentator Toofan Waziri told the *New York Times* that the U.S. presence has helped rally Afghan forces against the Taliban. Nonetheless, the Taliban remain in control of parts of Helmand Province and maintained a shadow government there. As of August 2016, the Taliban controlled four of Helmand's 14 districts, while the Afghan government reportedly believed that only two of Helmand's districts were securely under its control. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [63], [BBC News](#) [64], [New York Times](#) [22], [Long War Journal](#) [65], [Bloomberg News](#) [21], [CBS News](#) [66])

As of January 2018, the Taliban controlled or threatened 70 percent of Afghanistan, according to estimates by BBC News. The BBC estimated that the Taliban fully controlled 14 Afghan districts, or 4 percent of the country. The BBC further estimated that the Taliban "have an active and open physical presence" in an additional 263 districts, or 66 percent of Afghanistan. That same month, Bill Roggio of the Long War Journal estimated that the group controlled 45 percent of Afghanistan. In October 2017, the U.S.-led coalition estimated that the Taliban controlled 44 percent of Afghanistan. All of the estimates represent a significant increase since September 2016 when the group reportedly controlled just 10 percent of the country. On May 1, 2019, U.S. military command in Afghanistan reported that they would discontinue monitoring how many people and districts the government and insurgents controlled as the assessments "limited decision-making value" for commanders. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [67], [NBC News](#) [49], [Reuters](#) [68], [Reuters](#) [69], [Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty](#) [70], [New York Times](#) [71])

January 2018 estimates by Afghan and U.S. officials gauged that the Taliban included at least 60,000 fighters, up from 2014 U.S. estimates of 20,000 fighters. The quality of these new recruits, however, may not be of the same caliber as the Taliban's older fighters. The Taliban has even allegedly resorted to luring children into their ranks with sweets and then training them to become suicide bombers. The U.S. government does not release official numbers of the Taliban's ranks. (Sources: [NBC News](#) [49], [Voice of America](#) [50], [Al Jazeera](#) [72], [YNet News](#) [73])

The United States remains entrenched in the fight against Taliban forces, which has cost the United States more than \$700

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

billion since 2001. In July 2016, U.S. President Barack Obama announced that more than 8,000 U.S. troops would remain in Afghanistan through the end of his term in 2017. The president cited Afghanistan's "precarious" security situation as necessitating continued U.S. involvement. Obama had also recently adjusted the U.S. rules of engagement to allow troops to directly confront the Taliban, in addition to training Afghan forces. President Donald Trump raised U.S. troop levels in Afghanistan to 14,000 by the end of 2017. The Taliban has demanded direct negotiations with the United States on ending the conflict in Afghanistan and the Taliban's future role. In January 2018, Trump rejected future peace talks with the Taliban. That July, however, the Trump administration ordered U.S. diplomats to pursue direct negotiations with the Taliban. That month, U.S. and Taliban officials met to begin discussions on peace talks to end the war in Afghanistan with the understanding that the Taliban and Afghan government should lead the process. The Qatari government agreed to mediate between the Taliban and the Afghan government. By August 2019, the United States and Taliban had reached a framework agreement that included a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and intra-Afghan negotiations from the Taliban. While the Taliban and Afghan government officials have yet to meet in a formal capacity, Qatar and Germany sponsored a two-day intra-Afghan meeting in Doha where Afghan leaders and Taliban representatives could have an informal forum to discuss Afghanistan's future. The "ice-breaker" talks proved promising, with representatives from both sides calling for a "roadmap for peace" to reduce civilian casualties to zero. Sources: [Reuters](#) [74], [Military Times](#) [75], [Bloomberg News](#) [21], [New York Times](#) [30], [New York Times](#) [76], [Associated Press](#) [77], [Wall Street Journal](#) [78], [Wall Street Journal](#) [79], [Al Jazeera](#) [80])

According to a 2012 leaked NATO report, Pakistan's ISI provided funding and training to the Taliban both in their takeover of Afghanistan in the 1990s and after the 2001 U.S. invasion. The report—based on 27,000 interrogations of 4,000 captured Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other foreign fighters—alleged that senior Taliban officials maintain homes in Pakistan close to ISI headquarters, and "Pakistan's manipulation of the Taliban senior leadership continues unabatedly." Admiral Mike Mullen, former chair of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, credited Pakistan's support of the Taliban to the infiltration of the religious right in the Pakistani army and Pakistan's desire to expand its regional influence through "proxies." In response to the NATO report, Pakistan denied interference in Afghanistan. (Sources: [Time](#) [81], [Brookings Institution](#) [82])

In April 2017, U.S. General John Nicholson, who commands U.S. forces in Afghanistan, said the U.S. military had received reports that Russia is arming the Taliban. Other U.S. military officials corroborated the reports and said that Russia had increased its supply of small arms to the Taliban in the past 18 months. Russia denied the allegations. A Taliban video released in late July 2017 claimed that the Russian government has provided the terrorist group with snipers, heavy machine guns, and other weapons. Nicholson has previously criticized Russia for providing "legitimacy" to the Taliban. (Sources: [Washington Post](#) [83], [Daily Mail](#) [84], [CNN](#) [85], [Reuters](#) [86])

Since the rise of ISIS, the Taliban have emphasized preserving pan-Islamic unity. Following al-Qaeda's example, the Taliban have advised ISIS to "avoid extremism" that risks splintering the violent Islamist movement across the broader Middle East. Deceased Taliban leader [Mullah Mohammed Omar](#) [87] in particular reaffirmed the Taliban's priority of establishing a unified Islamist movement to expel the "far enemy" (the Western powers). Omar referred to ISIS leader [Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi](#) [88] as a "fake caliph" who "just wanted to dominate what has so far been achieved by the real jihadists of Islam after three decades of jihad. A pledge of allegiance to him is 'haram.'" Despite these warnings, hundreds of Taliban members have purportedly joined ISIS's Pakistani branch. (Sources: [National Review](#) [89], [Rudaw](#) [90], [NBC News](#) [23])

Afghan security officials have claimed to possess evidence that both Russia and Iran are providing financial, military, and material support to the Taliban. According to Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, chief of Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security, Iran and Russia have both increased their ties to the Taliban under the guise of fighting ISIS. Iran has supported the Taliban since 2006, according to the U.S. State Department. A 2012 U.S. Department of Defense report to Congress stated that Iran's support was part of a "grand strategy" to challenge U.S. influence. A May 2016 U.S. drone strike killed Taliban leader [Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour](#) [91] in Pakistan shortly after he crossed the border from Iran. Mansour had made multiple trips to Iran because of "ongoing battle obligations, according to Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid. In July 2018, the Afghan government reported that Taliban forces have admitted to receiving training in Iran. According to Taliban sources, Iran provided the training on the condition that the Taliban increase its attacks on American and NATO forces. (Sources: [Times](#) [92], [U.S. Department of State](#) [93], [Long War Journal](#) [94], [Federation of American Scientists](#) [95], [Pakistan Forward](#) [96])

On February 29, 2020, following an agreed seven-day reduction in violence period, U.S. and Taliban representatives

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

meeting in Doha, Qatar, signed an agreement for a U.S. troop withdrawal. The United States agreed to draw its forces down from 13,000 to 8,600 in the next three to four months, with the remaining U.S. forces withdrawing in 14 months. In exchange, the Taliban agreed to renounce al-Qaeda and prevent al-Qaeda and other groups from using Afghanistan as a base for terrorism against the United States. The Taliban also agreed to negotiate a permanent ceasefire with other Afghan militants and the Afghan government. The U.S. troop drawdown is dependent on the Taliban maintaining its commitments. The agreement also called for permanent ceasefire and power-sharing talks that March between Afghan militant groups as well as between the Taliban and the Afghan government. (Sources: [Associated Press](#) [97], [Al Jazeera](#) [98], [U.S. Department of State](#) [99])

Given the Taliban-U.S. peace agreement, there were reports on June 9, 2020 that a group of Taliban militants broke off from the mainstream Taliban to form the Hezb-e Walayat-e Islami (Party of Islamic Guardianship) in defiance of the peace negotiations. According to an Afghan intelligence official, the group has yet to be “officially announced,” but it is alleged that the group has close ties to Iran—a country which the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency reported in November 2019 as having provided financial, political, training, and military support to the Taliban. Members of the splinter group include radical Taliban commanders and members of other Taliban factions. Despite the formation of Hezb-e Walayat-e Islami, the Taliban has begun to put together an agenda for negotiations with the Afghan government. Sediq Sediqi, a spokesman for President Ashraf Ghani, claims the president would like for the talks to commence in July 2020. (Sources: [Radio Free Europe](#) [100], [Military Times](#) [101])

The Taliban and the Afghan government conducted limited negotiations via video conferencing in March 2020. On March 25, the Taliban announced the Afghan government had agreed to an initial prisoner release, while Afghanistan’s National Security Council said face-to-face discussions would soon begin. The Afghan government announced the formation of a negotiating team for talks with the Taliban the following day. On March 30, the government canceled the release of 100 Taliban prisoners scheduled for the following day after the deaths of at least 28 Afghan security personnel in multiple attacks over the preceding two days. The government blamed the Taliban for the attacks, though the group did not immediately claim responsibility. By early May, the Afghan government had released 933 Taliban prisoners in exchange for dozens of captive Afghan security personnel. (Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [102], [Al Jazeera](#) [103], [Al Jazeera](#) [104], [Agence France-Presse](#) [105], [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#) [106], [Reuters](#) [107], [Agence France-Presse](#) [108])

The global pandemic caused by COVID-19 has also affected Afghan-Taliban relations. Afghanistan had recorded more than 4,400 cases of the virus by the beginning of May 2020. On May 1, the Taliban accused the Afghan government of intentionally spreading the coronavirus in the country’s prisons in order to pressure the militant group in negotiations. In early May, the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission accused the Taliban of hijacking five truckloads of food aid sent by Turkmenistan amid the pandemic. (Sources: [Anadolu Agency](#) [109], [NPR](#) [110])

Because of ongoing negotiations between the Taliban and the United States, NATO’s Resolute Support mission stopped releasing data on the number of Taliban attacks. According to a Resolute Support assessment, the Taliban refrained from attacking coalition forces in March 2020 but increased attacks on Afghan forces. On April 30, 2020, the U.S. Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) released a quarterly assessment that called Taliban attacks in March “above seasonal norms.” The Afghan National Security Council found that the Taliban had carried out an average of 55 attacks per day since March 1. According to the council, the Taliban has continued its “campaign of terror against Afghans” and done nothing for peace. U.S. military leaders called on the Taliban to reduce attacks or face a response. In late April 2020, the Taliban rejected calls from the Afghan government for a ceasefire during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. However, on May 23, 2020, the Taliban announced a three day Eid ceasefire to which the Afghan government reciprocated. (Sources: [NBC News](#) [111], [Washington Post](#) [112], [Al Jazeera](#) [113], [Al Jazeera](#) [114])

Despite initiatives by both the Afghan government and the Taliban to commence conditional peace negotiations, on June 22, 2020, the National Security Council reported that the Taliban killed at least 291 Afghan security personnel and wounded 550 others in the previous week—the “deadliest” week of the entire Afghan war. Despite the increase in violence, Ghani claimed he will continue with a Taliban prisoner release—about an additional 2,000 Taliban inmates on top of the already freed 3,000—a condition the Afghan government must satisfy in order to begin peace negotiations with the Taliban. (Source: [Gandhara](#) [5])

On July 8, 2020, Afghan authorities reported that they would not follow through with the release of over 600 Taliban prisoners deemed “too dangerous.” However, under the conditions of the February 2020 U.S.-Taliban peace deal, Kabul

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

pledged to release over 5,000 Taliban prisoners in exchange for 1,000 Afghan security force captives. According to Javid Faisal, the spokesman for the National Security Council, the prisoners the Taliban asked to be released still had “serious criminal cases” against them. Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, claimed the criminal cases against the specific prisoners were fabricated, but Faisal stated that the Afghan government will continue with the release of other Taliban prisoners, but only those considered not as significant of a threat. (Source: [Military.com](#) [115])

Al-Qaeda

[Al-Qaeda](#) [14] has been operating in Afghanistan for more than two decades, during which time the terror group maintained close ties with the Taliban. Osama bin Laden swore allegiance to deceased Taliban leader [Mullah Mohammed Omar](#) [87] in 1996. In August 2015, al-Qaeda leader [Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) [116] swore allegiance to [Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour](#) [117], the now-deceased Taliban leader who replaced Omar after his death in 2013. After Mansour’s death, al-Zawahiri pledged allegiance to his replacement, [Mullah Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada](#) [118]. In August 2016, al-Zawahiri issued a call for Afghans to reject ISIS, which “seeks to split the ranks of the mujahideen” in Afghanistan, and support the Taliban. (Sources: [Long War Journal](#) [119], [Long War Journal](#) [120])

Al-Qaeda’s central command, which includes al-Zawahiri and his top aides, has traditionally been headquartered in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Al-Qaeda established several training camps in Afghanistan, including the sprawling Tarnak Farms, where Osama bin Laden allegedly plotted the 9/11 attacks. The CIA recorded footage of al-Qaeda fighters conducting military drills and firing at targets, as well as of bin Laden within the walled confines of Tarnak Farms. Al-Qaeda’s Afghanistan training camps have hosted notable terrorists such as Sahim Alwan, one of the “Lackawanna Six” from Buffalo, New York, who were convicted of supporting al-Qaeda. Al-Qaeda maintained its training camps in Afghanistan in the aftermath of the 2001 U.S. invasion. In May 2009, U.S. and Afghan forces discovered several training camps in Afghanistan’s Baghran district in the Helmand Province that were used by al-Qaeda and Taliban fighters. In August 2015, the United States bombed two al-Qaeda camps in the southern Afghan province of Kandahar. One of the camps encompassed nearly 30 square miles. (Sources: [MI5](#) [121], [NBC News](#) [122], [Wall Street Journal](#) [123], [Weekly Standard](#) [124], [Long War Journal](#) [125], [Long War Journal](#) [126])

After fighting in Afghanistan against the Soviet Union, bin Laden returned to his native Saudi Arabia in 1989 following the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. Saudi Arabia revoked bin Laden’s citizenship and expelled him in 1991. The Taliban provided a safe haven for al-Qaeda insurgents in Afghanistan prior to the September 11, 2001, terror attacks. In May 1996, bin Laden returned to Afghanistan. During a meeting that October with Taliban leader Mullah Omar, bin Laden pledged “unconditional support and financial backing” in exchange for the Taliban’s protection. That same year, bin Laden established al-Qaeda’s 55th Arab Brigade to fight alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan. Leaked memos from the U.S. military Joint Task Force Guantanamo (JTF) describe the brigade as bin Laden’s “primary battle formation supporting Taliban objectives.” According to the JTF, bin Laden remained “closely in the command and control of the brigade.” (Sources: [Long War Journal](#) [127], [CNN](#) [44], *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, from the Soviet Invasion to September 10, 2001*, Steve Coll, p. 9, [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [128], [Institute for Middle Eastern Democracy](#) [129], [Guardian](#) [130], [Weekly Standard](#) [17])

After the 1998 al-Qaeda attacks on U.S. embassies in Tanzania and Kenya, the United States launched cruise missiles at suspected al-Qaeda training camps in Afghanistan. Following the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in October 2001, al-Qaeda and the Taliban fled to the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) of Pakistan, where both organizations began to regroup and retool. After coalition forces destroyed the 55th Arab Brigade in late 2001, bin Laden and al-Qaeda rebuilt the organization as Lashkar al Zil, “the Shadow Army,” recruiting from jihadist groups in Pakistan to fight against Pakistani forces there and against coalition forces in Afghanistan. According to U.S. intelligence in 2009, Lashkar al Zil had been “instrumental” in Taliban victories in eastern and southern Afghanistan. Lashkar al Zil’s activities have decreased since the death of the group’s leader, Ilyas Kashmiri, in a June 2011 U.S. drone strike, but the group remains active. (Sources: [PBS](#) [131], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [128], [Weekly Standard](#) [17], [Long War Journal](#) [132], [BBC News](#) [133], [Jamestown Foundation](#) [134])

Al-Qaeda maintained a close relationship with the Taliban following the U.S. invasion. A U.S. intelligence report from Guantanamo Bay acquired by journalists Bill Roggio and Thomas Joscelyn described “a newly-conceived ‘unification’ of Al Qaeda and Taliban forces within Afghanistan.” The same report indicated that Mullah Omar and bin Laden “envisioned this new coalition” during a meeting in Pakistan in early spring 2003. Guantanamo detainee Haroon al Afghan reported an

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

August 2006 meeting during which commanders of the Taliban and al-Qaeda “decided to increase terrorist operations in the Kapisa, Kunar, Laghman, and Nangarhar provinces, including suicide bombings, mines, and assassinations.” (Source: [Weekly Standard](#) [17])

In an October 2010 letter, bin Laden ordered al-Qaeda operatives to relocate to Afghanistan’s eastern provinces because of U.S. airstrikes in Pakistan. U.S. forces have killed several high-level al-Qaeda commanders in Afghanistan since. For example, a December 2013 airstrike in Nangarhar killed two al-Qaeda military commanders, along with members of the Pakistani Taliban and Afghan Taliban. An October 2014 airstrike killed al-Qaeda leader Abu Bara al-Kuwaiti while he was at the home of al-Qaeda commander Abdul Samad Khanjari, who was also the Taliban’s shadow governor for the Achin district in Nangarhar. (Sources: [Long War Journal](#) [135], [Long War Journal](#) [126])

During the late 1990s and early 2000s, the men who eventually created [al-Qaeda in the Arabian Peninsula \(AQAP\)](#) [136] in 2009—[Nasir al-Wuhayshi](#) [137], Said al-Shihri, [Qasim al-Raymi](#) [138], and Mohamed al-Awfi—traveled to Afghanistan and spent time at al-Qaeda-sponsored training camps. Al-Wuhayshi served as Osama bin Laden’s personal secretary in Afghanistan between 1998 until about late 2001, when the two were separated during the U.S.-led Battle of Tora Bora. U.S. forces captured al-Shihri in Afghanistan in 2001 and transferred him to Guantanamo Bay. Al-Awfi was sent to Guantanamo Bay in 2002 and released to Saudi Arabia’s custody in 2007 to undergo deradicalization. After helping found AQAP, al-Awfi returned to Saudi Arabia, where he remained as of 2010, providing intelligence on al-Qaeda from a Saudi prison. Al-Raymi took over AQAP in June 2015 after al-Wuhayshi died in a U.S. drone strike. (Sources: [CTC Sentinel](#) [139], [New York Times](#) [140], [USA Today](#) [141], [BBC News](#) [142])

[Al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent](#) [143] (AQIS) also maintains a presence in Afghanistan. AQIS was founded in September 2014 at the behest of al-Zawahiri, who appointed [Asim Omar](#) [144] as emir of the new affiliate. The affiliate allegedly operates in Afghanistan, Pakistan, India, Burma, Bangladesh, and Kashmir. Al-Zawahiri stated that AQIS seeks to “rescue” the subcontinent’s Muslim population from “injustice, oppression, persecution, and suffering.” Harakat-ul-Mujahidden, a Pakistani Islamist terrorist organization long linked to al-Qaeda and now to AQIS, reportedly operates training camps in Afghanistan. A joint U.S.-Afghan mission in October 2015 destroyed an AQIS training camp in the Kandahar Province and killed dozens of trainees. (Sources: [Long War Journal](#) [145], [Long War Journal](#) [146], [U.S. Department of State](#) [25])

ISIS

In January 2015, [ISIS](#) [11] declared Afghanistan and Pakistan to be one region called the Khorasan Province (Wilayat Khorasan or ISIS-K). That same month, a group of Afghan and Pakistani militants released a video in which they pledged allegiance to ISIS and promised to increase their domestic operations. The militants introduced Hafez Sayed Khan Orakzai—a commander in the Pakistani Taliban who pledged allegiance to ISIS in October 2014—as their regional leader. In April 2015, ISIS claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in Jalalabad, its first major attack in Afghanistan. Since then, ISIS has increasingly targeted Shiite targets in Afghanistan. ISIS suicide bombers attacked a July 2016 demonstration by the predominately Shiite Hazara minority group, killing 80. And ISIS attacked two Shiite sites in October 2016, on the Shiite holy day of Ashura, killing more than 30 people. (Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [147], [NBC News](#) [23], [Wall Street Journal](#) [27], [Diplomat](#) [26], [Reuters](#) [148], [Deutsche Welle](#) [149])

According to an April 2019 assessment by an unnamed senior U.S. intelligence official, ISIS-K poses the top threat for so-called spectacular attacks on the United States. According to that official, ISIS-K has been emboldened by its success in Afghanistan and has targeted its recruitment at college graduates who have been unable to find employment. Another U.S. intelligence official told CNN that ISIS-K is using social media to establish contacts within the United States and is capable of striking within the country. According to retired U.S. Central Command commander General Joseph Votel, ISIS-K requires complete eradication because its fighters are ideologically committed. (Sources: [USA Today](#) [150], [CNN](#) [151])

ISIS fighters in Afghanistan have also used the country as a launching pad for attacks on neighboring Pakistan. After a February 17, 2016, ISIS suicide bombing killed at least 83 people in Pakistan, the Pakistani government blamed Jamaat-ur-Ahrar (JuA) for the attack. JuA is a faction of the Taliban that reportedly also has links to ISIS. Pakistani officials accused the Afghan government of allowing JuA to operate freely in Afghanistan and responded by launching overnight raids into Afghanistan, reportedly destroying a JuA training camp. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [152], [Nation](#) [153], [BBC News](#) [154])

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

In 2016, ISIS operated in only one Afghan province, Nangarhar. A September 2017 U.N. report revealed that ISIS had expanded its presence in Afghanistan to all of the country's seven provinces. (Source: [Voice of America](#) [155])

On July 11, 2017, a U.S. airstrike killed ISIS Khorasan leader [Abu Sayed](#) [156] in the group's headquarters in Kunar province. He was the third ISIS-Khorasan leader to be killed within a year. Previous ISIS leader Abdul Hasib was killed in a joint U.S.-Afghan operation in Afghanistan's Nangahar province on April 27, 2017. His predecessor Hafiz Saeed Khan was killed in a July 2016 U.S. drone strike. (Sources: [CNN](#) [157], [Reuters](#) [158])

There were approximately 1,300 ISIS fighters in Afghanistan as of September 2016, according to General John Nicholson, the highest ranking U.S. military commander in the country. Nicholson said on September 23, 2016, that ISIS leaders in Syria provide the Afghanistan fighters with money, guidance, and communications support. According to Nicholson, ISIS's fighters are largely former members of the Pakistan Taliban and primarily based in Afghanistan's Nangarhar region. On January 3, 2017, Najibullah Mani, head of the Interior Ministry's Counterterrorism Department, said ISIS is active in "at least 11" of Afghanistan's 34 provinces. As of March 1, 2017, U.S.-backed Afghan forces had reduced the number of ISIS fighters in the country to approximately 700, according to the U.S. military. (Sources: [Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty](#) [70], [Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty](#) [159], [Voice of America](#) [160])

Afghan media reported in December 2015 that ISIS had launched a Pashto-language radio station in Afghanistan called Voice of the Caliphate, which reportedly broadcasted anti-government and anti-Taliban messages. The Afghan government shut down the station later that month, but the station returned soon after using alternate frequencies. U.S. airstrikes reportedly destroyed the eastern Afghanistan broadcasting station in February 2016. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [25], [Long War Journal](#) [161], [Fox News](#) [162])

According to the U.S. State Department, the majority of the extremist groups active in Afghanistan have shunned the ISIS affiliate. The exception is the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan, which operates in northern Afghanistan near Uzbekistan as well as along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. The group broke its alliance with the Taliban to ally with ISIS's Khorasan Province in August 2015. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [25], [Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty](#) [163])

As a result of ISIS's encroachment on its territory, the Taliban have become more direct in opposing ISIS. The two terrorist groups have violently clashed on several occasions. In June 2015, the Taliban's deputy leader [Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour](#) [117] sent a missive to al-Baghdadi, warning ISIS's caliph that "jihad against the Americans and their allies [in Afghanistan] must be conducted under one flag and one leadership." ISIS and the Taliban reportedly agreed to a ceasefire in eastern Afghanistan in early August 2016, according to media reports. (Sources: [Diplomat](#) [26], [Wall Street Journal](#) [27], [Wall Street Journal](#) [164])

ISIS claimed a July 31, 2017, attack on the Iraqi embassy in Kabul, as well as an attack the following day on a Shiite mosque in Herat. The attacks came three weeks after U.S.-backed Iraqi forces recaptured the Iraq's second city of Mosul from ISIS, prompting Afghan security officials to question whether ISIS was increasing its activity in Afghanistan in response to its losses in Iraq. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [165], [CNN](#) [166], [Reuters](#) [167])

On May 30, 2019, a suicide bomber targeted the Marshal Fahim National Defense University in Kabul. At least six people were killed and another six were wounded. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack stating its fighters attacked "trainees in the Afghan army." It is suspected that ISIS is increasing its presence in Afghanistan as the U.S. and the Taliban are in the process of brokering a peace deal. On August 1, 2019, ISIS released a video of its members publicly beheading a member of the Taliban. According to the Middle East Media Research Institute, "ISIS considers Taliban members to be apostates who can thus be lawfully killed." ISIS claimed responsibility for a March 25, 2020, attack on a Sikh temple in Kabul that killed at least 25. (Sources: [Defense Post](#) [168], [Washington Times](#) [169], [Reuters](#) [170])

In the first half of 2020, ISIS claimed responsibility for a spate of attacks in Afghanistan. On March 6, ISIS gunmen killed 32 and wounded 58 at a memorial in Kabul. ISIS militants launched a rocket attack on Afghanistan's presidential palace on March 9. Another ISIS attack on a Sikh temple in Kabul, on March 25, killed at least 25. On May 11, Afghan forces arrested ISIS-K leader Zia-ul Haq, a.k.a. Shaikh Abu Omer al-Khorasani. (Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [171], [Associated Press](#) [172], [Reuters](#) [170], [New York Times](#) [173], [Guardian](#) [174], [Newsweek](#) [175], [New York Times](#) [176])

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Haqqani Network

The [Haqqani network](#) [18] is a militant Islamist group operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. It is considered a branch of the Afghan Taliban, but operates independently from the organization and has a more diffuse command structure. It originated in the late 1970s but rose to prominence in the resistance to the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in the 1980s. After the 1989 Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, [Jalaluddin Haqqani](#) [177] formed an alliance with the Taliban and supported the growth of al-Qaeda. When the Taliban violently assumed de facto control of Afghanistan in 1996, the group appointed Haqqani as minister of tribal affairs. Ever since, the Haqqani network has been subsumed under the larger Taliban, although the Haqqanis preserve distinct command and control. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [178], [Asia Times Online](#) [179], [Institute for the Study of War](#) [180])

The Haqqani network seeks to establish an Islamic state in Pakistan and Afghanistan and build a caliphate under Islamic law. Like the Taliban, the Haqqani network endorses an austere and radical interpretation of sharia (Islamic law), positing that Muslims must aspire to live in accordance with the actions of the Salaf, the first generation of Muslim leaders after the Prophet Muhammad. (Source: [Economist](#) [181])

Since the overthrow of the Taliban regime in 2001, the Haqqani network has been a lethal and sophisticated arm of the Afghan insurgency against the Western-backed government in Kabul. Although it has cooperated with and even praised al-Qaeda, the Haqqani network focus is regional, not global like al-Qaeda's. Indeed, according to declassified U.S. intelligence, the Haqqanis enjoyed close ties with the United States from the time of anti-Soviet jihad in the 1980s until September 11, 2001. (Sources: [Christian Science Monitor](#) [182], [Economist](#) [183])

Haqqani fighters first acquired battlefield experience during the Soviet occupation in the 1980s. Members later honed their combat capabilities through cooperation with al-Qaeda and the Taliban, especially after 2001. For a period, the Haqqani network was regarded by both the U.S. and Afghan governments as the most dangerous outfit operating in Afghanistan and Pakistan. By 2011, Haqqani operations accounted for 10 percent of attacks on coalition forces and about 15 percent of casualties. Since 2011, the group has sustained heavy casualties from the Pakistani military as well as from U.S. drone strikes, but it remains a formidable fighting force in the region. (Sources: [Foreign Policy](#) [184], [Heritage Foundation](#) [185])

In September 2011, senior U.S. military officer Mike Mullen told a Senate panel that the Haqqani network "acts as a veritable arms of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency (ISI)." According to Mullen, Haqqani militants had ISI support for an attack on the U.S. embassy and NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters in Kabul earlier that month. Pakistan, however, denied that it works with militant groups. (Source: [BBC News](#) [186])

Hezb-i-Islami

Hezb-i-Islami is reportedly the second largest insurgent faction in Afghanistan after the Taliban. It was created in the late 1970s by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar to fight against the Soviets. After the withdrawal of Soviet forces, Hekmatyar gained a reputation for firing hundreds of rockets at civilian targets during Afghanistan's civil war as Islamist groups fought for control of the country. Hekmatyar's attacks killed thousands of civilians, earning him the nickname "the Butcher of Kabul." (Sources: [CNN](#) [187], [New York Times](#) [188], [New York Times](#) [189], [Voice of America](#) [190])

Following the 2001 overthrow of the Taliban government, Hezb-i-Islami split into a political wing that worked with the government, and a militant wing led by Hekmatyar. The militant faction launched numerous attacks against coalition forces. For example, a May 2013 Hezb-i-Islami suicide bombing in Kabul killed 16 people, including six U.S. military advisers. A spokesman for the group said that Hezb-i-Islami decided to increase its attacks after it realized "that American invaders have the devil intention of staying in Afghanistan." Kabul University political scientist Tahir Hashimi told the *New York Times* that the group's main goal "was to make sure that whichever side wins the war, Hezb-i-Islami would be part of it." (Sources: [CNN](#) [187], [New York Times](#) [188], [New York Times](#) [189], [Voice of America](#) [190], [New York Times](#) [188])

Hezb-i-Islami signed a draft treaty with the Afghan government on September 22, 2016. The final agreement grants Hekmatyar amnesty and stipulates that the Afghan government will lobby international actors to lift sanctions on the group. (Sources: [CNN](#) [187], [Voice of America](#) [190])

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan

The Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) is a U.S.-designated Foreign Terrorist Organization based primarily in Uzbekistan and northern Afghanistan. The group's leadership largely operates in northern Afghanistan near Uzbekistan as well as along the Pakistan-Afghanistan border. According to the U.S. State Department, the IMU has ties to al-Qaeda, the Taliban, and the Pakistani Taliban. When the IMU emerged in 1998, it sought to overthrow Uzbekistan's communist President Islam Karimov. Following a violent crackdown by Karimov, the IMU expanded into Afghanistan in 1999 and reportedly shifted its focus from central Asia to an "international jihadism," according to a regional expert cited by the *Wall Street Journal*. The Taliban government granted the IMU safe haven in Afghanistan in exchange for foreign fighters, according to the Institute for the Study of War. The IMU fought alongside the Taliban after the 2001 U.S. invasion. Following heavy losses to coalition forces, the IMU reorganized in Pakistan. The IMU also clashed with local tribesmen, resulting in IMU fighters moving to Afghanistan. In 2009, NATO reported an increase in IMU foreign fighters in Afghanistan. IMU leaders "have integrated themselves into the Taliban's shadow government in Afghanistan's northern provinces," according to the U.S. State Department. The group has also carried out attacks on international forces in Afghanistan, such as an October 15, 2011, suicide attack on a U.S.-led Provincial Reconstruction Team, killing two Afghan civilians. In April 2015, the IMU released a video reportedly of the beheading of an Afghan soldier. The IMU threatened in the video to also behead members of Afghanistan's Shiite Hazara minority. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [191], [Institute for the Study of War](#) [192], [Wall Street Journal](#) [193])

In early August 2015, the IMU released a statement declaring that the Taliban cannot be trusted because they concealed the death of their leader, Mullah Mohammad Omar. The IMU also accused the Taliban of collaborating with Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence. A few days later, the group pledged allegiance to ISIS and declared itself part of its caliphate. According to IMU leader Usmon Ghazi, the IMU is no longer "just a movement, we are a state." He further said that IMU fighters should be considered ISIS fighters from Khorasan, referring to ISIS's branch in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In June 2016, an IMU breakaway faction—continuing to call itself the IMU—disavowed ISIS and reasserted its loyalty to the Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other jihadist groups in the region. According to the statement, the IMU fractured after the 2015 declaration of loyalty to ISIS. The pro-Taliban IMU faction pledged to "continue its Islamic activities with the grace of Allah against the enemies of religion and stand shoulder to shoulder with [believers] and Muslim brothers of Afghanistan." (Sources: [Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty](#) [163], [Long War Journal](#) [194])

Foreign Fighters

Since the 1980s, Afghanistan has been a destination for foreign fighters. Al-Qaeda and the Taliban have set up training camps for foreign fighters to fight either against the Soviet occupation or the U.S. coalition. These fighters reportedly sometimes go on to other conflicts. According to the Soufan Group, some 50 Afghans were fighting in Syria as of January 2015. (Sources: [The Soufan Group](#) [195], [Al Jazeera](#) [196], [Washington Post](#) [197])

Since the 2001 fall of the Taliban government, foreign fighters have continued to arrive in Afghanistan to fight alongside the Taliban and other militant groups. According to Afghan officials, foreign fighters are entering Afghanistan from Pakistan, Chechnya, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. Gul Muhamad Bedar, the deputy governor of Afghanistan's Badakhshan province, told Al Jazeera that 400 foreign fighters and their families have joined some 100 Afghan Taliban fighters, and they are "spreading rapidly." In April 2015, media reported that hundreds of Pakistani jihadists were fleeing into Afghanistan to escape a government crackdown. (Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [196], [Washington Post](#) [197])

Major Extremist and Terrorist Incidents

Extremist groups operating in Afghanistan employ tactics such as suicide bombings, kidnappings, beheadings, and targeted assassinations. These attacks target the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces as well as civilians, government infrastructure, and foreigners. Between January and March 2018, the United Nations recorded 2,258 civilian casualties in Afghanistan, a near record level, according to the organization. Casualties included 763 deaths and 1,495 injuries. The report by the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan showed suicide bombings and gun attacks had doubled over the same period in 2017. (Sources: [Washington Post](#) [198], [U.S. Department of State](#) [25])

In November 2018, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced that 28,529 Afghan soldiers had been killed since 2015,

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

representing an average of 25 per day. According to Ghani, 58 American were killed during the same period. In July 2018, the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) reported that 1,692 civilians were killed in Afghanistan between January 1 and June 30, 2018. UNAMA found that anti-government forces were responsible for 67 percent (1,127 deaths and 2,286 injuries) of the casualties. The organization attributed 42 percent of the casualties to the Taliban, 18 percent to ISIS, and 7 percent to unidentified attackers. According to UNAMA, suicide and other complex attacks were responsible for 1,413 casualties (28 percent), marking a 22 percent increase from the same period in 2017. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [199], [U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan](#) [200], [Al Jazeera](#) [201])

According to UNAMA's 2017 Annual Report on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict in Afghanistan, 3,438 Afghan civilians were killed and 7,015 were wounded in 2017. The 10,453 casualties represent a 9 percent decrease from 2016. The investigation attributed 42 percent of the casualties to the Taliban, 10 percent to ISIS, and 13 percent to other militants and anti-government forces. The remaining casualties were attributed to Afghan security forces (16 percent), international military forces (2 percent), other pro-government armed groups (1 percent), and crossfire between government and anti-government forces (11 percent). Suicide bombings and improvised explosive devices were the largest cause of casualties in 2017. (Sources: [U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan](#) [202], [U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan](#) [203])

Taliban Takeover

By 1994, the mujahideen had "carved [Kandahar, Afghanistan] and neighboring districts into criminal fiefs," according to journalist Steve Coll. The Taliban emerged as a singular, armed force in Kandahar, Afghanistan, with Mullah [Mohammed Omar](#) [87] as their leader. The group soon absorbed over 15,000 students and clerics from western Pakistan and began implementing sharia. By the end of 1994, the Taliban had complete control over Kandahar and Helmand province, the center of opium cultivation. (Sources: [New Yorker](#) [53], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [47])

In September 1996, Taliban fighters captured Kabul, driving out the controlling mujahideen forces. The Taliban implemented a hardline version of sharia based on Hanafi Islamic jurisprudence, implementing Islamic punishments such as public executions, amputations, and stoning. In August 1998, Taliban forces captured the city of Mazar in northwest Afghanistan, slaughtering 5,000 to 6,000 people. Human Rights Watch noted that during the seizure of the city, Taliban troops shot at "anything that [moves]," specially targeting members of the Persian-speaking Shiite Hazara ethnic community. Among the dead were 10 Iranian diplomats and a journalist. (Sources: [BBC News](#) [204], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [47], *The Looming Tower*, Lawrence Wright, p. 261, [Human Rights Watch](#) [205])

Taliban Insurgency

The U.S.-led coalition had deposed the Taliban by December 2001, and the terror group's leadership fled to neighboring Pakistan. Between late 2001 and early 2002, the coalition reportedly killed, wounded, or captured an estimated 30,000 Taliban fighters. The remaining fighters fled to Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) or reintegrated into Afghan society. Taliban fighters in the FATA eventually form *Tahrik-e Taliban*, the Pakistani Taliban, in 2007. (Sources: [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [47], [RAND Corporation](#) [206])

Taliban fighters in Afghanistan began to reorganize in May 2003. A renewed Taliban insurgency emerged in April 2006 with an uptick in suicide bombings and the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Afghan, Canadian, and British troops responded in May and June 2006 with Operation Mountain Thrust, which sought to degrade the Taliban in southern and eastern Afghanistan and resulted in the deaths of more than 1,000 Taliban fighters. According to then-U.N. Special Representative for Afghanistan Tom Koenigs in August 2006, the Taliban "will not be overcome by high casualty figures." The Taliban committed numerous suicide bombings and attacks on Afghan and U.S. forces. For example, on February 27, 2007, a Taliban suicide bomber blew up a checkpoint at Bagram Air Base during a visit by U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney, killing 20 and injuring 20 more. In February 2008, a Taliban suicide bomber killed more than 80 and injured 50 at a dogfight near Kandahar. At the time, the attack was the deadliest in Afghanistan since 2001. (Sources: [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [47], [RAND Corporation](#) [206], [CNN](#) [207], [New Yorker](#) [53], [USA Today](#) [208], [BBC News](#) [209], [Der Spiegel](#) [210], [Washington Post](#) [211])

In September 2011, Taliban suicide bombers attacked the home of former Afghanistan President Burhanuddin Rabbani,

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

killing him and four other members of Afghanistan's High Peace Council. On September 13, 2011, Taliban gunmen attacked the U.S. embassy and NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) headquarters in Kabul, killing three police officers and one civilian. Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid told CNN that the Taliban are targeting "the U.S. Embassy, governmental organizations and other foreign organizations." U.S. and Afghan officials later said the Haqqani network was most likely behind the attack with support from Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Agency. (Sources: [Telegraph](#) [212], [New York Times](#) [213], [CNN](#) [214], [New York Times](#) [215], [BBC News](#) [186])

Taliban forces began a bloody offensive in Afghanistan after the withdrawal of most NATO troops in December 2014. On September 28, 2015, the Taliban took control of the northern Afghan city of Kunduz. It was the first major city to fall into Taliban hands since the group was forcibly deposed in 2001. The Taliban have since fought Afghan and U.S. forces for control of Afghan territory. As of March 2017, Taliban forces reportedly controlled up to 43 percent of Afghanistan. The Taliban's influence has since continued to increase. An October 2018 report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) found that the Taliban controlled more territory in Afghanistan than it has at any point since 2001. SIGAR reported that the Afghan government controlled or influenced only 55.5 percent of Afghanistan, the lowest level reported since 2015, when the government controlled 72 percent. Further documenting the Taliban's increased influence, an October 2018 study by the Long War Journal estimated that 9 percent of Afghanistan's population lived in areas controlled by the Taliban, while 41 percent lived in areas contested by the Taliban. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [69], [New York Times](#) [216], [BBC News](#) [64], [Al Jazeera](#) [217], [Long War Journal](#) [218], [CNN](#) [219], [SIGAR](#) [220])

The Taliban have also specifically targeted Afghan media. An October 2015 statement said the group would begin targeting Afghanistan's two largest television networks in response to media reports on violent Taliban activities, which the Taliban called a "clear, shameless example of propaganda by these satanic networks." According to the statement, the Taliban would treat the networks "as military objectives because of their disrespectful and hostile actions toward the Afghan mujahid nation." In January 2016, a Taliban suicide bomber drove into a minibus carrying employees of Tolo TV, Afghanistan's largest television network. The attack during rush hour killed seven and wounded at least 25. A Taliban spokesman promised more attacks unless Tolo TV apologized for its "malicious acts" to the Taliban, to the Afghan people, "and especially to the residents of Kunduz." (Source: [New York Times](#) [216])

Both ISIS and the Taliban have sought to disrupt Afghanistan's fledgling democracy. In 2018, militants launched several attacks on campaign rallies and voter registration drives ahead of the country's parliamentary elections that October. The Taliban have denounced the elections as an "American-led process" that legitimizes foreign occupation. The Taliban specifically warned people to stay away from schools used as voting centers. Security forces recorded 120 hand grenade or improvised explosives attacks in the days prior to the October 20, 2018, parliamentary elections. Nonetheless, more than 4 million Afghans voted in the elections. The U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan recorded at least 56 people killed and 370 wounded during the October voting period. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [221], [Wall Street Journal](#) [222], [New York Times](#) [223], [Australian Broadcasting Corporation](#) [224], [CNN](#) [225], [UNAMA](#) [226])

Capture of Bowe Bergdahl

On June 30, 2009, the Taliban took U.S. soldier Private Bowe Bergdahl hostage. Days after his capture, a senior U.S. military official said that Bergdahl was captured by low-level insurgents and then purportedly "sold" to members of the Taliban-aligned Haqqani network. On July 18, 2009, the Taliban released a 28-minute video on the Internet in which Bergdahl said he was scared and wished to return home. The Taliban alleged that Bergdahl was drunk and off base at the time of his capture, but U.S. officials refuted that claim, stating, "The Taliban are known for lying and what they are claiming (is) not true." Bergdahl is promoted to sergeant while held in captivity. (Sources: [CNN](#) [227], [CNN](#) [228], [Guardian](#) [229])

On May 31, 2014, the United States exchanged Bergdahl for five Taliban militants held at Guantanamo Bay. The United States transferred the detainees to Qatar, where they would receive a one-year travel ban. On October 16, 2017, Bergdahl pled guilty to desertion and misbehavior in front of the enemy. On November 4, 2017, Bergdahl was dishonorably discharged but avoided a prison sentence. A military court reduced his rank to private and fined him \$1,000. (Sources: [Hill](#) [230], [New York Times](#) [231], [Fox News](#) [232], [CNN](#) [233], [CNN](#) [234])

- **June 23, 2020:**The Taliban launch overnight raids in Ghazni province. The raids kill at least 14 security personnel and wound at least eight others. Source: [Gandhara](#) [5]

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- **June 17, 2020:**The Taliban attacks two military bases in Aqcha District. The attack kills 16, wounds five others, and results in the kidnapping of one other. In Kunduz City, a Taliban Red Unit attacks a security outpost. The attack kills seven and wounds three others. In Zurmat District, a mother and her two children are killed when their vehicle collides with a roadside bomb planted by the Taliban. Source: [New York Times](#) [235]
- **June 15, 2020:**The Taliban ambush four villages—Akhundzada, Norkhil, Payendakhil and Jangali—in Tagab District. The attacks kill 14 and wound 22 others. In Deh Yak District, the Taliban capture a security outpost and detonate a roadside bomb. The ambush and explosion kills 15 security forces and wounds nine others. Source: [New York Times](#) [235]
- **June 12, 2020:**The Taliban attack a village in Pasaban District. The attack kills seven security officials and wounds one other. In Khosan District, Taliban insurgents attack a security outpost, killing five and wounding six others. In Kabul, the Taliban detonate explosives hidden in a mosque, killing the imam and three others. Source: [New York Times](#) [235]
- **June 9, 2020:**Taliban militants detonate a bomb that strikes a vehicle carrying a district chief and four pro-government militiamen in Mazar-I-Sharif, Northern Afghanistan. The attack kills five. Source: [Xinhua](#) [236]
- **June 2, 2020:**A bomb detonates at a popular mosque in Kabul's Green Zone. The attack kills two and wounds two others. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [237]
- **June 1, 2020:**A roadside bomb detonates in northern Afghanistan. The attack kills seven. Afghan authorities suspect the Taliban was behind the attack. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [237]
- **May 31, 2020:**A roadside bomb detonates in Kabul. The bomb targeted a bus carrying employees of Khrushid TV. The attack kills two and wounds four. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack, claiming Khurshid TV is a station "loyal to the Afghan apostate government." Source: [Stars and Stripes](#) [238]
- **May 28, 2020:**The Taliban attacks a security outpost in Siah Gird District, Parwan Province. The attack kills seven, wounds one, and results in the kidnapping of two others. Source: [New York Times](#) [239]
- **May 26, 2020:**The Taliban attacks a security convoy in Shanky District, Zabol Province. The attack kills three and wounds one other. Source: [New York Times](#) [239]
- **May 22, 2020:**The Taliban attacks a security outpost in Faiz Abad. The attack kills five and wounds seven others. Source: [New York Times](#) [239]
- **May 21, 2020:**The Taliban ambush a bus in Shajoe, Zabol province. The attack kills three passengers. In Shah-Tigh, Goh province, Taliban militants attack a security outpost. The ambush kills one officer and wounds another. Source: [New York Times](#) [239]
- **May 20, 2020:**Taliban militants attack a security outpost in the Lala Gozar village of Khowaja Bahawuddin District. The attack kills nine pro-government militia members and wounds six others. Source: [New York Times](#) [239]
- **May 19, 2020:**Gunmen open fire outside of a mosque in Kalezay village, Charikar. The attack kills 12 people and wounds six others. Although the government claims the Taliban is responsible for the attack, the insurgents allege the attack was actually the government's doing. Source: [New York Times](#) [239]
- **May 18, 2020:**An explosives-filled Humvee detonates at an Afghan intelligence agency installation in Ghazni province, killing at least seven people and wounded 40. The Taliban claim responsibility. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [240]
- **May 14, 2020:**An explosives-filled truck detonates near a military court in the eastern city of Gardez, killing at least five and wounding at least 14. The Taliban claim responsibility, calling the attack retaliation for Afghan President Ashraf Ghani blaming the group for a May 12 attack on a maternity hospital in Kabul that killed at least 24. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [241], [Al Jazeera](#) [242]
- **May 12, 2020:**Three militants wearing police uniforms attack Dasht-e-Barchi Hospital in Kabul and besiege the maternity hospital for five hours until they are killed by security forces. At least 80 women and infants are evacuated from the hospital. At least 24 people, including two newborn babies, are killed. The Taliban deny responsibility and condemn the attack. U.S. officials blame ISIS. Separately, a suicide bomber kills 32 people and wounds more than 60 at the funeral of local pro-government militia commander and former warlord in Nangarhar province's Khewa district. A remotely detonated bomb in a market in Khost kills a child and wounds 10 people. ISIS claims responsibility for both attacks. Sources: [Reuters](#) [243], [BBC News](#) [244], [Al Jazeera](#) [171], [Al Jazeera](#) [242], [Wall Street Journal](#) [245], [Al Jazeera](#) [171]
- **May 11, 2020:**Four bombs in northern Kabul wound four. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [171], [Associated Press](#) [172]
- **May 10, 2020:**Militants attack an Afghan army outpost in Laghman province, killing six soldiers and wounding five. In all, at least 27 soldiers are killed in attacks on military outposts in eastern Afghanistan. The Taliban claim responsibility. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [245], [Associated Press](#) [172]
- **May 9, 2020:**On May 9, a gunman kills three returning home from evening prayers in Patakia province. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Associated Press](#) [172]
- **May 7, 2020:**A rocket strikes a power station in Kabul and two roadside bombs detonate.

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

There are no reported casualties from either attack. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Associated Press](#) [172]

- **May 3, 2020:** Suspected Taliban militants throw a hand grenade into a mosque in the Khayerkot district of the southeastern Paktika province, wounding at least 20. Separately, a truck bomb at a military center in Helmand province kills at least five and wounds seven. The following day, the Taliban claim responsibility for the Helmand attack and claim the bombing killed and wounded dozens. Sources: [Reuters](#) [246], [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#) [247]
- **April 21, 2020:** Suspected Taliban militants attack a security checkpoint at the Mes Aynak Copper Mine in eastern Logar province, killing at least eight members of the Afghan security forces. Militants also attack multiple checkpoints in Sar-e-Pul province, killing 11 and wounding 19. The Taliban also capture one of the checkpoints. A roadside bomb kills at least four in Ghazni province. The Afghan government blames the Taliban for all the attacks, though the group does not immediately claim responsibility. Source: [France 24](#) [248]
- **April 19, 2020:** Suspected Taliban militants ambush Khwaja Ghor district, opening fire on security personnel. At least 19 security personnel are killed. In northern Balkh province, the Taliban ambush security forces, killing seven and injuring one child. In western Badghis province, the Taliban attack an army checkpoint, killing three soldiers and wounding 10. Sources: [The Hindu](#) [249], [Associated Press](#) [250]
- **April 16, 2020:** The Taliban ambushes security outposts in Charkh District, Logar Province. The attack kills 13 soldiers and injures one other. That same day, the Taliban shoot and kill two police officers, one in Pul-e-Malan and the other in Tagob-Esmael. Source: [New York Times](#) [251]
- **April 15, 2020:** In an insider job, a cook poisons five police officers at a security outpost in Imam Saheb. He seizes weapons, equipment and a military vehicle before fleeing to join the Taliban. Source: [New York Times](#) [251]
- **April 12, 2020:** The Taliban ambush a vehicle belonging to an officer of the National Directorate of Security in Gardez City. The attack kills three, including the officer. Source: [New York Times](#) [251]
- **April 7, 2020 - April 8, 2020:** On April 7, the Taliban ambushes security forces in Sholgara, northern Balkh province. The attackers took seven civilians hostage during the ambush, killing them the next day. Source: [Los Angeles Times](#) [252]
- **April 7, 2020 - April 8, 2020:** Taliban officials walk out of peace talks with the Afghan government. According to Suhail Shaheen, the spokesman for the Taliban's Qatar office, the first face-to-face discussions with the government were "fruitless" as the talks broke down over a prisoner swap that was previously agreed upon between the U.S. and the Taliban in February 2020. The Taliban allegedly wanted the release of 15 commanders involved in what the Afghan government considered big attacks. However, Kabul did not agree to the conditions, and instead sought to release 400 low-threat Taliban prisoners in exchange for a reduction in violence from the jihadist camp. On April 8, Javid Faisal, spokesman for Afghanistan's Office of the National Security Council, announced that the Afghan government will release 100 Taliban prisoners in an effort to keep the peace talks moving forward. Sources: [BBC News](#) [253], [Anadolu Agency](#) [254], [Al Jazeera](#) [255]
- **April 7, 2020:** Taliban rebels storm the headquarters of Baharak district. However, Afghan security forces are able to repel the attack, killing three militants, including Taliban commander Qari Ansarullah Gajar. Gajar's death will likely affect Taliban operations in Takhar and surrounding areas. Sources: [Xinhua](#) [256], [Telangana Today](#) [257]
- **April 4, 2020:** Afghan forces arrest Abdullah Orokzai, a.k.a. Aslam Farooqi, the leader of ISIS-K. Nineteen other militants are arrested, including two high-ranking members. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [258]
- **April 2, 2020:** The Taliban attack security outposts in Karistan, Moqor district. Six security forces are killed. Source: [New York Times](#) [251]
- **March 29, 2020 - March 30, 2020:** Militants kill at least 28 members of the Afghan security forces in multiple attacks. On March 29, an attack on a military checkpoint in the Arghandab district in the southern Zabul province kills at least six. Separately, militants attack a checkpoint in the Baghlan province, killing at least five and wounding six others. Militants also storm a police compound in the Takhar province, killing at least 13. On March 30, a sticky bomb attached to a vehicle in Kabul kills at least four. Authorities blame the Taliban for the attacks, but the group does not immediately claim responsibility. As a result of the attacks, the Afghan government cancels the release of 100 Taliban prisoners that had been scheduled for March 31 as part of peace negotiations with the Taliban. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [104], [Agence France-Presse](#) [105], [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#) [106], [Reuters](#) [107]
- **March 25, 2020:** Gunmen throw grenades and shoot indiscriminately during an attack on a Sikh temple in Kabul, killing at least 25 and wounding at least eight. The gunmen take up to 200 hostages during a six-hour standoff with security forces, who eventually kill all three attackers. ISIS claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: [Reuters](#) [170], [New York Times](#) [173], [Guardian](#) [174]
- **March 9, 2020:** ISIS launches a rocket attack during president elect Ashraf Ghani's Inauguration ceremony. The assailants launched five missiles to target the presidential palace. It is unclear if there were any casualties, despite claims from ISIS's official news agency claiming an "injury was delivered." Source: [Newsweek](#) [175]
- **March 6, 2020:** Two gunmen open fire on a crowded event in Kabul. The attack kills 32 and injures at least 58 others. The event commemorated the life of an ethnic Hazara leader who was

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

killed by Taliban militants in 1995. ISIS-K, ISIS's branch in Afghanistan, claimed responsibility for the attack. The Hazara are a minority Shiite Muslim group who are frequently targeted by both ISIS and the Taliban. Source: [New York Times](#) [176]

- **March 5, 2020:**The Taliban attacks a security outpost in Sharesafa. The attack kills six and wounds others. Also that day, the Taliban ambush the Makhmal Kocha area of Imam Sahib District. The attack kills six. Source: [New York Times](#) [259]
- **March 4, 2020:**The Taliban attack a military base in Kunduz city. The attack kills 15 soldiers. That same day, they attack a security outpost in the Niche area of Tarin Kot. The attack kills nine. Source: [New York Times](#) [259]
- **March 2, 2020:**The Taliban carry out eight different attacks in Faryab, Kandahar, Wardak, Helmand, Herat, Paktia, and Badghis Provinces. In each attack, the assailants ambush a security outpost. In total, the attacks kill nine. Source: [New York Times](#) [259]
- **February 24, 2020:**The Taliban attacks a pro-government checkpoint in Balkh's Chahar Kint district. The attack killed at least six and wounds another five. Source: [Radio Free Europe](#) [260]
- **February 20, 2020:**The Taliban attacks a local outpost in Khwaja Ghar District. The attack kills four police officers. Source: [New York Times](#) [261]
- **February 17, 2020:**The Taliban ambush a security outpost in Kunduz. The attack kills 15 soldiers and wounds three others. Also in Kunduz, the Taliban launch a mortar attack. The attack kills one and wounds eight others. Also that day, the Taliban shoot and kill one pro-government militia member in Faryab province and two members of the security forces in Jowzjan province. Source: [New York Times](#) [261]
- **February 16, 2020:**The Taliban ambush a security checkpoint in Kunduz. According to Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid, the attack kills 19 people. However, the Afghan defense ministry puts the death toll at five. Source: [Reuters](#) [262]
- **February 14, 2020:**The U.S. government and the Taliban meet in Munich, Germany, where they agree on the first step of a peace deal that could end the 18-year long Afghan war. U.S. and Taliban officials agree to a reduction in violence over a seven-day period, with the U.S. military monitoring the progress of the violence reduction. If the reduction in violence is successful, the negotiations will enter into the next stage which will include talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government and a reduction in the 13,000 U.S. troops that are currently stationed in the country. However, the peace process faces a new obstacle in the face of Ashraf Ghani's second term win as the president of Afghanistan. The Taliban have been vocal in their rejection of Ghani's win and have consistently announced their rejection of any Afghan government supported by the U.S. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [263], [Newsweek](#) [264], [Wall Street Journal](#) [265], [Washington Post](#) [266]
- **February 11, 2020:**A suicide attacker detonates an explosive in Kabul. The attack kills six and wounds 13 others. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [New York Times](#) [261]
- **February 8, 2020:**In an insider attack, an assailant dressed in an Afghan army uniform opens fire in Nangarhar province. The attack kills two U.S. soldiers, Sgt. Javier Jaguar Gutierrez and Sgt. Antonio Rey Rodriguez, and wounds six others. No group claims responsibility for the attack, but U.S. and Afghan forces have been fighting both Taliban and ISIS fighters in the area. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [267], [Associated Press](#) [268]
- **February 3, 2020:**The Taliban ambushes a pro-government militia commander in Sar-i-Pul City. The attack kills six and wounds three others. Source: [New York Times](#) [261]
- **February 2, 2020:**The Taliban attacks a security outpost in Ali Abad District. The attack kills five and wounds three others. Security forces eventually repel the insurgents. Source: [New York Times](#) [261]
- **January 29, 2020:**The Taliban ambush security checkpoints in Dasht-e Archi district, northern Kunduz province. At least 13 Afghan security forces are killed and at least 12 others are injured in the overnight assault. Government forces eventually repel the insurgents. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [269]
- **January 27, 2020:**A U.S. Air Force jet crashes in Ghazni province, eastern Afghanistan. Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, later releases a statement claiming "an aircraft of American occupiers has crashed in Ghazni province," and that "lots" of U.S. service members were killed. However, the next day, the U.S. military confirmed that two casualties were recovered from the wreckage. The circumstances around the crash are still unclear as some versions of Mujahid's statement claimed the plane crashed while another stated that the jihadist group brought down the aircraft. The crash site is in territory controlled by the Taliban. Colonel Sonny Leggett, a spokesman for U.S. forces in Afghanistan, later confirms that "while the cause of [the] crash is under investigation, there are no indications the crash was caused by enemy fire." Although the Taliban claims to have shot down the aircraft, the Taliban often takes credit for attacks that will legitimize their role as a viable threat to military forces. Adding to the confusion around the crash, Iranian news and social media reports have framed the crash as retaliation for the death of Major General Qasem Soleimani, the former leader of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-Quds Force, who was killed in an American drone strike weeks earlier. Iranian reports also went so far as to falsely identify a C.I.A. official who had been killed in the crash. The U.S. military was quick to negate these claims. The U.S. Air Force uses the jet that crashed as a flying command and communications hub, according to CBS News. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [270], [The Hill](#) [271], [CBS News](#) [272], [Business Insider](#) [273], [Washington Post](#) [274], [Reuters](#) [275], [New York Times](#) [276]

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- **January 23, 2020:**The Taliban attack a security outpost in Baghlan-e-Markazi District. The attack kills five security forces and wounds seven others. Source: [New York Times](#) [277]
- **January 16, 2020:**A Taliban red unit attacks a security outpost in Nawabad-e-Andarabiha village of Khan Abad District. The attack kills 11 and wounds two others. Police officers eventually repel the insurgents. Source: [New York Times](#) [277]
- **January 11, 2020:**A vehicle carrying U.S. troops hits a roadside bomb in southern Kandahar. The attack kills two U.S. service members—Staff Sergeant Ian McLaughlin and Private First Class Miguel Villalon—and injures two others. The Taliban claims responsibility for the attack. Sources: [CBS News](#) [278], [CBS News](#) [279]
- **January 9, 2020:**Resolute Support, NATO’s mission in Afghanistan, launches a drone attack in Herat Province. The attack kills Mullah Nangyalay, a top Taliban splinter-group commander. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [280]
- **January 1, 2020:**The Taliban attacks security outposts in Dash-e-Arch District, Kunduz Province. The attack kills 14 and injures two others. Also on the 1st, the Taliban attack Belcheragh District center in Faryab, Province. The attack kills five security forces and wounds two others. Also in Balk province on the same day, the Taliban attack a security outpost on the Balk-Jowzjan highway. The attack kills nine officers. Source: [New York Times](#) [277]
- **December 30, 2019:**Three separate attacks occur in Jowzjan, Faryab and Helmand Provinces. In the first, Taliban militants violently clash with Afghan forces in the Abad outpost in Faizabad District. The attack kills 14 security forces. The second attack occurs when a bomb detonates in Khwaja Sabz Posh District. The explosion kills two, with no group claiming responsibility for the bomb. In the third attack, the Taliban attacks a government vehicle in the Qala-e-Rig village of Zendah Jan District. The attack kills one and wounds two others. Source: [New York Times](#) [277]
- **December 29, 2019:**A Taliban red unit attacks a security outpost in Khowaja Bahauddin District. The attack kills 17 militia members and wounds four others. Also on the 29th, the Taliban attacks a military base in the Balghali area of Sar-i-Pul Province. A roadside bomb hits a Humvee and kills two soldiers and wounds three others. Source: [New York Times](#) [277]
- **December 28, 2019:**The Taliban detonate explosives under an army checkpoint before ambushing soldiers in Sangin, Helmand Province. The attack kills sixteen and injures at least six others. Sources: [New York Times](#) [277], [Voice of America](#) [281]
- **December 26, 2019:**An explosives-filled Humvee detonates at a military base in Pul-e-Bangala area of Balk District. The attack kills 20 security forces and wounds six others. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Also on the 26th in Uruzgan Province, an explosives-laden motorcycle detonates near a vehicle belonging to the health director of Uruzgan. The attack kills three and injures three others. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [New York Times](#) [282]
- **December 25, 2019:**Taliban militants intercept a convoy of vehicles on a highway in Farah Province. The insurgents kidnap 27 peace activists from the organization People’s Peace Movement. The activists planned to travel throughout Farah to call for peace and ceasefire among Afghanistan’s rival sides. Source: [Reuters](#) [283]
- **December 24, 2019:**Taliban insurgents enter a military base in Dawlat Abad District, Balk Province. In the suspected insider attack, the insurgents then burn an army container, killing 16 soldiers. They also hold six soldiers hostage. Sources: [New York Times](#) [282], [Reuters](#) [284]
- **December 23, 2019:**Taliban insurgents target U.S. and Afghan soldiers in northern Kunduz province with an improvised explosive device. The attack kills one U.S. service member, Sgt. First Class Michael J. Goble, and wounds two others. Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid announces that the Taliban was responsible for the attack via Whatsapp, while also attaching photos of an ID belonging to the U.S. Army sergeant and blood-soaked clothing. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [285], [New York Times](#) [286]
- **December 13, 2019:**A roadside bomb detonates in Jaghatu District. The explosion kills ten and injures six others. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [New York Times](#) [282]
- **December 11, 2019:**Two suicide bombers and five gunmen target an under-construction medical facility near Bagram Air Base, an American base north of Kabul. The explosion kills two and wounds more than 70. The Taliban claim responsibility for the attack. Source: [CBS News](#) [287]
- **December 10, 2019:**The Taliban ambushes the funeral of an Afghan government employee in Jawzjan province. The militants abduct as many as 45 elderly family members of the deceased. The Taliban have consistently warned people not to attend the funerals of anyone working with the Kabul government. Source: [Associated Press](#) [288]
- **December 9, 2019:**A suicide car bomb detonates in southern Helmand province. The attack kills five soldiers and wounds at least four others. The attacker was shot and killed before reaching his intended target—a checkpoint for an Afghan national army compound—at which point the vehicle exploded. The Taliban immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Source: [Associated Press](#) [288]
- **December 7, 2019:**Qatar hosts a new round of peace talks between the United States and the Taliban. These negotiations between the U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and Afghanistan’s Taliban are the first talks

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

between the two camps since U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the dialogue in September. Among the participants of the current talks is Anas Haqqani, one of three senior Taliban figures freed last month in exchange for kidnapped American University of Afghanistan professors—American Kevin King and Australian Timothy Weeks. The talks will initially focus on getting a Taliban promise to reduce violence, with a permanent cease-fire being the eventual goal. Source: [Washington Post](#) [289]

- **December 1, 2019:**The Taliban attacks security outposts on the highway connecting Kunduz to Takhar Province. The attack kills 11 soldiers and leads to the capture of five others. Source: [New York Times](#) [282]
- **November 27, 2019:**A car strikes a roadside bomb, in Imam Sahib District. At least 13 people are killed. It is suspected that the Taliban planted the bomb. Source: [New York Times](#) [290]
- **November 20, 2019:**A Taliban Red Unit attacks a military base in the village of Arbab Khalili in Imam Sahib District. The attack kills 13 soldiers and wounding five others. Also on the 20th, a member of the Taliban infiltrates the border patrol in Atishan, Adraskan District, and shoots and kills five border soldiers. Source: [New York Times](#) [290]
- **November 13, 2019:**A car bomb detonates in Kabul. At least 12 civilians are killed and another 20 are wounded. The GardaWorld security company—based in Montreal, Canada—was the apparent target. It is suspected that the Taliban or ISIS planted the bomb. Sources: [New York Times](#) [291], [Al Jazeera](#) [292]
- **November 12, 2019 - November 19, 2019:**On November 12, 2019, President Ashraf Ghani announces that Afghanistan will release two senior Taliban commanders, Haji Mali Khan and Abdul Rashid, and Anas Haqqani, a leader of the Haqqani militant group, in exchange for an American and an Australian professor who were kidnapped in 2016. The government’s decision is in the hope of securing direct talks with the Taliban. On November 19, 2019, the Taliban releases the two hostages. The Taliban describes the prisoner exchange, which they say included 10 captured Afghan soldiers, as a “goodwill and confidence-building measure that can aid the peace process.” Sources: [Reuters](#) [293], [CNN](#) [294], [BBC News](#) [295], [Wall Street Journal](#) [296]
- **November 4, 2019:**The Taliban target security forces with a roadside bomb in the Akakhil village of Dand-e-Shahabuddin area in Pul-i-Kumri City, the provincial capital. The bomb hits a vehicle and kills 8 while wounding six others. Source: [New York Times](#) [291]
- **November 1, 2019:**The Taliban attack the Charsiha security outpost in Khawaja Bahauddin District. The attack kills nine and wounds three. Source: [New York Times](#) [291]
- **October 29, 2019:**A Taliban Red Unit attacks the Bala Hisar military base in Aqcha District, where fighting continues for three hours. The attack kills 24 security forces and wounds another 10. Five soldiers were taken prisoner. The Taliban seized equipment, four Humvees and 29 weapons before reinforcements arrived and recaptured the base. Source: [New York Times](#) [297]
- **October 25, 2019:**A Taliban Red Unit attacks two security outposts in the Qorogh and Khwaja Bandkasha villages of Ishkamish District. The ambushes kill 10 security forces, including five police special forces and five pro-government militia members. Source: [New York Times](#) [297]
- **October 22, 2019:**The Taliban storm a checkpoint in Ali Abad, killing at least 15 policemen and wounding another two. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [298]
- **October 18, 2019:**Explosives detonate in a mosque in Deh Bala. At least 60 people are killed and another 50 are wounded. It is expected that ISIS is responsible for the attack given a history of insurgent presence in the area. Source: [New York Times](#) [299]
- **October 11, 2019:**A series of explosions occur in eastern Afghanistan, ultimately wounding five people. The first explosion targets the house of Suhrab Qaderi, the head of the Nangarhar provincial council. A bodyguard was wounded. A second explosion nearby, minutes later, wounds one civilian. Several hours later, a bomb detonates outside a mosque in Jalalabad, wounding three civilians. ISIS claims responsibility for the first two attacks. No group claims responsibility for the attack on the mosque. Source: [Washington Post](#) [300]
- **October 9, 2019:**The Afghan National Directorate of Security, Afghanistan’s intelligence service, claims that Asim Omar—the leader of AQIS—was among those killed during a joint U.S.-Afghan operation on September 23, 2019 in Helmand province that killed at least 40 people. Source: [Reuters](#) [301]
- **October 7, 2019:**A bomb placed in a rickshaw explodes and hits a shuttle of newly recruited soldiers. The attack kills 10 people and wounds another 27. No group claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [New York Times](#) [302]
- **October 5, 2019:**In an effort to revive U.S.-Taliban peace negotiations, Taliban officials meet with U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in Pakistan to discuss confidence-building measures that could include a possible prisoner swap or a reduction in violence. The discussions between the two sides were informal, the Taliban members said, and did not indicate the beginning of a new round of peace discussions, only that one may take place in the future. Source: [New York Times](#) [303]
- **October 4, 2019:**A Taliban Red Unit attacks a security outpost in Telawka. The attack kills 10 soldiers. Source: [New York Times](#) [302]
- **September 28, 2019:**In order to curb voter participation in the presidential election, the Taliban carries out over 68

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

attacks on polling stations across the country.

At least 40 people are killed and over 190 are wounded in the attacks. Source: [New York Times](#) [304]

- **September 26, 2019:**The Taliban attacks a security outpost in Pashton Kot District. The attack kills 13 public protection officers and wounds six others. That same day, the Taliban attacks a security outpost in Darzab District killing four officers and wounding five others. Also on the 26th, the Taliban attacks a security outpost in Dara-e-Suf Payan District. The ambush kills five officers and wounds five others. Source: [New York Times](#) [305]
- **September 25, 2019:**The Taliban attacks outposts in Qaramqul District. The attack kills 13 police officers and pro-government militia members. Source: [New York Times](#) [305]
- **September 24, 2019:**Unconfirmed rebels detonate a bomb next to Ashraf Ghani's campaign office in Kandahar city. The explosion kills four civilians. Also that day, the Taliban attack a local police outpost in Ali Abad District. The attack kills 10 police officers. Source: [New York Times](#) [305]
- **September 23, 2019:**U.S. special operations forces backing Afghan commandos raid a building filled with dozens of al-Qaeda fighters in southern Afghanistan. The raid kills over 20 militants and wounds another 14. Source: [Fox News](#) [306]
- **September 19, 2019:**An airstrike targets an ISIS tent in Khogyani District. The strike kills at least 31 and injures another 30. The victims were civilians and were not affiliated with ISIS. Also on the 19th, a Taliban truck bomb explodes near a hospital in Qalat, Zabul Province. The attack kills at least 20 people and injures another 95. Source: [New York Times](#) [307]
- **September 17, 2019:**A suicide bomber on a motorcycle detonates outside a Presidential rally in Charikar. At least 26 people are killed and another 30 are injured. Later that day, another suicide bomber detonates outside the Ministry of Defense in Kabul. The attack kills 22 and wounds another 38. The Taliban claims responsibility for both attacks. Sources: [Washington Post](#) [308], [New York Times](#) [307]
- **September 5, 2019:**A car bomb explodes in Kabul. At least 10 people are killed and another 42 are injured. The Taliban claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [New York Times](#) [307]
- **September 3, 2019:**Taliban militants storm Afghan forces in Zarih District. At least 35 soldiers are killed, but the Taliban does not capture the district. Source: [New York Times](#) [307]
- **September 2, 2019:**A truck bomb explodes near Green Village, a compound that houses foreign contractors and nongovernment organizations. Exact figures are unreported, but it is suspected that at least 30 people are killed and more than 100 are wounded. The Taliban claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [New York Times](#) [307]
- **August 31, 2019:**The Taliban attacks Kunduz City from multiple directions. The attack kills 10 security officials. Following the ambush, a suicide bomber detonates killed 10 more security forces and five civilians. Source: [New York Times](#) [307]
- **August 28, 2019:**The Taliban attacks a village in Koshk-e-Robatsangi. At least 14 people are killed and nine others are wounded. Source: [New York Times](#) [309]
- **August 20, 2019:**Security forces ambush Taliban militants in Darqad district. The ambush kills four militants, including Mohammad Omar, a local Taliban leader. Source: [Xinhua](#) [310]
- **August 19, 2019:**A series of bombings strike restaurants and public squares in Jalalabad on Afghanistan's 100th Independence Day. At least 66 people are wounded. No group claims responsibility for the 10 bombs, but both ISIS and the Taliban operate in the area. Source: [Reuters](#) [311]
- **August 17, 2019:**A suicide bomber infiltrates a wedding in Kabul and detonates his bomb-laden vest. The attack kills 63 and injures 182. ISIS's Khorasan Province claims responsibility for the bombing. The attack was meant to target the Shiite community, but the fatalities included members of both Sunni and Shiite sects. Source: [Associated Press](#) [312]
- **August 16, 2019:**A bomb detonates at a mosque in southwestern Pakistan, killing Hafiz Ahmadullah, the brother of Afghan Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhunzada. At least four others were killed in the attack. The mosque served as a headquarters for a council of Taliban leaders to meet and discuss issues. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [313]
- **August 16, 2019:**NATO-led aircrafts strike Ghazni province, killing six Taliban militants and injuring four others. Source: [Xinhua](#) [314]
- **August 14, 2019:**Afghan security forces ambush a group of Taliban fighters in Kunduz province. The ambush kills five militants and injures five others. The militants were trying to establish a checkpoint on a road leading to the border town of Shir Kham Port. Source: [Xinhua](#) [315]
- **August 11, 2019:**Taliban militants surrender to security forces in northern Badakhshan. Among the 15 who surrendered was Taliban commander Mullah Asho, the second in command in Badakhshan province. The same day, special forces of the National Directorate of Security raid the Kolalgo area of Zurmat District. The operation kills at least 11 civilians. Sources: [Xinhua](#) [316], [New York Times](#) [317]
- **August 10, 2019:**Taliban forces attack a military convoy on the highway connecting Kabul and Kandahar. During the battle, the military Humvee hits a roadside bomb, killing four soldiers in the process. Also that day, the

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- Taliban attacks Qarqin district center where fighting ensues for five hours. One soldier and one pro-government militia member are killed in the clash, and two other members are wounded. Source: [New York Times](#) [317]
- **August 9, 2019:**The Afghan National Police launch an operation in eastern Logar province, arresting two Taliban suspects involved in terror attacks.
The suspects were using walkie-talkie radio signals to report the location and commute of government officials along the Kabul-Logar highway. Source: [Xinhua](#) [318]
 - **August 7, 2019:**A suicide car bomb explodes outside of a police station in Kabul.
The attack kills 18 and injures at least 145. The Taliban claims responsibility for the attack. The blast comes a day after the insurgents call for a boycott of the presidential election on September 28. Separately, security forces conduct raids on two Islamic State hideouts in Kabul. The raids kill five, including two militants and three members of the security forces. Sources: [Radio Free Europe](#) [319], [Reuters](#) [320], [New York Times](#) [321]
 - **August 5, 2019:**A policeman in Kandahar opens fire on his colleagues.
The attacker fled the scene after killing seven officers. Taliban spokesperson Qari Yusouf Ahmadi claims the attacker is a member of the Taliban. Separately, the Afghan special forces conduct airstrikes in Uruzgan, Ghazni, Paktika and Faryab provinces. At least 16 militants are killed within 24 hours. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [322], [Xinhua](#) [323]
 - **August 3, 2019:**An airstrike kills three Taliban leaders, including Mullah Abdul Bari, the shadow governor, in Farah province.
It is uncertain whether the strike was conducted by the Afghan Air Force or NATO-led coalition forces. Source: [Xinhua](#) [324]
 - **August 1, 2019:**ISIS releases a video of its members publicly beheading a Taliban member.
According to the Middle East Media Research Institute, “ISIS considers Taliban members to be apostates who can thus be lawfully killed.” Source: [Washington Times](#) [169]
 - **July 31, 2019:**A roadside bomb tears through a bus in western Afghanistan.
At least 34 people are killed and 15 are injured. It is suspected that the Taliban are behind the attack. Source: [Washington Post](#) [325]
 - **July 29, 2019:**In an insider attack, an Afghan soldier opens fire on American troops in Kandahar.
Two U.S. soldiers are killed, and the perpetrator, reportedly a member of the Taliban, is wounded. Source: [BBC News](#) [326]
 - **July 28, 2019:**An unidentified number of gunmen and three suicide bombers storm the office of Amrullah Saleh, President Ashraf Ghani’s running mate.
At least 20 people, including three assailants, are killed and 50 people are injured, including Saleh. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack. Source: [Radio Free Europe](#) [327]
 - **July 27, 2019:**A suicide bomber attacked the Ab Band police headquarters in southeastern Ghazni Province.
There were three casualties and 12 injuries. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the bombing. Sources: [Radio Free Europe](#) [328], [Associated Press](#) [329]
 - **July 25, 2019:**The Taliban detonate a car bomb in Kabul, killing 11 civilians.
On the same day, A Taliban Red Unit attacks two security bases in Ishkamish District. Thirty-seven soldiers and police officers are killed, and six officers are wounded. Afghan reinforcements later recapture both bases. Source: [New York Times](#) [330]
 - **July 18, 2019:**Taliban fighters detonate a car bomb outside the police headquarters in Kandahar city.
At least 11 are killed and nearly 90 others are wounded. Two Taliban attackers blew themselves up and six others are shot dead. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [331]
 - **July 16, 2019:**Afghan commandos raid a Taliban prison near the house of the Taliban shadow governor in Aab Kamari District.
Thirty-five commandos and four civilians are killed Four civilians are taken prisoner by the insurgents. Thirty Taliban fighters are killed and another 50 are wounded. Source: [New York Times](#) [332]
 - **July 13, 2019:**The Taliban plant a roadside bomb in Sayedabad which strikes an American armored personnel carrier.
One U.S. soldier is killed in the attack. The same day, a group of suicide bombers storm a police base in Qala-e-Naq, killing at least three security personnel and wounding eight others. The Taliban claims responsibility for the attack. Source: [Voice of America](#) [333]
 - **July 9, 2019:**The Taliban attack and eventually capture two military bases and three security outposts in Imam Sahib District.
Nine security forces are killed, and 11 are injured. 10 border force members are taken hostage. Source: [New York Times](#) [334]
 - **July 2, 2019 - July 3, 2019:**Taliban forces—comprised of 130 militants—capture Qosh Tapa, killing 20 security forces, including N.D.S. officers and soldiers.
A day later, the Taliban ambush Darzab District, killing the head of the National Directorate of Security and five officers who fled Qosh Tapa the day before. Two others are wounded. Source: [New York Times](#) [335]
 - **July 1, 2019:**Five Taliban members detonate a car bomb and storm an area housing military and government buildings in Kabul.
The attack leaves 105 people wounded and at least 16, including the five insurgents, dead. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [336], [CNN](#) [337]

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- **June 30, 2019:**The Taliban attacks a military base in Kandahar. The insurgents detonate an explosive-filled Humvee and then drive a stolen police pickup truck filled with explosives into the base. The attack leaves 45 of the 60 police officers, 8 civilians, and 25 Taliban fighters dead. Source: [New York Times](#) [338]
- **June 26, 2019:**Two U.S. soldiers are killed by small-arms fire during a military operation against the Taliban in southern Uruzgan province. Source: [New York Times](#) [339]
- **June 11, 2019:**Afghan security forces launch clearance operations in Kohistanat, killing 16 insurgents including Abdul Bashir, the commander of the Taliban's Red Unit Force and wounding 23 others. Two security personnel are killed and four others are injured during the operation. Source: [Xinhua](#) [340]
- **May 31, 2019:**A car bomb hits a convoy of foreign forces in Kabul. It is reported that at least four bystanders are killed, and seven are wounded, including four U.S. troops. The Taliban-sponsored attack came as a delegation of Taliban officials met Senior Afghan politicians in Moscow to discuss a possible peace process to end the almost two decade war in Afghanistan. Sources: [Washington Post](#) [341], [Al Jazeera](#) [342]
- **May 30, 2019:**A suicide bomber targets the Marshal Fahim National Defense University in Kabul. At least six are killed and another six are wounded. ISIS claimed responsibility for the attack. Source: [Defense Post](#) [168]
- **May 28, 2019:**Taliban insurgents attack security checkpoints in western Ghor province and eastern Logar province. Eighteen are killed and seven are wounded in Ghor, while five soldiers are killed, four wounded, and four captured in Logar. Source: [Associated Press](#) [343]
- **May 27, 2019:**The Taliban captures and burns down Qashqari military base while also attacking several outposts in Sar-i-Pul City. During the 5-hour attack, eight security officials are killed, 29 are wounded, and three soldiers are taken prisoner by the Taliban. Source: [New York Times](#) [344]
- **May 15, 2019:**The Afghan Ministry of the interior confirms that Mullah Khadem, a key Taliban commander, is killed in a military operation in Balkh Province. Khadem commanded over 10 insurgents in the area. Source: [New York Times](#) [345]
- **May 10, 2019:**Taliban militants overrun two government outposts in Murghab. The exact number of casualties is not released, but it is reported that more than 20 Afghan soldiers are dead including several officers from an elite police unit. Source: [New York Times](#) [346]
- **May 8, 2019:**Four Taliban insurgents detonate an explosive-laden vehicle and then break into American NGO Counterpart International's offices in Kabul. At least nine are killed, including the attackers, and 24 are injured. Source: [CNN](#) [347]
- **May 5, 2019:**A suicide car bomber strikes the entrance of a police headquarters in Pul-e-Khmuri with eight gunmen rushing in after the explosion, killing 13 officers and injuring 55. The Taliban claims responsibility. The attack comes two days after President Ashraf Ghani demands an immediate cease-fire between the Taliban and government forces. Source: [Radio Free Europe](#) [348]
- **April 27, 2019:**The Taliban attacks a security outpost in Feroz Koh City. Nine security forces are killed and five others are wounded. Source: [New York Times](#) [349]
- **April 20, 2019:**A suicide bomber detonates an explosive and a gunman open fire on the Afghan ministry of information in Kabul. The attack kills 11—four civilians, three police officers, and all five attackers—and injures eight. Source: [BBC News](#) [350]
- **April 14, 2019 - April 15, 2019:**On April 14, the Benafsha Girls High School in the Farah province's Tosak village is burned down by unidentified militants. Overnight on April 15, militants blow up the Nawdeh Girls High School, also in Farah province. There are no casualties in the attacks. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, though the Taliban had recently warned that it would attack girls' schools. Approximately 2,000 students attended the two schools altogether. Sources: [TOLO News](#) [351], [Xinhua](#) [352]
- **April 13, 2019 - April 14, 2019:**A gunman opens fire at a wedding in Khost province, killing at least five and wounding 15. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Voice of America](#) [353]
- **April 13, 2019:**Taliban militants attack the city of Kunduz, killing at least six and wounding at least 50. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [354]
- **April 12, 2019:**The Taliban announce the *al-Fath* ("Victory") operation, the beginning of their annual spring offensive. A Taliban statement calls on Afghan soldiers and police officers to abandon the government. Taliban militants ambush a police convoy in the Ghor province, killing at least seven and wounding three. Sources: [Reuters](#) [355], [Associated Press](#) [356]
- **April 8, 2019 - April 9, 2019:**On April 8, an explosives-laden vehicle explodes at the Bagram Air Field, killing three U.S. Marines and wounds three others. The Taliban claim responsibility. Overnight, Taliban forces raid Afghan army bases near the Pakistani border, killing at

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- least 20 soldiers. A Taliban spokesman claims credit and claims the group also stole weapons. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [357], [Wall Street Journal](#) [358], [Associated Press](#) [359]
- **April 6, 2019:** Twin explosions in Jalalabad kill at least three and wound 20. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Also that day, suspected Taliban militants attack two security checkpoints in Sari Pul and Ghazni provinces, killing at least seven and wounding 12. The Taliban claim responsibility for the attack on Ghazni but not in Sari Pul. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [360], [Associated Press](#) [361]
 - **April 4, 2019:** Hundreds of Taliban fighters attack the center of Bala Murghab district in Badghis province, killing at least 30 Afghan soldiers and officers and capturing 21 others. The Afghan Air Force launches airstrikes around the district in response but Afghan officials warn that reinforcements are desperately needed. Also that day, explosives at a health facility in Pul-i-Kumri City kill one and wound 18. In the Faizabad district of the Jowzjan province, Taliban fighters launch a pre-dawn raid on a security outpost that leaves six police officers dead and one wounded. Four Taliban fighters are also reportedly killed during the fighting. Source: [New York Times](#) [362]
 - **March 30, 2019 - March 31, 2019:** On March 30, multiple Taliban attacks on security checkpoints across the country kill at least 30. On March 31, Taliban fighters ambush the convoy of Afghan Vice President Abdurrashid Dostum, killing two of his guards. Four Taliban militants are also reportedly killed. The Taliban claim responsibility. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [363], [Washington Post](#) [364]
 - **March 28, 2019 - March 29, 2019:** Taliban forces attack security outposts in Badakhshan, Zabul, and Ghazni provinces, killing at least 17. The Taliban claim responsibility for all three attacks. Source: [Associated Press](#) [365]
 - **March 23, 2019:** Twin explosions at an agricultural show in Lashkar Gah kill at least four and wound 31. The Taliban claim responsibility. Sources: [Voice of America](#) [366], [Al Jazeera](#) [367]
 - **March 22, 2019:** Taliban militants attack Afghan forces in the Sangin district of Helmand province, killing at least 40. Afghan officials do not confirm the details of the attack or the death toll, but some reports claims up to 65 Afghan soldiers are killed. Source: [New York Times](#) [368]
 - **March 21, 2019:** Militants plant four landmines in Kabul. Three explode during celebrations of Nowruz, the Persian new year, killing at least six and wounding 23. Security forces diffuse the fourth before it explodes. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Voice of America](#) [369], [Reuters](#) [370]
 - **March 17, 2019:** Taliban forces capture 150 Afghan soldiers after forcing Afghan units in the Badghis province into neighboring Turkmenistan. It is the largest known capture to date of Afghan soldiers in the war against militants. The capture raises the total number of Afghan soldiers captured that week to 190. At least 16 soldiers are killed. Taliban forces largely take control of the Murghab district. Source: [New York Times](#) [371]
 - **March 15, 2019:** Militants shoot TV journalist Sultan Mahmoud Khirkhwa in the head in Khost, killing the reporter. The attackers are reportedly shot dead. ISIS claims responsibility two days later. Khirkhwa is the fourth journalist killed in Afghanistan in 2019. Source: [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#) [372]
 - **March 13, 2019:** Taliban forces attack an army checkpoint in the Farah province, killing 10. At least five soldiers are reported missing after security forces repel the attack. The Taliban claim responsibility. Separately, a bomb attached to the car of Afghan journalist Nesar Ahmad Ahmadi wounds the journalist in Helmand province. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Associated Press](#) [373]
 - **March 7, 2019:** Militants fire mortars at a memorial service in Kabul, killing at least three and wounding 20. The service, for a Hazara leader killed by the Taliban in 1995, is attended by high-level Afghan politicians, including former President Hamid Karzai. ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Service. Source: [Washington Post](#) [374]
 - **March 6, 2019:** A suicide bomber explodes at the office of the Entire Builders and Engineers construction company in Jalalabad. Four gunmen wearing suicide vests attack the site, killing 16 employees. The attackers then engage security forces in a five-hour-long gun battle who kill all of the militants. Security forces discover a nearby vehicle with suicide vests, explosives, and landmines. There are no immediate claims of responsibility and the Taliban deny responsibility. Source: [New York Times](#) [375]
 - **March 4, 2019:** Taliban militants attack a military base and police outpost in Kunduz province, killing 19 soldiers and police officers. Separately, Taliban militants storm the main bazaar of Yangi Qala district in the Takhar province, killing three and wounding seven. Sources: [Xinhua](#) [376], [New York Times](#) [375]
 - **March 1, 2019:** Up to 30 Taliban militants wearing Afghan military uniforms, including at least eight suicide bombers, attack the Camp Shorab military compound in Helmand province, killing at least 40 and wounding 16. A small contingent of U.S. forces is stationed at the base to train Afghan soldiers but no U.S. citizens are injured. Sources: [New York Times](#) [377], [New York Times](#) [375]
 - **February 17, 2019:** Taliban gunmen open fire on a police vehicle in the Baghlan province, killing at least two civilians and wounding five others. Source: [Xinhua](#) [378]

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- **February 12, 2019 - February 13, 2019:**On February 12, Taliban militants attack a security checkpoint in the Balamurghab district in the Badghis province, killing eight and wounding eight others. Later in the day, Taliban militants attack a security post in Farah city, killing four and wounding four others. A mortar strikes a house in the Takhar province, killing three and wounding eight. Source: [Xinhua](#) [379]
- **February 6, 2019:**Taliban fighters kill seven soldiers in an attack on a military outpost in Arghandab District, Zabul Province. Source: [New York Times](#) [380]
- **February 5, 2019:**Taliban fighters kill 30 Afghan security personnel and wound 20 more when they storm a checkpoint in the Telawaki area of Kunduz City. The Taliban also capture a security outpost and kill 11 security personnel in the Hasan Tal area of Baghlan-e-Markazi District, Baghlan Province. Sources: [Pajhwok Afghan News](#) [381], [New York Times](#) [380]
- **February 4, 2019:**Taliban fighters kill 10 pro-government militiamen in an attack on the village of Gola, Dara-i-Suf Payan District, Samangan Province. Source: [New York Times](#) [380]
- **February 1, 2019:**Taliban fighters kill 17 Afghan security personnel in attacks across two provinces. The Taliban kill six soldiers in an attack on an outpost in Gorekab, Sozma Qala District, Sar-i-Pul Province. In the Baghdis Province, Taliban fighters kill one soldier and five police officers in an attack in Qades District while five soldiers are killed in an attack on the village of Morichaq, Bala Murghab District. Source: [New York Times](#) [380]
- **January 22, 2019:**A second U.S. soldier is killed in fighting in Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan Province. Source: [CNN](#) [382]
- **January 21, 2019:**Taliban fighters kill 126 Afghan army, special forces, and intelligence personnel in an attack on a training center of the National Directorate for Security in Maidan Wardak province, west of the capital Kabul. The attackers used a captured Humvee as a car bomb before fighting with small arms. Source: [Reuters](#) [383]
- **January 13, 2019:**A U.S. Army Ranger is wounded in Baghdis province and dies of wounds several days later. Source: [CNN](#) [382]
- **January 9, 2019:**Taliban militants attack multiple security positions in three separate provinces, killing a total of at least 21 police officers and wounding 23 officers. In Badghis province, militants kill six policemen. Militants also kill seven police officers in Baghlan province and eight officers in Takhar province. Taliban forces also take control of 30 villages and strategic areas, according to Afghan officials. Sources: [Xinhua](#) [384], [Associated Press](#) [385]
- **January 6, 2019 - January 7, 2019:**On January 6, Taliban militants conduct multiple raids in Badghis province, killing 21 soldiers and police personnel and wounding nine. Afghan security forces say they killed 15 of the attackers and wounded another 10. A Taliban spokesman claims militants killed more than 32 in the raids and seized multiple weapons. On January 7, a bomb explodes in a market in the Janikhail district of Patika province, killing at least 10 and wounding 13. There are no immediate claims of responsibility for the bombing. Source: [Voice of America](#) [386]
- **January 5, 2019:**Taliban militants kidnap 15 government employees on their way to work in Farah city, the capital of Farah province. The kidnappings take place on the same day that Afghan forces raid a Taliban prison and free 12 hostages. Taliban militants storm a checkpoint in the town of Nava in Kandahar province along the Pakistan border, killing at least seven border police officers. Afghan security reportedly kills 16 of the attackers. The Taliban claim responsibility over social media. Sources: [The Nation](#) [387], [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#) [388]
- **January 2, 2019:**Taliban militants attack two security checkpoints outside of Pul-e Khumri, the capital of Baghlan province, killing at least 11 police officers and wounding two others. Source: [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#) [389]
- **January 1, 2019:**Taliban forces launch a series of coordinated attacks that kill at least 27 members of the Afghan security forces. In the Sar-i-Pul province, three Taliban attacks on security forces kill at least 21 people and wound 25 others. In the northern Balkh province, Taliban fighters attack a security outpost, killing six and wounding seven. The militants also steal weapons and equipment. The Taliban claim responsibility for all of the attacks. Later that night, Taliban militants plant a bomb in an underground tunnel near an Afghan National Army military base in Maiwand district in Kandahar province, killing at least five and wounding six. A Taliban spokesman claims the explosion flattened the base and killed at least 40. Sources: [New York Times](#) [390], [Washington Post](#) [391], [Voice of America](#) [392]
- **December 24, 2018:**Militants blow up a car outside the Ministry for Martyrs and Disabled Persons building in Kabul and then storm the building, killing at least 43 and wounding at least 27. Security forces kill the attackers after a 10-hour-long gun battle during which the militants also take hostages. The Taliban initially deny involvement in the attack but members of the Afghan government blame the group. Sources: [UNAMA](#) [393], [Washington Post](#) [394], [Washington Post](#) [395], [Washington Post](#) [391]
- **December 11, 2018:**A suicide attack on an operational team from the National Directorate for Security outside of Kabul kills at least four and wounds six. The Afghan government releases no other information. Source: [Reuters](#) [396]
- **November 28, 2018:**Taliban fighters set off a car bomb outside the entrance of British private security company G4S

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

in Kabul.

The militants then attempt to storm the building. The attack leaves at least 10 dead and 19 wounded. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) [397]

- **November 26, 2018:** Taliban militants ambush a police convoy in the Lash-e Joveyn district of Farah province, killing at least 22.
The Afghan government provides no further details. Source: [Reuters](#) [398]
- **November 23, 2018:** A suicide bomber explodes during Friday prayers in a mosque on an Afghan army base in Khost province, killing at least 27 and wounding 79.
ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency, claiming the blast killed 50 and wounded 110. ISIS warns of further attacks. Source: [Agence France-Presse](#) [399]
- **November 20, 2018:** A suicide bomber explodes during a religious gathering marking the birthday of the prophet Muhammad at the Uranus Wedding Hall near Kabul, killing at least 55 and wounding at least 96.
There are no immediate claims of responsibility and the Taliban deny responsibility. Sources: [New York Times](#) [400], [Agence France-Presse](#) [399]
- **November 17, 2018:** Taliban militants attack a security checkpoint in the Badghis province, killing at least five and wounding three.
The militants capture one officer. The Taliban claim they also stole ammunition. Source: [Associated Press](#) [401]
- **November 9, 2018 - November 15, 2018:** At least 242 Afghan soldiers are killed in militant attacks, according to Afghan casualty reports.
On November 11, Taliban militants kill an entire company of 50 elite commandos in Ghazni province. On November 15, Taliban militants attack a joint police and army outpost in the Farah province, killing at least 38. The Taliban claim they also captured weapons and vehicles from the outpost. Taliban forces launch a series of other attacks in Farah and Takhar provinces. Sources: [New York Times](#) [199], [New York Times](#) [402], [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#) [403], [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#) [404]
- **November 5, 2018 - November 6, 2018:** Taliban militants launch a series of nine attacks in seven provinces over a 24-hour period that kill at least 59 security personnel.
In a major attack, militants overrun the Afghan Border Force battalion headquarters in Farah province, killing at least 20 and capturing other soldiers. At least 23 officers are captured. In Ghazni, the militants capture a joint police and army outpost, killing 16 officers. Source: [New York Times](#) [405]
- **November 3, 2018:** A member of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces attacks NATO forces in Kabul, killing a U.S. National Guardsman and wounding one other.
Afghan forces immediately kill the attacker. The fatality is identified as Brent Taylor, mayor of North Ogden, Utah. Sources: [Reuters](#) [406], [NATO](#) [407]
- **October 31, 2018:** A suicide bomber explodes outside the Pul-e-Charkhi prison outside of Kabul, killing seven and wounding five.
There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Sources: [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#) [408], [Associated Press](#) [409]
- **October 29, 2018:** A suicide bomber explodes near the headquarters of the Independent Election Commission in Kabul, killing at least two and wounding at least seven.
ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [410], [Reuters](#) [411], [TOLO News](#) [412]
- **October 27, 2018:** A suicide car bomb explodes near a police automotive repair center in Wardak province capital Maidan Shar, killing at least six and wounding 15.
The Taliban claim responsibility. The Taliban also claim the blast killed and wounded dozens of soldiers, which local authorities refute. Sources: [Xinhua](#) [413], [Reuters](#) [414]
- **October 20, 2018 - October 21, 2018:** At least 38 people are killed and 130 wounded in election day violence.
Parliamentary elections are extended a second day because of technical problems and security concerns. Both the Taliban and ISIS had pledged to target the elections. The government records at least 192 security incidents, including a suicide attack at a Kabul voting station that kills at least 15 and a roadside bomb that kills at least 11 in Nangarhar. Almost one-third of polling stations are closed the first day of voting because of security concerns. The U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan reports that at least 56 people are killed and 370 wounded during the voting period. Sources: [CNN](#) [225], [BBC News](#) [415], [Associated Press](#) [416], [Al Jazeera](#) [417]
- **October 19, 2018:** A militant opens fire at a security meeting between Kandahar's police chief, General Abdul Raziq Achakza, and U.S. military leaders, killing Achakza and Kandahar's top intelligence official.
The attack also wounds three members of the NATO coalition forces, including U.S. Brigadier General Jeffrey Smiley. U.S. soldiers shoot and kill the attacker. U.S. Army General Scott Miller, the commander of U.S. and NATO forces in Afghanistan, is uninjured in the attack. The Taliban claim responsibility and announce that Achakza had been the primary target. Sources: [ABC News](#) [418], [CNN](#) [419]
- **October 18, 2018:** A gunman wearing an Afghan army uniform opens fire at a security meeting with U.S. military officials at the governor's compound in Kandahar, killing three senior Afghan officials and wounding three Americans. Among the fatalities are the provincial police chief, provincial intelligence director, and Provincial Governor Zalmay Wessa. Security forces shoot and kill the attacker. The Taliban claim responsibility. Sources: [Washington Post](#) [420], [Washington Post](#) [421]

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- **October 9, 2018:**A suicide bomber explodes at a parliamentary campaign rally in Lashkar Gah in Helmand province, killing at least eight people and wounding 11. The candidate, Saleh Mohammad Achekzai, is among the dead. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Reuters](#) [422]
- **October 6, 2018 - October 7, 2018:**Beginning late on October 6, Taliban fighters set fire to a government building in the Sayed Abad district in the Maidan Wardak province. The militants kill 14 policemen including the district chief. The following day, militants blow up a series of bridges between Kabul and three provinces. Afghan authorities dispute the Taliban claim they overran the Sayed Abad district headquarters. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [423], [Associated Press](#) [424]
- **October 2, 2018:**A suicide bomber explodes at an election rally in the Nangarhar province, killing at least 13 and wounding at least 30. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Separately, Taliban militants attack a security checkpoint in the Faryab province, killing at least 10 and setting the checkpoint on fire. Taliban militants also attack a checkpoint in the Nimroz province, killing six and wounding four. Taliban militants kill at least three and wound six in an attack on a security checkpoint in the Kandahar province. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [425], [Wall Street Journal](#) [222]
- **September 23, 2018:**A Taliban prisoner at the Shar-e-Safa district jail in Zabul province seizes an assault rifle from a guard and kills at least eight police officers during an hours-long firefight that continues into the next day. The prisoner escaped, according to some reports, though it remains inconclusive. Sources: [Voice of America](#) [426], [MENAFN](#) [427]
- **September 13, 2018 - September 14, 2018:**Overnight Taliban attacks in the Farah province kill at least 29 police officers. Fighters also attack a security outpost in the Samangan province, killing six. A roadside bomb in the Nangahar province wounds five. There are no immediate claims of responsibility for the Samangan or Nangahar attacks but officials suspect the Taliban. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [428], [Gulf Times](#) [429]
- **September 11, 2018:**A suicide bomber at a protest rally outside of Jalalabad kills at least 68 and wounds 165. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. The Taliban deny responsibility. Sources: [Washington Post](#) [430], [Reuters](#) [431]
- **September 9, 2018:**Police in Kabul shoot a suicide bomber before he can detonate his explosives. Hours later, a suicide bomber explodes in Kabul near a procession commemorating the 2001 death of former anti-Soviet mujahideen commander Ahmad Shah Massoud. The attack kills at least seven and wounds 25. ISIS claims responsibility but does not provide evidence of its claim. Sources: [Reuters](#) [432], [Reuters](#) [433]
- **September 5, 2018:**A suicide bomber explodes at a wrestling training center in a Shiite neighborhood of Kabul. A car bomb explodes outside the center after emergency workers and journalists arrive on the scene. The double bombing kills at least 21 and wounds 70. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [CBS News](#) [434], [CBS News](#) [435], [Reuters](#) [436]
- **August 21, 2018:**Militants fire approximately 30 mortars at the presidential palace in Kabul during a presidential address marking Eid al-Adha. The attacks cause no casualties. Security forces kill four of the nine militants responsible and arrest the other five. Police blame the Taliban. Source: [Reuters](#) [437]
- **August 20, 2018:**The Taliban officially reject a three-month ceasefire offer made a day earlier by President Ashraf Ghani. Taliban fighters ambush three buses in Kunduz and take hostage 170 passengers traveling to Kabul for the Eid al-Adha holiday. Afghan security forces rescue 149 hostages within hours of the attack. A Taliban commander tells Reuters that the remaining 21 hostages would likely be exchanged for Taliban prisoners. Sources: [CNN](#) [438], [Reuters](#) [439], [Associated Press](#) [440]
- **August 16, 2018:**Gunmen and suicide bombers attack an intelligence services training facility in Kabul, wounding three. One bomber explodes while the other three are killed by security forces. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [441], [Voice of America](#) [442]
- **August 15, 2018:**Taliban fighters attack a security outpost in the Baghlan province, killing at least 44 police officers and soldiers. A Taliban statement claims the group killed 70 Afghan soldiers and stole armored vehicles and ammunition from two checkpoints and a military base. A separate Taliban statement announced the group's withdrawal of its guarantee of protection for the International Committee of the Red Cross, citing the ICRC's failure to guarantee protections for Taliban fighters in Afghan prisons. Separately, a suicide bomber explodes at a private school in a Shiite Hazara neighborhood of Kabul, killing at least 48 and wounding 67. The Taliban deny involvement. ISIS claims responsibility the following day through its Amaq News Agency. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [443], [Reuters](#) [444], [Reuters](#) [445], [NBC News](#) [446], [BBC News](#) [447], [Associated Press](#) [448]
- **August 13, 2018:**Taliban fighters attack a military base known in the Faryab province, killing 17 soldiers and wounding 19 others. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [443]
- **August 10, 2018 - August 14, 2018:**Taliban fighters dressed as Afghan soldiers attack the city of Ghazni.

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

The Taliban order their fighters to leave the city after five days of fighting with security forces that killed at least 200 people, though there are multiple, conflicting casualty reports. The U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan estimates that up to 150 civilians were killed during the siege. At least 140 members of the security forces were killed, according to other reports. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [443], [BBC News](#) [449], [Wall Street Journal](#) [450], [Reuters](#) [444], [Reuters](#) [451]

- **July 22, 2018:** A suicide bomber explodes outside of Kabul International Airport, killing at least 20 and wounding 70. The attack occurs shortly after Afghan Vice President Abdul Rashid Dostum leaves the airport after returning to the country from a year of self-imposed exile in Turkey. Dostum is not injured in the bombing. ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency and claims that it killed and wounded more than 115 people in the attack. Separately, gunmen attack a mosque in the Nangarhar province, killing four and wounding three. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [452], [Associated Press](#) [453], [CBS News](#) [454]
- **July 19, 2018 - July 20, 2018:** Over the course of two days, Taliban fighters attack multiple security outposts in the Ghazni and Zabul provinces, killing 14 police officers and wounding 10 others. The Taliban claim to have killed 16 officers alone in attacks on security positions in Ghazni province's Qarabagh district, conflicting with official Afghan government figures. Source: [Associated Press](#) [77]
- **July 15, 2018 - July 17, 2018:** On July 15, Taliban fighters attack a police checkpoint in the Nangarhar province, killing seven. Five Taliban militants are also killed. Separately, a suicide bomber explodes outside of the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development in Kabul, killing at least seven. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. On the night of July 16, Taliban militants attack a police checkpoint in the Kandahar province, killing nine policemen and wounding seven. According to Afghan officials, 25 Taliban fighters are killed and 15 are wounded in the confrontation. On July 17, a suicide bomber explodes in the northern Sar-i-Pul province, killing at least 20, including 15 village elders and five Taliban commanders. There are conflicting reports regarding the exact location of the explosion. The attack comes as village leaders are meeting with Taliban officials in the area. Afghan officials blame ISIS. Sources: [CBS News](#) [455], [Al Jazeera](#) [456], [Reuters](#) [457], [Associated Press](#) [458]
- **July 11, 2018:** Gunmen attack the government's education department building in Jalalabad, killing at least 10 and wounding another 10. Authorities suspect ISIS, which claimed responsibility for two attacks in the city earlier in the month. Sources: [TOLO News](#) [459], [Al Jazeera](#) [460]
- **July 10, 2018:** A suicide bomber explodes at a security checkpoint in Jalalabad, killing at least 12. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [460], [Al Jazeera](#) [461]
- **July 1, 2018:** A suicide bomber explodes in Jalalabad near a vehicle carrying members of Afghanistan's Sikh minority, killing at least 20 and wounding 20. ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency. At least 13 Sikhs are among the dead, prompting community leaders to question whether there is a future for Sikhs in Afghanistan. Sources: [Reuters](#) [462], [Times of India](#) [463]
- **June 27, 2018 - June 28, 2018:** Taliban militants launch overnight attacks on security checkpoints in the Takhar Province, killing at least 14 border police officers and wounding two others. Six others are missing after the raids. Separate Taliban attacks leave at least 11 dead in the Logar province and at least five dead in Nangarhar province. Source: [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#) [464]
- **June 20, 2018:** Taliban fighters attack a security checkpoint in the Bala Murghab district of the Badghis province. The fighters then ambush Afghan reinforcements when they arrive at the checkpoint, altogether killing 30 soldiers and capturing the checkpoint. Separately, Taliban fighters attack another police checkpoint in the province, killing at least four. The attacks come three days after the end of Taliban-declared three-day ceasefire for the Muslim holiday of Eid al-Fitr. The Afghan government in turn declared a ceasefire that was set to expire on June 20. Afghan authorities accuse the Taliban of using the ceasefire to plan and prepare for the attacks. Nonetheless, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani extends the government ceasefire another 10 days. Sources: [Reuters](#) [465], [Associated Press](#) [466]
- **June 17, 2018:** A suicide bomber near the Nangarhar governor's compound in Jalalabad kills at least 18 and wounds at least 49. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Sources: [CNN](#) [467], [Associated Press](#) [468]
- **June 16, 2018:** A car bomb in Nangarhar kills at least 36 and wounds at least 65 others during a gathering of Taliban fighters and Afghan soldiers marking the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Fitr. ISIS's affiliate in Afghanistan claims responsibility. Sources: [New York Times](#) [469], [Reuters](#) [470]
- **June 11, 2018 - June 12, 2018:** On June 11, a bombing outside Afghanistan's rural development ministry in Kabul kills 17 and wounds at least 12 others. Three suicide bombers attack the Education Ministry's office in Jalalabad, but security forces kill two of the bombers before they can detonate. The third bomber's explosives fail to detonate. There are no fatalities but 15 are wounded in the attack, which officials blame on ISIS. A bomb explodes prematurely in a house in Nangarhar's Chaparhar district, killing one and wounding 12 others. ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency for the Kabul attack but does not provide evidence of its claim. The Taliban deny responsibility. Taliban fighters reportedly kill 15 Afghan soldiers and policemen in an attack on a security post in the Qal-i-Zal district of Kunduz province. Taliban fighters launch an overnight raid in the Kohistan district in the Faryab province, killing eight, including the district governor. Sources: [New York Times](#) [471], [Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty](#) [472], [Reuters](#) [473], [Al Jazeera](#) [474]
- **June 4, 2018:** A suicide bomber explodes at a gathering of 2,000 Islamic religious scholars and clerics in Kabul, killing

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

at least 14 and wounding 17.

The clerical conclave had earlier that morning issued a fatwa declaring the ongoing war in Afghanistan to be illegal and suicide bombings to be un-Islamic. The religious leaders also offered to mediate between warring factions. ISIS claims responsibility while denouncing the fatwa. Sources: [Tolo News](#) [475], [Al Jazeera](#) [476], [Washington Post](#) [477]

- **May 30, 2018:**Ten militants belonging to a local ISIS affiliate attack the Interior Ministry in Kabul, setting off three suicide bombs.
The attacks kill at least one police officer and wounding five others. Separately, at least three are killed and 12 are wounded when Taliban suicide bombers attack a police station in the Logar province. Source: [CBS News](#) [478]
- **May 19, 2018:**Three explosions at the Spinghar Cricket Ground in Jalalabad in the Nangahar province kill eight and wound 45.
The Taliban deny responsibility. Source: [New York Times](#) [479]
- **May 15, 2018 - May 16, 2018:**Taliban militants attack the city of Farah, killing 30.
The militants briefly hold the city and then abandon it early the next day after a U.S. airstrike. Source: [New York Times](#) [480]
- **May 7, 2018 - May 9, 2018:**On May 7, Taliban forces attack a police station in Faryab in northern Afghanistan, killing or wounding at least 25 officers and kidnapping 31.
On May 8, Taliban forces take control of two rural northern districts. On May 9, gunmen and suicide bombers kill at least seven and wound 17 in two separate attacks on a police station and near a bank, both in Kabul. ISIS claims responsibility for the police station attack. The Taliban claim responsibility for the attack near the bank, claiming the attack targeted the nearby Afghan intelligence agency. Nonetheless, the National Directorate for Security blames the Taliban-linked Haqqani network for both attacks. Source: [BBC News](#) [481], [New York Times](#) [482], [Reuters](#) [483], [Telegraph](#) [484]
- **May 7, 2018:**The Afghan government releases information that insurgents had killed 252 Afghan troops and wounded approximately 400 others within the past week.
Since the end of April, Afghan forces have killed about 800 insurgents and wounded 500 others, according to government officials. The officials also report that the security forces had foiled approximately 70 percent of 2,600 attacks on Afghan police and military. Source: [Voice of America](#) [485]
- **May 6, 2018:**Explosives planted in a mosque in the Khost province kill at least 17 and wound 37.
Afghans were using the mosque as a voter registration center ahead of national elections. The Taliban deny responsibility. Sources: [BBC News](#) [486], [New York Times](#) [223]
- **April 30, 2018:**Multiple attacks across the country kill at least 46 and wound at least 65.
A suicide bomber on a motor bike explodes near a security compound close to the NATO headquarters and foreign embassies in Kabul. A second bomber, disguised as a cameraman, explodes after journalists gather at the site of the first blast, killing several journalists. The dual attacks kill at least 30 and wound at least 45. ISIS's Khorasan Province claims responsibility on Telegram, crediting its "martyrs" Qaqa al-Kurdi and Khalil al-Qurshi for the attacks. ISIS does not provide further evidence of its responsibility. Separately, a car bomb explodes near a NATO convoy in Kandahar several hours later, killing 11 children and wounding 16 others, including NATO soldiers, civilians, and policemen. Five Afghan policemen are killed and four people wounded in two other attacks in the Balkh and Nangahar provinces. There are no immediate claims of responsibility for the attacks outside of Kabul. Sources: [Washington Post](#) [487], [Associated Press](#) [488], [CNN](#) [489]
- **April 25, 2018 - April 26, 2018:**On April 25, the Taliban announce the start of their annual spring offensive.
The Taliban statement says the group will utilize "new and intricate tactics" aimed at "crushing, killing and capturing American invaders and their supporters." That night, Taliban fighters launch attack an Afghan army security post in Dashti Archi district in the Kunduz province, killing at least seven soldiers and wounding one, according to the military. At least 15 Taliban fighters are killed and 13 wounded, according to the military's account. A local hospital chief disputes the army's figures, telling the Associated Press that 13 soldiers were killed and nine were wounded. On April 26, Taliban fighters ambush a government convoy in the Logar province, killing the deputy provincial governor and his two bodyguards. The Taliban claim credit in a media statement. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [490], [Associated Press](#) [491]
- **April 24, 2018:**At least 11 Afghan soldiers and police officers are killed in attacks across the country.
Militants kill at least five and wound two in an attack on a security checkpoint in the Farah province. At least four local police officers are killed seven wounded in Ghazni province. The Taliban claim responsibility for both attacks. Later in the day, militants kill two policemen and wound six soldiers in an attack on a security checkpoint in Badghis province. There are no immediate claims of responsibility but authorities blame the Taliban. Source: [Associated Press](#) [492]
- **April 23, 2018:**Taliban fighters launch simultaneous attacks on police and army units in the western Badghis province, killing 18 soldiers and policemen.
The Taliban claim the attack in a media statement. In a separate attack, Taliban fighters kill four policemen and wound three others during a gun battle in Farah province. Three Taliban fighters are killed and two are wounded during the two-hour gun battle. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [493], [Associated Press](#) [492]
- **April 22, 2018:**A suicide bomber explodes at a voter registration center in Kabul, killing at least 60 people and wounding 130.
ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq news agency, claiming it targeted Shiite "apostates." The attack on the

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

polling station comes as the Afghan government prepares for overdue parliamentary elections in October. In a separate attack the same day, a roadside bomb explodes near a voter registration center in northern city of Pul-I Khumri, killing six and wounding three. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Authorities do not believe the two attacks are related. Militants kill three university students in Nangarhar province. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, but authorities suspect ISIS. Sources: [New York Times](#) [494], [Associated Press](#) [492], [Associated Press](#) [493], [Reuters](#) [221]

- **April 14, 2018 - April 15, 2018:**At least 26 security officers are killed in four attacks on government outposts in northern and eastern Afghanistan. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, but government officials blame the Taliban. Source: [New York Times](#) [495]
- **March 21, 2018:**A suicide bomber kills at least 29 people and wounds more than 50 others near the Sakhi shrine in Kabul as worshippers gathered to mark Nowruz, the Persian new year. ISIS claimed responsibility through its Amaq news agency. The Sakhi shrine is a popular destination for Shiites marking the new year. It is also located near Kabul University and a hospital. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [496], [BBC News](#) [497], [Reuters](#) [498]
- **March 8, 2018 - March 9, 2018:**On March 8, Taliban fighters attack a police outpost in Ghazni province, killing four policemen. On March 9, a suicide bomber blows up at a police checkpoint in Kabul near a Shiite gathering, killing at least nine and wounding 18. ISIS claims responsibility. The bombing targeted Afghanistan’s Hazara minority. Separately, the Taliban attack an army outpost in the Takhar province, killing 10 officers and wounding nine. Sources: [Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty](#) [499], [Washington Post](#) [500]
- **February 28, 2018:**A group militants attack a police station, killing six officers and wounding five others. Separately, another group of militants wearing army uniforms stops a bus and kidnap 30 people, including 19 police officers. Both incidents occur in the border area between the Kandahar and Uruzgan provinces. There are no immediate claims of responsibility for either attack, but police suspect the Taliban. Source: [Associated Press](#) [501]
- **February 24, 2018:**Taliban militants kill at least 18 soldiers in an attack on military camps in the Farah province. The Taliban also claim responsibility after two car bombs in Helmand province kill four policemen. The same day, a suicide bomber explodes outside an intelligence agency office, killing three and wounding six. ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency. Source: [Washington Post](#) [502]
- **February 21, 2018:**Taliban militants attack a police post in the Ghazni province, killing eight officers and wounding another. The Taliban also claim to capture a police officer, though the government does not confirm the claim. Later that night, militants ambush a car in Parwan province carrying four intelligence officers, killing all four. There are no immediate claims for the Parwan attack. Source: [Associated Press](#) [503]
- **February 14, 2018:**Militants kill at least 10 police officers in two separate attacks on police positions in the Farah and Faryab provinces. Afghan authorities blame the Taliban for both attacks, though the Taliban do not immediately claim responsibility. Source: [Associated Press](#) [504]
- **January 29, 2018:**Five gunmen armed with rocket-propelled grenades and automatic rifles attack the Marshal Fahim military academy in Kabul, killing 11 soldiers and wounding 15. Two of the attacks set off explosive vests while Afghan forces kill two others and capture the fifth. ISIS’s Khorasan Province claims responsibility through ISIS’s Amaq News Agency. The Afghan defense ministry says the attack was on an army unit guarding the academy, not the academy itself. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [505], [Reuters](#) [506]
- **January 27, 2018:**A militant drives an explosives-filled ambulance into a fortified area of Kabul home to government buildings and hospitals, killing at least 103 people and wounding 235. Investigators believe a second ambulance may have been involved but the attackers escaped. The Taliban claim responsibility for the bombing, calling the attack a warning to U.S. President Donald Trump against the U.S. “policy of aggression” in Afghanistan. The quick claim hours after the attack leads authorities to suspect the Taliban were also trying to send a message to opposing insurgents like ISIS. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [505], [Reuters](#) [507], [CNN](#) [508]
- **January 24, 2018:**A suicide car bomb explodes outside the Jalalabad office of the international charity Save the Children. After the explosion, gunmen storm the aid group’s office, killing at least six and wounding at least 26 during an hours-long gun battle with police. ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq News Agency, claiming that it had targeted British, Swedish, and Afghan government institutions. Headquartered in the United Kingdom, Save the Children’s local office is located near a Swedish aid office and the Afghan Department of Women’s Affairs. Save the Children temporarily suspends its operations in Afghanistan after the attack. Also that morning, unidentified gunmen attack a police checkpoint in the Dayak district in Ghazni province, killing four Afghan policemen. Sources: [Reuters](#) [507], [New York Times](#) [509], [Associated Press](#) [510], [Reuters](#) [511]
- **January 20, 2018 - January 21, 2018:**Gunmen wearing army uniforms storm the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul late on January 20 and take hotel guests hostage during a 14-hour standoff with Afghan security forces and NATO troops. At least 22 civilians are killed, according to the Afghan government, but local news outlets report the death toll is at least 43. At least 14 foreign nationals are among the fatalities. Ten others are wounded, including six security officers.

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

The Taliban claim responsibility, but the Afghan government suspects the Haqqani Network. Also on January 20, a roadside bomb in Farah province kills the province's deputy police chief and wounds two officers. The Taliban claim responsibility. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [512], [BBC News](#) [513], [CNN](#) [514], [New York Times](#) [515]

- **January 16, 2018:** Three mortar shells strike a bazaar in the Khwaja Sabz Push district in northern Afghanistan, killing at least five and wounding 45. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, but local officials suspect the Taliban. Source: [Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty](#) [516]
- **January 4, 2018:** A suicide bomber explodes in a Kabul market while security officers carry out a drug and alcohol raid. The attack kills at least 20 people and wounds 30. ISIS claims the attack through its Amaq News Agency without providing direct evidence linking it to the attack. Sources: [New York Times](#) [517], [Reuters](#) [518]
- **December 31, 2017:** An explosive attached to a motorcycle remotely detonates at a funeral of former district chief Gul Wali in Jalalabad kills at least 17 and wounds 13. Police initially believe the attack is the work of a suicide bomber before discovering the remote-control bomb. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. The Taliban deny responsibility. Sources: [Deutsche Welle](#) [519], [New York Times](#) [520], [Reuters](#) [521]
- **December 28, 2017:** A suicide bomber explodes at the Tabian Social and Cultural Centre in Kabul during a commemoration of the anniversary of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The attack at the Shiite cultural center kills at least 41 and wounds 84. ISIS claims responsibility through its Amaq news agency. Sources: [CNN](#) [522], [Reuters](#) [523]
- **December 27, 2017:** Afghan security forces intercept a suicide car bomb at a military base in Lashkargah in the Helmand province and prevent the car from driving onto the base. The two bombers inside blow themselves up at the gates, killing at least two soldiers and wounding 15 others. The Taliban claim responsibility. Source: [Voice of America](#) [524]
- **December 25, 2017:** A suicide bomber blows himself up at the entrance of Afghanistan's National Directorate of Security in Kabul as employees arrive to work. The attack kills at least 10 and wounds five. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [New York Post](#) [525], [CNN](#) [522]
- **November 16, 2017:** A suicide bomber kills at least 12 people at a gathering of the Jamiat-i-Islami party at a hotel in Kabul. Police stop the bomber at the entrance to the hotel hosting the event. ISIS claims responsibility but does not provide specific evidence linking it to the attack. The Taliban deny responsibility. Sources: [Reuters](#) [526], [Reuters](#) [527], [Washington Post](#) [528], [New York Times](#) [529]
- **November 13, 2017 - November 14, 2017:** Taliban units kill at least 30 police officers over the course of two days. On November 13, Taliban fighters attack a police post in the Farah province while the officers inside are sleeping. The attackers kill eight police officers. On November 14, over the course of six hours, a Taliban unit attacks more than a dozen police checkpoints in the southern Kandahar province, killing at least 22 Afghan police officers and wounding 15 others. Security forces kill 45 of the attackers and wound 35, according to the government. The Taliban claim to have killed 43 officers and destroyed 13 armored vehicles. Afghan officials suspect the Taliban's elite Red Unit of carrying out the attacks using night vision goggles and M-4 automatic rifles with laser pointers. Sources: [New York Times](#) [530], [Reuters](#) [531], [New York Times](#) [532]
- **October 23, 2017:** Taliban militants attack a security post in Kabul, killing four policemen and wounding two others. Source: [Associated Press](#) [533]
- **October 21, 2017:** A suicide bomber blows himself up outside the Marshal Fahim military academy in Kabul, killing at least 15 military cadets and wounding four others. The Taliban claim responsibility. Sources: [BBC News](#) [534], [Al Jazeera](#) [535]
- **October 20, 2017:** A suicide bomber explodes at the Shiite Imam Zaman Mosque in Kabul, killing at least 56 and wounding 55 others. ISIS claims responsibility. In a separate attack, militants attack a Sunni mosque in the Ghor province, killing at least 33 people. There are no immediate claims of responsibility for the second attack. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [535], [BBC News](#) [536], [Guardian](#) [537]
- **October 17, 2017:** Taliban fighters drive two explosives-filled cars into a police training center in Gardez, the provincial capital of Paktia. Five gunmen wearing suicide belts then storm the compound, killing at least 41, including the provincial police chief. At least 158 people, mostly civilians, are wounded. Afghan security forces reportedly kill all five gunmen. In Ghazni's Andar district, suicide bombers drive an explosives-filled Humvee into a security compound outside the provincial governor's office. Gunmen then engage security forces in a nine-hour battle before they are repelled. At least 25 police officers and five civilians are killed, while 25 people are wounded. At least 13 of the attackers are also killed. In the Shibkho district in Farah province, gunmen attack a government compound, killing three policemen. The Taliban claim responsibility for all three attacks. Sources: [CBS News](#) [538], [Associated Press](#) [539], [Reuters](#) [540]
- **September 29, 2017:** A suicide bomber disguised as a shepherd blows up outside a Shiite mosque in Kabul, killing at least five people and wounding 29 others. ISIS claims responsibility. The attack comes two days before the Shiite holiday of Ashura. On the same day, Taliban

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

fighters attack a police checkpoint in Bala Bluk in the Farah province, killing five. The Afghan army pushes the Taliban out of Bala Bluk after several hours. The Afghan air force destroys three Taliban vehicles, killing 20 militants trying to escape, according to police. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [541], [Reuters](#) [542]

- **September 27, 2017:**A Taliban militant drives an explosives-filled Humvee into a security checkpoint in Kandahar's Maruf district, killing 12 Afghan soldiers and wounding four others. The Taliban claim they held the district for several hours, stealing weapons and other resources. Afghan police push the Taliban out of the district hours later. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [541], [Associated Press](#) [543]
- **August 3, 2017 - August 5, 2017:**Up to 600 militants attack Mirzawalang village in the Sar-e Pul province, capturing the village after a 48-hour battle with the Afghan Local Police. At least 50 people—mostly civilians—die during the fighting. Most are shot but some are beheaded, according to government sources. Ten of the attackers also reportedly die in the fighting. Afghan officials say the attack is a joint operation by the Taliban and ISIS. Villagers report the presence of foreign fighters among the attackers, claiming to hear some attackers speaking Punjabi, Uzbek, and Turkmen. The Taliban confirm they captured Mirzawalang, but deny working with ISIS or foreign fighters. A Taliban spokesman says allegations that the Taliban are working with ISIS are meant to discredit the Taliban. Sources: [CNN](#) [544], [Reuters](#) [545], [Al Jazeera](#) [546]
- **August 2, 2017:**A suicide bomber attacks a NATO convoy in Kandahar, killing two U.S. soldiers and wounding four others. The Taliban claim responsibility. Source: [Associated Press](#) [547]
- **August 1, 2017:**Two gunmen attack the Jawadia Shiite mosque in Herat, firing machine guns and throwing grenades at worshippers. Both attackers detonate suicide bombs. The attack kills at least 33 and wounds another 64. Both attackers are killed. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [BBC News](#) [548], [Reuters](#) [549], [CNN](#) [166], [BBC News](#) [550]
- **July 31, 2017:**A suicide bomber blows himself up at the gates of the Iraqi embassy in Kabul. Gunmen then rush into the complex and engage security forces in a gun battle. Four attackers are killed. Two Afghan employees are killed and three Afghan police officers are wounded. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [551], [Reuters](#) [167]
- **July 26, 2017:**Taliban fighters attack an Afghan military base in Kandahar province, capturing the base and killing at least 26 Afghan soldiers, according to the Afghan Defense Ministry. Other reports say at least 30 soldiers are killed. The Afghan military recaptures the base several hours later, killing or wounding at least 80 Taliban militants. The Taliban fighters steal weapons and vehicles. In a statement of responsibility, the Taliban claim they killed 74 soldiers and captured six others. Sources: [Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty](#) [552], [Reuters](#) [553]
- **July 24, 2017:**A suicide car bombing alongside a government-owned bus kills at least 35 and wounds 40 in Kabul during rush hour. The explosion destroys the bus and several nearby shops. The bombing takes place near the home of Hajji Mohammed Mohaqiq, the deputy chief executive of the Afghan government. The Taliban claim responsibility and say they had targeted the Afghan intelligence service. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [554], [Associated Press](#) [555], [New York Times](#) [556], [Reuters](#) [557]
- **June 30, 2017:**A pickup truck hits a roadside bomb in the eastern Nangarhar province, killing seven people. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Associated Press](#) [558]
- **June 29, 2017:**Taliban fighters attack a security outpost in the western Farah province, killing at least six policemen and wounding three others. Nine Taliban fighters are killed in a three-hour gun battle, while others escape with stolen guns and ammunition. Source: [Associated Press](#) [558]
- **June 28, 2017:**Gunmen kill two police officers, sisters, in an attack on a security post in the eastern Badakhshan province. There are no immediate claims of responsibility but police suspect the Taliban. Source: [Associated Press](#) [559]
- **June 27, 2017:**Gunmen kill two policemen in an attack on a security checkpoint in Qalat, the provincial capital of Zabul province. There are no immediate claims of responsibility but police suspect the Taliban. Source: [Associated Press](#) [559]
- **June 24, 2017:**A group of Taliban gunmen attack a security checkpoint near the electricity-producing Salma Dam in the Herat province. The gunmen kill at least 10 police officers, while four attackers are also killed. Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [560]
- **June 22, 2017:**A car bomb outside the New Kabul Bank in Lashkar Gah targets Afghan soldiers waiting to collect their pay. At least 29 people are killed and 60 are wounded. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Sources: [Reuters](#) [561], [Al Jazeera](#) [562]
- **June 20, 2017:**Taliban gunmen kill at least eight Afghan security guards on their way to work at the U.S. base at Bagram air field. Source: [Washington Post](#) [563]
- **June 18, 2017:**A suicide car bomber and accompanying gunmen attack the police headquarters in the Spin Ghar region in Paktia province.

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- Five Afghan police officers are killed and 18 people are wounded. The Taliban claim responsibility in a WhatsApp message to journalists. Source: [New York Times](#) [564]
- **June 17, 2017:**An Afghan soldier opens fire at an Afghan army base in Mazar-i-Sharif, killing one Afghan soldier and wounding seven U.S. soldiers.
The Taliban deny responsibility. Source: [Reuters](#) [565]
 - **June 6, 2017:**A bomb kills at least 10 people at a mosque in Herat. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. The Taliban deny responsibility. Source: [Voice of America](#) [566]
 - **May 31, 2017:**A truck bomb explodes in the heart of Kabul's diplomatic quarter during the morning rush hour, killing at least 80 people and wounding more than 300 others.
The blast occurs near the entrance of the Green Zone, which houses the U.S. military headquarters and several foreign embassies. The blast creates a massive crater and shattered windows as far as a mile away. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [567], [Washington Post](#) [568], [New York Times](#) [569]
 - **May 27, 2017:**A suicide car bomber targets an Afghan military convoy guarding U.S. forces in Khost province. The bombing kills at least 18 people, mostly civilians. The Taliban claim responsibility. Source: [Associated Press](#) [570]
 - **May 26, 2017:**Taliban fighters kill at least 15 soldiers in an attack on an Afghan army camp.
At least 20 Taliban fighters are killed, according to the Afghan government. Source: [Associated Press](#) [571]
 - **May 25, 2017:**A suicide car bomber attacks a security checkpoint in Helmand province, killing three intelligence officers and wounding four others.
The Taliban claim responsibility. Source: [Associated Press](#) [572]
 - **May 24, 2017:**Taliban fighters attack multiple security checkpoints in southern Afghanistan, killing at least 13 Afghan soldiers and wounding eight others.
At least 20 Taliban fighters are killed, according to the Afghan government. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [572], [Associated Press](#) [571]
 - **May 22, 2017 - May 23, 2017:**Just before midnight on May 22, a group of militants attack an Afghan military base in Kandahar province, killing at least 10 soldiers and wounding nine.
Security forces kill at least a dozen of the attackers in a firefight. The Taliban claim responsibility. Early on May 23, Taliban fighters attack a police station in Badghis province, killing at least one policeman. Police kill 11 of the attackers during a gun battle. Sources: [Reuters](#) [573], [Associated Press](#) [574]
 - **May 22, 2017:**Five Afghan security personnel traveling to a funeral are killed in an ambush in the Faryab province. In Logar province, gunmen shoot and kill a deputy chief of a provincial clerical council. There are no immediate claims of responsibility for either attack. Sources: [Associated Press](#) [575], [Associated Press](#) [575]
 - **May 21, 2017:**Up to 1,000 Taliban fighters attack police outposts across Zabul province, killing at least 20 Afghan police officers and wounding 10 others.
Dozens of Taliban fighters are also killed, according to the military. Simultaneously, the Taliban fire rockets at the provincial governor's compound in Qalat, causing no casualties but damaging the compound and a nearby police station. Sources: [New York Times](#) [576], [Reuters](#) [577]
 - **May 20, 2017:**Taliban fighters attack a bank in Paktia province, killing three people. Security forces kill three of the attackers.
Simultaneously, a Taliban fighter drives an explosives-filled Humvee into the gates of the provincial governor's compound in the city of Ghazni. Two Afghan security personnel and 25 Taliban fighters die in an ensuing firefight, though the Taliban claim they caused more casualties. Also that day, a German aid worker and an Afghan guard are killed in an attack on a house in Kabul, while a Finnish national is kidnapped. The three work for Swedish aid group Operation Mercy. There are no immediate claims of responsibility for the attack on the aid workers, but police suspect the Taliban. Sources: [Reuters](#) [578], [Reuters](#) [577], [Reuters](#) [579], [New York Times](#) [576], [Reuters](#) [580]
 - **May 19, 2017:**An American military convoy north of Kabul strikes a roadside bomb. The U.S. military says there are no casualties despite witness reports.
The Taliban claim credit and claim several U.S. casualties. Later in the day, at least 11 civilians, including five children, are killed when their vehicle strikes an improvised explosive device in the road. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Voice of America](#) [581]
 - **May 17, 2017:**A suicide attack on state-run the Radio Television Afghanistan (RTA) broadcasting station in Jalalabad kills at least five people and wounds 24.
Three other assailants are killed in a gun battle with security forces. ISIS claims responsibility. Source: [Reuters](#) [582]
 - **May 3, 2017:**A suicide car bomb targets a NATO convoy near a National Defence Security checkpoint in Kabul, killing at least eight Afghan civilians and wounding 28 others, including three American soldiers.
The checkpoint is in close proximity to the U.S. embassy and a NATO compound. Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [583], [Washington Post](#) [584]
 - **April 24, 2017:**Suspected Taliban militants explode a car bomb at the gates of the Camp Chapman U.S.-operated base in the eastern province of Khost.
Several Afghan casualties are reported but the U.S. Army does not immediately release details. The attack coincides with a visit by U.S. Secretary of Defense Jim Mattis to Afghanistan. Source: [Reuters](#) [585]
 - **April 20, 2017:**A group of 10 Taliban fighters dressed as Afghan military in two army trucks mounted with machine guns drive onto an Afghan military base in the northern Balkh province.

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Armed with M16 rifles, the militants attack unarmed soldiers who were leaving the base's mosque after Friday prayers. Some of the attackers blow themselves up during the assault. At least 170 soldiers die in the attack, but official expect the death toll to climb to 200. It is the deadliest attack on Afghan forces by the Taliban since the 2001 ouster of the Taliban government. Sources: [New York Times](#) [586], [New York Times](#) [587], [Wall Street Journal](#) [588]

- **April 12, 2017:**A suicide bomber explodes in Kabul near the Administrative Office of the President and the ministries of defense and finance, killing five people and wounding 10 others. ISIS claims responsibility. ISIS also claims that the bomber detonated at the "second checkpoint of the presidential building in Kabul." Source: [CNN](#) [589]
- **March 20, 2017:**A suicide car bomb kills at least six Afghan intelligence officers at a checkpoint near Lashkar Gah in Afghanistan's Helmand province. Seven other officers are wounded. Five insurgents are killed in an ensuing gun battle with security forces. The Taliban claims responsibility. Sources: [New York Times](#) [590], [Associated Press](#) [591]
- **March 17, 2017:**A suicide car bomb kills one Afghan soldier at a military base in Afghanistan's Khost province. Four gunmen attack the base after the bombing but are killed by the Afghan army. The Taliban claims responsibility. Source: [Reuters](#) [590]
- **March 8, 2017:**Four ISIS militants wearing white medical coats and armed with guns and grenades attack the Sardar Mohammad Daud Khan Hospital in Kabul after a suicide bomber blows up the military hospital's gates. Two of the attackers reportedly detonate explosive vests inside the hospital. The attack kills at least 30 people and wounds more than 50. Afghan security forces retake the hospital after a seven-hour fight. Shortly after, ISIS's Amaq news agency claims the attack and shares photos of the siege on the messaging service Telegram. Sources: [BBC News](#) [592], [Associated Press](#) [593], [New York Times](#) [594]
- **March 1, 2017:**Taliban militants detonate a car bomb near a police station in Kabul. Gunmen then attack a police station and barricade themselves inside for several hours until they are neutralized, according to the Afghan government. Soon after the car bomb, two militants attack an office of the National Directorate for Security east of Kabul. One blows himself up and the other is shot and killed. The attacks kills 15 people, including 11 civilians, and wound 50. The Taliban immediately claims responsibility for both attacks, claiming they killed dozens. In the northern Baghlan province, Taliban gunmen seize the Tala wa Barfak district and kill four Afghan security officers. The Taliban also claims to capture light and heavy weaponry. Source: [Reuters](#) [595]
- **February 28, 2017:**Taliban fighters attack a police guard post in Lashkar Gah, killing 11 police officers. Source: [New York Times](#) [596]
- **February 24, 2017:**Taliban fighters ambush police commanders leaving a mosque in Sardar village in Zawzjan province, killing 10 officers and an officer's wife. Four of the attackers are killed and another six are wounded in the ensuing gun battle. After the attack, the Taliban claims responsibility and claims it has captured the village. Sources: [Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty](#) [597], [Al Jazeera](#) [598]
- **February 22, 2017:**A remotely detonated motorcycle bomb at a market in Paktika province, killing three people. There are no immediate claims of responsibility but authorities suspect the Taliban. In a separate incident, Taliban fighters ambush a military convoy in Kapisa province. During the ensuing fight between the attackers and military, a mortar strikes a nearby house, killing four people. Source: [Associated Press](#) [599]
- **February 15, 2017:**Gunmen kidnap 52 farmers in the northern province of Jowzjan. Police blame the Taliban but there are no immediate claims of responsibility or demands. In a separate incident, Taliban fighters attack a village in Faryab province, killing five people. The Taliban take control of the village. Sources: [Reuters](#) [600], [Associated Press](#) [601]
- **February 11, 2017:**A car bomb kills eight people in Lashkar Gah, capital of Helmand province, a day after coalition airstrikes kill at least 26 civilians in the province. The car bomb also wounds 19. The Taliban claim responsibility. Sources: [CNN](#) [602], [CNN](#) [603]
- **February 8, 2017:**Gunmen kill six Afghan International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) workers in Jowzjan province. Authorities believe two missing Red Cross workers may have been taken hostage. Authorities suspect ISIS. The Taliban denied responsibility. The ICRC announced a temporary hold on its work in Afghanistan in response. Sources: [BBC News](#) [604], [New York Times](#) [605]
- **February 7, 2017:**A suicide bomber kills 21 people at the Afghan Supreme Court building in Kabul. Another 41 people are wounded. ISIS claimed responsibility the following day. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [606], [Tolo News](#) [607]
- **January 10, 2017:**A string of suicide bombings in three Afghan cities kill at least 50 people and wound dozens. A suicide bomber in Helmand province's Lashkar Gah kills at least seven people and wounds nine. Police say the bombing targeted a guesthouse used by Afghanistan's main intelligence agency, the National Directorate of Security (NDS). Authorities also find and diffuse an explosives-filled car nearby. Hours later, twin suicide bombings near Afghanistan's parliament in Kabul kill 32 people and wound 70. Later in the day, a bomb in Kandahar targets the provincial governor's office during a visit by a United Arab Emirates delegation. The attack kills 11 people and wounds 17. Five UAE diplomats are killed. The Taliban claim responsibility for the Kabul and Lashkar Gah bombings but credit the Kandahar bombing to an "internal local rivalry." The Taliban say their target in Kabul was a minibus carrying NDS

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- staff. Juma al-Kaabi, the UAE's ambassador to Afghanistan, dies from his wounds a month later. Sources: [Wall Street Journal](#) [608], [Al Jazeera](#) [609], [Associated Press](#) [610], [Reuters](#) [611]
- **January 3, 2017:** Taliban gunmen kill at least four police officers in an ambush in the northeastern Badakhshan province. According to provincial council member Ahmad Bashir Musamum, seven officers are killed in the attack. Source: [Associated Press](#) [612]
 - **December 21, 2016 - December 22, 2016:** Three Taliban gunmen armed with grenades attack the Kabul home of Member of Parliament Mir Wali, killing eight people and wounding six others. Wali and his wife are wounded, while two of their grandchildren are among the dead. The gunmen hold 18 people hostage for 10 hours until police kill the attackers. The Taliban release a statement claiming they attacked Wali's home because of an "important gathering of security officials" there. Source: [BBC News](#) [613]
 - **December 19, 2016:** Gunmen stop a two-car International Committee for the Red Cross (ICRC) convoy traveling to Kunduz province in northern Afghanistan. The gunmen take a Spanish ICRC worker hostage and release the Afghan ICRC employees. There were no immediate claims of responsibility. Sources: [Voice of America](#) [614], [Wall Street Journal](#) [615]
 - **December 19, 2016:** The Taliban releases a propaganda video featuring American citizen Caitlan Coleman and her Canadian husband, Joshua Boyle, who were kidnapped while hiking in Afghanistan in 2013. In the video, Coleman begs President Barack Obama to "just give the offenders something so they and you can save face and we can leave the region permanently." They also ask President-elect Donald Trump to be "merciful to [the Taliban's] people and God willing they will release us." The video also featured the couple's two children. According to a Taliban statement, Coleman was pregnant when she was kidnapped and gave birth to both children after she and her husband converted to Islam in captivity. In response to the video, Canada called for the couple's unconditional release. Sources: [NBC News](#) [616], [NBC News](#) [617], [Associated Press](#) [618]
 - **December 17, 2016:** Gunmen kill six female women and their driver on their way to Kandahar Airport. The women are employees of the foreign security firm Olive Group and had been responsible for security checks for female passengers at the airport. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) [619]
 - **November 21, 2016:** A suicide bomber at a Shiite mosque in Kabul kills 32 people and wounds at least 70 during the Shiite ceremony of Arbaeen. ISIS claims responsibility but does not reveal the bomber's identity. Sources: [Fox News](#) [620], [New York Times](#) [621], [CNN](#) [622]
 - **November 16, 2016:** A suicide bomber on a motorcycle targets a minibus in Kabul carrying members of a security unit responsible for protecting senior Afghan officials. The attack kills two of the security service members and four civilian bystanders, and wounds 10. ISIS's Khorasan Province claims responsibility. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) [623]
 - **November 12, 2016:** A Taliban suicide bomber dressed as a day laborer blows up at the U.S. base Bagram Air Field just north of Kabul. The attack kills four Americans and wounds 16 U.S. service members and a Polish soldier. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) [624]
 - **November 10, 2016:** A Taliban suicide bomber rams a truck into the Mazur Hotel in the northern Afghan city of Mazar-i-Sharif. The hotel is used by German diplomats as their consulate. The truck bombing is followed by gunfire and an explosion inside the hotel. The attack kills at least six people and wounds 120. The Taliban claim the attack is in retaliation for coalition airstrikes in Kunduz a week before. According to Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid, the attackers were sent "with a mission to destroy the German consulate general and kill whoever they found there." Sources: [New York Times](#) [625], [BBC News](#) [626]
 - **October 31, 2016:** A suicide bomber explodes during a meeting of tribal elders at a house in the eastern Afghan province of Nangarhar, killing four people and wounding seven, according to the Afghan government. Nangarhar is reportedly ISIS's main stronghold in Afghanistan. ISIS claims responsibility for killing 15 "apostates" during the attack. Source: [Reuters](#) [627]
 - **October 12, 2016:** An explosion outside a Shiite mosque in the northern Afghan province of Balkh kills at least 14 people and wounds 24 others during an Ashura celebration. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [Reuters](#) [148], [Deutsche Welle](#) [149]
 - **October 11, 2016:** Taliban fighters ambush a police position in Chah-e-Anjir, killing about 100 police officers and soldiers. Taliban fighters reportedly capture at least 22 armored Humvees, dozens of trucks, and hundreds of rifles. In a separate attack later in the evening, gunmen disguised as police officers attack the Shiite shrine Kart-e-Sakhi in Kabul, killing at least 18, including a policeman, and wounding 36 others during an celebration of the Shiite festival of Ashura. ISIS claims responsibility. Sources: [New York Times](#) [628], [Reuters](#) [629], [Reuters](#) [148]
 - **September 5, 2016 - September 6, 2016:** A bomb explodes near the Afghan Defense Ministry in Kabul. After security forces gather at the site, a suicide bomber wearing a military uniform explodes. The attack kills at least 35 people, including a district police chief and five police officers. At least 91 others are wounded. Hours later, a third bomb explodes behind the Kabul bank. Following the blast, three gunmen barricade themselves near the office of the

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

aid group Care International and a government complex. A standoff with Afghan forces ends on September 6 after security forces kill the three gunmen. Six people are wounded. The Taliban claim responsibility for the attacks. Sources: [Reuters](#) [630], [Voice of America](#) [631], [USA Today](#) [632], [CNN](#) [633]

- **August 24, 2016:** A car bomb explodes outside the American University of Afghanistan in Kabul. Gunmen then open fire on the American University campus after the explosion, killing at least 13 people: seven students, a professor, two security guards, and three security forces personnel. At least 14 others are reportedly wounded. Afghan forces kill two gunmen, while a third assailant dies in the car bomb explosion. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Sources: [Fox News](#) [634], [New York Times](#) [635], [Associated Press](#) [636], [CNN](#) [637], [Reuters](#) [638]
- **August 15, 2016:** A bomb attached to a military vehicle explodes outside the U.S. embassy in Kabul, wounding two people. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: [Fox News](#) [639]
- **August 9, 2016:** A bomb kills at least two people and wounds 15 at the main market in the commercial city of Mazar-i-Sharif near the Uzbekistan border. Local police blame a suicide bomber while the Ministry of Interior says the bomb was hidden in a shopping cart. Source: [Reuters](#) [640]
- **August 7, 2016:** Unidentified militants kidnap an American and an Australian in western Kabul. Both men are lecturers at the American University of Afghanistan. Source: [CNN](#) [641]
- **August 1, 2016:** A truck bomb explodes outside a hotel compound used by foreign service contractors in Kabul. The Taliban claim responsibility. Source: [Reuters](#) [642]
- **July 23, 2016:** Two ISIS suicide bombers kill at least 80 people and wound more than 260 during a peaceful rally in Kabul in support of the Hazara, a predominately Shiite minority group. The Taliban condemn the attack. Sources: [CNN](#) [24], [BBC News](#) [643], [Reuters](#) [644]
- **June 20, 2016:** A suicide car bomb in Kabul targets a minibus carrying guards working for the Canadian embassy, killing 14 Nepalese nationals and wounding several others. The Taliban and ISIS issue competing claims of responsibility. Sources: [NBC News](#) [645], [CNN](#) [646]
- **June 5, 2016:** Three Taliban gunmen attack a provincial court in Pul-i-Alam, killing seven people and wounding at least 23. Among the dead are “a number of prosecutors and judges,” according to a Taliban statement over Twitter. The Taliban claim the attack is “retaliation for the execution of six martyred Taliban fighters.” Source: [CNN](#) [647]
- **June 1, 2016:** Five Taliban militants attack an appellate court building in Ghazni, killing a police officer and five civilians. One attacker sets off a suicide bomb at the gate, after which the other four force their way inside the court. The four militants die in the subsequent shootout with security forces before they can set off their own suicide bombs. In a separate incident, gunmen kill three aid workers from the Focus Humanitarian Assistance group in east Afghanistan. Afghan officials blame the Taliban. Sources: [CNN](#) [647], [Deutsche Welle](#) [648], [Reuters](#) [649]
- **May 31, 2016:** Taliban gunmen kill 10 passengers and kidnap 18 more on buses headed toward the Afghan city of Kunduz. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) [650]
- **May 25, 2016:** A suicide bomber kills at least 10 people and wounds four on a bus carrying staff from an appeal court west of Kabul. The Taliban claim responsibility and claim the attack killed or wounded at least 22 people, contrary to numbers from Afghan authorities. Sources: [CNN](#) [647], [Reuters](#) [651]
- **April 19, 2016:** A suicide bomber explodes a car outside a government security building in Kabul. A second attacker then storms the building but dies in a gun battle with security forces. The attack kills at least 64 people and wounds more than 300 others. The attack targets a government security team, though the majority of the casualties are civilians, according to Kabul police. The Taliban claim responsibility. Source: [CNN](#) [12]
- **March 28, 2016:** Militants fire three rockets at the country’s parliament in Kabul. The Taliban claim responsibility. Sources: [NBC News](#) [652], [New York Times](#) [653]
- **January 20, 2016:** A suicide bomber driving an explosives-filled car drives into a minibus carrying employees of Tolo TV, Afghanistan’s largest television network. The attack during rush hour kills seven and wounds at least 25. The Taliban claim responsibility. A Taliban spokesman promises more attacks unless Tolo TV apologizes for its “malicious acts” to the Taliban, to the Afghan people, “and especially to the residents of Kunduz.” Source: [New York Times](#) [216]
- **December 21, 2015:** A Taliban suicide bomber on a motorbike kills six U.S. soldiers patrolling on foot and wounds three others outside of the U.S. base Bagram Air Field, just north of Kabul. Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) [654]
- **December 8, 2015:** A group of heavily armed Taliban suicide bombers wearing Afghan security uniforms assault Kandahar Air Field, leaving more than 50 dead. The attack lasts for 26 hours before the Afghan army reclaims control. Sources: [Fox News](#) [655], [Voice of America](#) [656], [Australian Broadcasting Corporation](#) [657]
- **November 9, 2015:** Rival Taliban factions battle in southern Afghanistan, leaving dozens dead.

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- Source: [Voice of America](#) [658]
- **October 11, 2015 - October 14, 2015:**The Taliban storm two check points in the southern Helmand province, killing 29 Afghan border police officers.
Source: [Washington Free Beacon](#) [659]
 - **September 28, 2015:**The Taliban take control of the northern Afghan city of Kunduz. It is the first major city (population: 300,000) to fall into Taliban hands since the group was forcibly deposed from Kabul in 2001. Sources: [BBC News](#) [64], [New York Times](#) [22]
 - **September 4, 2015:**More than 300 girls are admitted to hospitals after exposure to gas attacks in their schools in Herat, Afghanistan.
The Taliban are suspected. Source: [International Business Times](#) [660]
 - **May 14, 2015:**Taliban gunmen attack the popular Park Palace hotel in Kabul, killing 14, including an American.
Source: [New York Times](#) [661]
 - **July 8, 2014:**A Taliban suicide bomber on a motorbike blows up in front of a clinic in the Bagram district, north of Kabul, killing 10 civilians, four coalition service members and two Afghan police officers.
Source: [Wall Street Journal](#) [662]
 - **March 20, 2014:**Four Taliban gunmen kill at least nine people, including children, in an attack on Kabul's Serena Hotel.
The hotel is popular with foreign dignitaries and wealthy Afghans. Security forces later kill the gunmen. Source: [New York Times](#) [663]
 - **January 17, 2014:**Taliban suicide bombers blow up a restaurant that is regularly visited by Westerners in Kabul's diplomatic quarter, killing 21.
Among the dead are four U.N. personnel. Sources: [New York Times](#) [664], [New York Times](#) [665]
 - **April 2012:**The Taliban attack the diplomatic quarter in Kabul. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tells Reuters, "These attacks are the beginning of the spring offensive and we [have] planned them for months."
He says that the primary targets are the German and British embassies and NATO headquarters. U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Ryan Crocker says that the Haqqani network most likely helped the Taliban to carry out the attacks.
Source: [Reuters](#) [20]
 - **February 2012:**After U.S. soldiers burn Qurans on February 22 at Bagram Air Base in Afghanistan, violent protests erupt across the country.
U.S. military officials say that the Qurans contained extremist inscriptions that Taliban inmates used to communicate with one another and fuel extremism. During the riots, angry mobs scream "die, die, foreigners," among other anti-Western chants. Source: [CBS News](#) [666]
 - **September 13, 2011:**Taliban gunmen strike the U.S. embassy and NATO's ISAF headquarters in Kabul, killing three police officers and one civilian.
Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid tells CNN that the Taliban are targeting "the U.S. Embassy, governmental organizations and other foreign organizations." The next day, U.S. and Afghan officials say the Haqqani network is most likely behind the attack. Sources: [New York Times](#) [213], [CNN](#) [214], [New York Times](#) [215], [BBC News](#) [186]
 - **September 10, 2011:**A Taliban suicide bomber detonates an IED at the entrance of the Combat Outpost Sayed Abab, an ISAF base in Wardak province, Afghanistan.
The bomber kills four Afghans and wounds 77 U.S. soldiers in the attack. Source: [Long War Journal](#) [667]
 - **September 2011:**Taliban suicide bombers attack the home of former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani, killing him and four other members of Afghanistan's High Peace Council.
As an ethnic Tajik, Rabbani had been selected to lead the High Peace Council, a committee established to hold peace talks with the Taliban. Sources: [Telegraph](#) [212], [Los Angeles Times](#) [668]
 - **August 5, 2010:**Taliban gunmen murder 10 aid workers in Badakhshan, Afghanistan.
The workers include six Americans, four Afghans, one Briton and, and one German. The Taliban claim that the aid workers were "spies and Christian missionaries." Source: [New York Times](#) [669]
 - **June 30, 2009:**The Taliban takes U.S. soldier Private Bowe Bergdahl hostage.
Days after his capture, a senior U.S. military official said that Bergdahl was captured by low-level insurgents and then "sold" to members of the Taliban-aligned Haqqani network. Sources: [CNN](#) [227], [Guardian](#) [229]
 - **November 10, 2008:**The Taliban kidnap *New York Times* reporter David Rohde.
Rohde escapes from captivity seven months later in June 2009. Rohde's family asserts that there was no ransom paid, or Taliban prisoners released, in exchange for Rohde's release. Source: [New York Times](#) [670]
 - **August 17, 2008 - August 18, 2008:**At least 10 Taliban suicide bombers attack the U.S. military base Camp Salerno in Bamiyan, Afghanistan.
In a twin attack, approximately 100 Taliban insurgents attack and kill 10 elite French paratroopers in a district near Kabul. The *New York Times* reports that NATO and American military officers blame the increased Taliban insurgency on "the greater freedom of movement the militants have in Pakistan's tribal areas on the Afghan border." Source: [New York Times](#) [671]
 - **July 7, 2008:**A suicide bomber attacks the Indian embassy in Kabul, killing 41 and injuring over 140.
U.S. intelligence agencies conclude that the ISI helped plan the attack, a claim that Pakistan strongly denies. Sources: [Long War Journal](#) [672], [New York Times](#) [673], [Guardian](#) [674]

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

- **February 2008:** A Taliban suicide bomber kills over 80 and injures 50 when he detonates explosives at a dogfight near Kandahar. The attack is the deadliest in Afghanistan since 2001. Source: [Washington Post](#) [211]
- **July 19, 2007:** Taliban insurgents kidnap 23 South Korean missionaries in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan. The Taliban kill two Korean hostages before the Taliban and the South Korean government reach a deal. The Taliban release the remaining hostages in August. As part of the deal, the South Korean government promises to withdraw its 200 troops from Afghanistan by the end of 2007 and to disallow evangelical missionaries to travel to Afghanistan. Sources: [New York Times](#) [675], [New York Times](#) [676]
- **February 27, 2007:** A Taliban suicide bomber blows up a checkpoint at Bagram Air Base while U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney is visiting, killing 20 and injuring 20 more. Cheney, who is unhurt, is the target of the attack. Source: [CNN](#) [207]
- **April 2006:** A renewed Taliban insurgency emerges with an uptick in suicide bombings and the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs). Source: [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [47]
- **September 9, 2001:** Two Tunisians, reportedly sent to Afghanistan by Osama bin Laden, pose as journalists and assassinate Ahmed Shah Massoud, leader of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance in Afghanistan. Source: [Carnegie Endowment for International Peace](#) [677]
- **March 2001:** Taliban fighters decimate two massive statues of Buddha in Bamiyan, Afghanistan, with anti-aircraft weapons and tanks, prompting an international outcry from the United States, the European Union, Russia, India, and Pakistan. Sources: [Guardian](#) [678], *The Looming Tower*, Lawrence Wright, p. 381
- **August 1998:** Taliban forces capture the city of Mazar in northwest Afghanistan, slaughtering 5,000 to 6,000 people. Taliban troops reportedly shoot at “anything that [moves],” specially targeting members of the Persian-speaking Shiite Hazara ethnic community. Among the dead are 10 Iranian diplomats and a journalist. Sources: [Human Rights Watch](#) [205], *The Looming Tower*, Lawrence Wright, p. 304
- **September 1996:** Taliban fighters capture Kabul, driving out the mujahideen forces. The Taliban implement a hardline version of sharia based on Hanafi Islamic jurisprudence, implementing Islamic punishments such as public executions, amputations, and stoning. Sources: [BBC News](#) [204], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [47], *The Looming Tower*, Lawrence Wright, p. 261
- **1994:** The Taliban emerge as a singular, armed force in Kandahar, Afghanistan, with Mullah Mohammed Omar as their leader. By the end of 1994, the Taliban have complete control over Kandahar and Helmand province. Sources: [New Yorker](#) [53], [Council on Foreign Relations](#) [47]

Domestic Counter-Extremism

Government Counter Extremism

Afghanistan lacks a “comprehensive formal national countering violent extremism (CVE) strategy,” according to the U.S. State Department. In 2016, the State Department credited Afghanistan’s Office of the National Security Council (ONSC) for beginning the process of creating a CVE strategy, while government ministries have “CVE issues incorporated in their portfolios.” The ONSC began work on a CVE strategy in late 2015. The ONSC has elicited advice and feedback from provincial leaders, while also creating an inter-ministerial working group to develop the country’s CVE strategy. The State Department has also praised the “major role” of Afghanistan’s media in countering violent extremism by highlighting the Afghan people’s criticism of terrorist tactics. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [25], [U.S. Department of State](#) [34])

Created in March 2014, the government-supported Moderation Center of Afghanistan promotes intrafaith communication and a government-sanctioned “moderate interpretation of Islam.” Afghan Shiite and Sunni clerics traveled to Kuwait for training and then became teachers throughout Afghanistan to train other religious leaders. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [679])

Former President Hamid Karzai created the National Ulema Council in 2002. The quasi-governmental organization includes religious scholars (“*ulema*”) working to spread moderation through Afghanistan’s religious institutions. The October 2015 National Ulema Conference in Support of Peace in Afghanistan brought together more than 500 religious scholars, including members of the council. Attendees issued a joint condemnation of recent violence and called on the government and armed opposition groups to reach an accord through peaceful negotiation. According to the State Department, Afghan leaders highlight the council’s role in “preaching peace and denouncing terrorist attacks....” (Sources:

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

[Afghan Office of the President](#) [680], [U.S. Department of State](#) [25], [High Peace Council](#) [681])

Karzai also created the High Peace Council in 2010 to negotiate with the Taliban. The council held informal meetings with Taliban members on the sidelines of other events until their first direct meeting with the Taliban on July 7, 2015. Meeting participants agreed to “move forward with sincerity to ensure security and lasting peace in Afghanistan.” They also agreed to hold future meetings “on developing a mechanism to put an end to the killing and shedding the blood of innocent people.” (Sources: [Associated Press](#) [682], [High Peace Council](#) [683])

Afghan individuals accused of terrorism are prosecuted by Afghanistan’s Justice Center in Parwan (JCIP). In July 2015, the Office of the National Security Council granted the JCIP jurisdiction over all individuals captured on the battlefield; persons accused of terrorist crimes; influential and prominent members of the Taliban; and commanders of terrorist groups. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani expanded the JCIP’s authority in September 2015 and gave it nationwide jurisdiction, declaring it to be Afghanistan’s counterterrorism court. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [684])

Afghanistan’s government has sought to initiate dialogue with insurgent factions. The government began negotiations with Hezb-i-Islami in March 2016 and signed a draft treaty with the group on September 22, 2016. Under the terms of the treaty the Afghan government would grant leader Gulbuddin Hekmatyar amnesty and provide for his security while lobbying international actors to lift sanctions on the group. Human Right Watch criticized the treaty for not holding warlords accountable, while the United States praised the deal as “a step in bringing the conflict in Afghanistan to a peaceful end.” Afghanistan’s chief executive, Abdullah Abdullah, called on the Taliban to sign a similar treaty. (Sources: [CNN](#) [187], [Voice of America](#) [190])

Military Counter Extremism

NATO launched the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan in 2001 under a U.N. mandate to root out the Taliban and support Afghanistan’s security. The mission included 130,000 troops from 51 nations at its height. ISAF officially ended combat missions in Afghanistan in December 2014 and Afghan forces took control of the country’s security. Up to 17,000 NATO troops were expected to remain in Afghanistan in a supporting role as the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) assumed full responsibility for Afghanistan’s security and defense. NATO launched Operation Resolute Support in January 2015 to train and assist ANDSF. By 2018, the United States had 14,000 troops in Afghanistan. That December, U.S. President Donald Trump called for a drawdown of half of the U.S. troops in Afghanistan. (Sources: [NATO](#) [685], [Guardian](#) [28], [U.S. Department of State](#) [25], [CNN](#) [686])

In October 2015, then-President Barack Obama halted the drawdown of U.S. troops from the country, citing the need to prevent Afghanistan from being used as “a safe haven for terrorists to attack our nation again.” Afghan security has continued to work with U.S. forces to combat domestic extremist groups such as the Taliban and ISIS. Obama announced in July 2016 that the United States would maintain a troop presence of more than 8,000 soldiers through the end of his term in 2017. According to Obama, “the Afghan people will need the partnership of the world, led by the United States, for many years to come.” (Sources: [New York Times](#) [29], [New York Times](#) [30])

Afghanistan’s security is challenged by reported shortages in military equipment and personnel. The country’s air force comprises 130 aircraft, but the air force does not have enough personnel to maintain and fly them. The Afghan air force flew 22,260 missions in 2015. The air force flew almost 7,000 missions between January and May 2016, but U.S. military advisers in Afghanistan have pointed to the challenge of “human capital.” In October 2016, Afghan military sources told Reuters that the Afghan security forces are losing up to 5,000 soldiers each month due to desertions or casualties, with only about 3,000 new soldiers and police recruited at the same time. As of March 2017, the Afghan military numbered approximately 300,000 soldiers. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [687], [Reuters](#) [629], [Reuters](#) [688])

In March 2017, the Afghan government announced plans to double the country’s complement of 17,000 elite special forces to combat militants such as the Taliban. As of the announcement, Afghan special forces carried out 70 percent of the country’s offensive operations. The following month, U.S. General John Nicholson called for thousands more troops to support the NATO coalition during the Taliban’s planned spring offensive. As of April 2017, there were 8,500 American troops in Afghanistan supporting the Afghan forces. That month, 300 U.S. Marines arrived in Afghanistan to aid Afghan forces in recapturing territory from the Taliban in Helmand province. It is reportedly the first significant Marine presence in Afghanistan since 2014. In August 2017, President Donald Trump announced that U.S. troops would remain in

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Afghanistan indefinitely. The following month, the U.S. government sent an additional 3,000 troops to Afghanistan. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [688], [Al Jazeera](#) [583], [NPR](#) [689], [Military Times](#) [690], [BBC News](#) [691])

In April 2018, the U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) released a report signaling a decrease in the number of personnel in the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) in 2017. ANDSF includes the army, air force, and police. According to the report, the ANDSF included an estimated 296,400 personnel as of January 2018. The number represents a 10.6 percent decrease over January 2017. SIGAR also noted that the portion of the Afghan population living under the authority of the Afghan government as of January 2018 had increased to 65 percent, an increase of 1 percent from October 2017. In 2017, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani announced a plan, in conjunction with the Pentagon, to double the size of ANDSF's commando forces by 2020, from 11,700 to 23,300. According to a Pentagon report cited by the *Washington Post*, Ghani wants Afghan forces "to cover the preponderance of the population by 2020, compelling the Taliban to seek reconciliation." (Sources: [Reuters](#) [692], [Washington Post](#) [693])

International airstrikes targeting militants in Afghanistan have also led to civilian casualties. On February 10, 2017, U.S. and Afghan coalition forces killed at least 26 Afghan civilians during airstrikes in Helmand province. The strikes targeted "anti-government elements," according to the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. In November 2016, at least 30 civilians died in a NATO airstrike in Kunduz. NATO said the strike was to protect "friendly forces under fire." (Sources: [CNN](#) [603], [Associated Press](#) [694], [Al Jazeera](#) [695])

On December 9, 2019, the *Washington Post* published thousands of pages of documents revealing that senior U.S. officials misrepresented the reality of the 18-year campaign in Afghanistan. According to the documents, the U.S. military achieved a quick but short-term victory over the Taliban and al-Qaeda in early 2002, and the Pentagon's focus then shifted toward Iraq. However, the Taliban returned in greater numbers. Despite troops on the ground voicing concerns about the American strategy's growing shortcomings, senior American officials almost always said that progress was being made. "We were devoid of a fundamental understanding of Afghanistan — we didn't know what we were doing," Douglas Lute, a three-star Army general who served as the White House's Afghan war czar during the Bush and Obama administrations, told government interviewers in 2015. The 2,000 pages of interviews were obtained through a Freedom of Information Act request and years of legal back-and-forth with the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, according to the *Washington Post*. (Sources: [Washington Post](#) [696], [New York Times](#) [697])

ISIS

Afghan forces are combatting ISIS domestically with the U.S.-led international coalition. ISIS has attempted to expand its presence in Afghanistan, and the United States is monitoring ISIS-affiliated groups in the country, according to the U.S. State Department. In July 2016, Afghan forces supported by the United States reportedly killed an estimated 300 ISIS fighters and several top leaders in an operation in the eastern part of the country. U.S. General John Nicholson of NATO told Reuters in August 2016 that the United States is intent on degrading ISIS's capability in Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [644], [U.S. Department of State](#) [698], [U.S. Department of State](#) [25])

The United States has also targeted ISIS in Afghanistan. On April 13, 2017, U.S. forces dropped an 11-ton warhead on a series of Afghan caves allegedly used by ISIS in Nangarhar province in eastern Afghanistan. Afghan officials claimed the bomb killed at least 94 ISIS fighters, though the U.S. military has refused to confirm the bomb's toll. The warhead—the GBU-43B Massive Ordnance Air Blast, nicknamed the "mother of all bombs"—was the largest non-nuclear warhead ever deployed by the United States. Afghan officials criticized the U.S. government for using the ordnance against ISIS instead of the Taliban, which eight days later killed at least 170 Afghan soldiers in its largest ever attack on an Afghan military base. (Sources: [CNN](#) [699], [ABC News](#) [700], [Associated Press](#) [701], [Reuters](#) [69])

According to the U.S. State Department, "grassroots, civilian-organized militias" have also emerged in Afghanistan to fight ISIS. These militias have at times partnered with the Afghan Security Forces. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [25])

Taliban

The Afghan Security Forces continue to coordinate with the United States in confronting the Taliban. According to then-U.S. State Department Deputy Spokesman Mark Toner in August 2016, the United States remains committed to helping Afghanistan "build a more stable, peaceful, democratic, and prosperous future." The United States is in "close contact and

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

coordination with the Afghan Security Forces ... if we see opportunities to take out key leadership [of the Taliban], we're going to strike." Nonetheless, some Afghan officials have criticized the United States for focusing its military strikes on ISIS rather than the Taliban. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [702], [Reuters](#) [69])

According to U.S. General John Nicholson, the top U.S. and NATO officer in Afghanistan, Afghan forces suffered 5,000 fatalities in 2015 against the Taliban. Nicholson told Reuters in August 2016 that Afghan forces have been more aggressive in confronting the Taliban in 2016, and therefore more successful. Afghan forces have reportedly used schools in Taliban-held areas as military bases, according to Human Rights Watch. The organization accused Afghan forces of "putting children at risk and depriving thousands of an education." (Sources: [Associated Press](#) [703], [Reuters](#) [644], [Voice of America](#) [704], [Human Rights Watch](#) [705])

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani initiated direct contact with the Taliban in July 2015 in an attempt to start a peace process. The talks collapsed later that month after the publication of the 2013 death of Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar. In December 2015, Afghanistan, China, Pakistan, and the United States committed to resuming peace talks with the Taliban. By June 2017, however, continuous violent attacks by the Taliban had derailed talks as the government debated whether to increase the severity of its responses. After a May 31, 2017, bombing killed more than 80 people in Kabul, the government ordered the execution of 11 Taliban prisoners. The Taliban threatened retaliation against the Afghan judiciary and also foreign detainees. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [706], [Voice of America](#) [707], [U.S. Department of State](#) [702])

In a bid to end the 18-year Afghanistan war, Qatar and Germany sponsored a two-day intra-Afghan meeting in Doha in July 2019. The high-profile meeting featured Afghan leaders and Taliban representatives. Around 50 Afghan politicians, activists, and journalists joined the Taliban in discussions on ways to find lasting peace in Afghanistan. As the Taliban has repeatedly refused to negotiate with the Western-backed government of Ashraf Ghani, they agreed to join the meeting on the condition that the attendees were there only in a personal capacity. The talks were informal and were not expected to result in concrete settlements or policies, but attendees were hopeful that the meeting would set the groundwork for future negotiations. (Source: [Al Jazeera](#) [80])

The Afghan government and United States have both engaged in negotiations with the Taliban to end the war that began in 2001. On February 29, 2020, U.S. and Taliban representatives signed an agreement in Qatar for a gradual U.S. troop withdrawal in exchange for the Taliban renouncing renounce al-Qaeda and agreeing to prevent al-Qaeda and other groups from using Afghanistan as a base for terrorism against the United States. The Taliban also agreed to negotiate a permanent ceasefire with other Afghan militants and the Afghan government. The Afghan government voiced immediate objections to a clause calling for a prisoner swap of 5,000 Taliban prisoners in Afghan custody for 1,000 prisoners held by the Taliban as a precondition for negotiations. The government argued that the United States did not have the authority to free Taliban prisoners from Afghan custody and that should be left to direct negotiations between the Afghan government and the Taliban. In response, U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the United States would work on confidence-building measures with the Taliban and the Afghan government. (Sources: [Associated Press](#) [97], [Al Jazeera](#) [98], [U.S. Department of State](#) [99], [Washington Post](#) [708])

On May 23, 2020, the Taliban announced a three-day Eid ceasefire. The statement instructed Taliban fighters to refrain from entering government areas, and also stated that Kabul forces should not enter territories under their control. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani accepted the ceasefire, and ordered his forces to comply, also announcing plans to release up to 2,000 Taliban prisoners. Despite the ceasefire, according to Javid Faisal, a spokesman for the country's main intelligence and security office in Kabul, at least 146 civilians were killed and another 430 were wounded by the Taliban during Ramadan. Following the three-day Eid ceasefire on May 26, Faisal announced that Afghan authorities would release as many as 900 Taliban prisoners. The Afghan government also urged the Taliban to extend the Eid ceasefire. As of May 2020, Kabul has released about 1,000 Taliban inmates, whereas the Taliban has released about 300 Afghan security forces. On May 27, Reuters reported that two senior U.S. officials in Kabul claimed that the U.S. will significantly reduce the number of troops in Afghanistan from 13,000 to about 8,600 by early June 2020. Due to ongoing concerns regarding the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, the withdrawal is ahead of the original mid-July deadline agreed upon by the U.S. and the Taliban on February 29 in Doha, Qatar. (Sources: [Al Jazeera](#) [114], [Al Jazeera](#) [709], [Reuters](#) [7], [New York Times](#), [8] [The Hill](#) [9])

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

International Counter-Extremism

International Organizations

The U.S. and the Taliban resumed peace negotiations in July 2019 in Doha which focused on establishing direct talks between the Taliban and Afghans and forging a ceasefire. On August 1, 2019, it was reported that the Trump administration is preparing to withdraw 7,000 troops, about half the total U.S. deployment, in exchange for a number of concessions from the Taliban. There are two main parts of the deal: the Taliban must start negotiations with the Afghan government as well as agree to a ceasefire and renounce all its ties to al-Qaeda. As of August 2, 2019, Trump has informed advisers that he plans to withdraw all U.S. troops by the 2020 election. It is uncertain if a withdrawal plan has been coordinated by the Defense and State Departments or if the Trump administration has informed Kabul of the strategy. American and Taliban officials initiated an eighth round of talks in Doha on August 3, 2019 with U.S. envoy for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad tweeting, “we are pursuing a peace agreement not a withdrawal agreement, a peace agreement that enables withdrawal.” However, on September 8, 2019, U.S. President Donald Trump called off the talks between the Taliban and the United States. Trump claimed the talk withdrawal was the result of group fighters overrunning parts of the strategic northern city of Kunduz compounded by deadly Taliban-claimed suicide attacks the week prior. (Sources: [New York Times](#) [710], [Washington Post](#) [711], [The Hill](#) [712], [Al Jazeera](#) [713], [New York Times](#) [714])

Afghanistan has “consistently emphasized the need to strengthen joint cooperation to fight terrorism and violent extremism in a variety of bilateral and multilateral fora,” according to the U.S. State Department. In December 2015, Afghanistan participated in the Heart of Asia Conference in Pakistan. In May 2015, Afghanistan, the United Nations, and Tajikistan organized the “Sharing of Experiences on Implementing the UN Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy in Central Asia for Heart of Asia Countries.” (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [715])

Afghanistan has also belonged to the Asia/Pacific Group on Money Laundering since April 2006. In June 2014, the Financial Action Task Force warned Afghanistan that it risked being placed on a list of “high-risk and non-cooperative jurisdictions” if it did not enact anti-money laundering and terror-financing legislation. The Afghan government amended its laws in 2015 to increase cross-border declarations for the physical transportation of cash and negotiable instruments, according to the State Department. In 2016, Afghanistan froze the assets of individuals and entities designated under U.N. Security Council resolutions 1267 and 1988, which related to ISIS, al-Qaeda, and related groups. (Sources: [U.S. Department of State](#) [715], [U.S. Department of State](#) [34], [U.N. Security Council](#) [716], [U.N. Security Council](#) [717])

China’s Role in Countering Terrorism in Afghanistan

On June 20, 2019, China hosted a Taliban delegation in an effort to promote peace and reconciliation in Afghanistan. China’s Xinjiang region shares a short border with Afghanistan, and it is suspected that the talks were held in part to prevent Islamist extremists from recruiting or operating in the mostly Muslim Xinjiang. Furthermore, on July 11 and 12, 2019, the United States, Russia, China, and Pakistan held talks in Beijing to call on the Taliban to immediately agree to a ceasefire and to direct negotiations with the Afghan government. Pakistan’s inclusion in the Beijing talks was considered pivotal as Islamabad has active, albeit clandestine, channels in negotiating with the Taliban. A Taliban delegation met with Chinese officials in Beijing on September 23, 2019, to discuss peace efforts in Afghanistan. The Taliban’s nine-member delegation traveled to Beijing and met Deng Xijun, China’s special representative for Afghanistan, said Suhail Shaheen, the Afghan group’s spokesman in Qatar. (Sources: [Reuters](#) [718], [U.S. Department of State](#) [719], [Radio Free Europe](#) [720], [Al Jazeera](#) [721], [Reuters](#) [722])

Cooperation with India

The leaders of Afghanistan and India agreed in late August 2016 to continue working together to “overcome terror and extremism” facing their countries. India is one of the largest donors to Afghanistan’s reconstruction efforts, having invested approximately \$2 billion since 2001. According to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Afghanistan “continues to be challenged by externally sponsored instruments and entities of violence and terror.” Indian officials are reportedly concerned about Pakistani militants crossing the border into Afghanistan to carry out terrorist attacks. (Sources: [Voice of America](#) [723], [Radio Free Europe Radio Liberty](#) [724], [Diplomat](#) [725], [Bakhtar News Agency](#) [726])

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Public Opinion

Personal Safety

The United Nations recorded near record levels of civilian casualties in Afghanistan between January and March 2018. That February, the *Washington Post* reported high levels of feelings of insecurity among the Afghan population, as well as a general feeling that the government has abandoned the Afghan people. (Sources: [Washington Post](#) [727], [Washington Post](#) [198])

According to a 2016 poll of the Afghan people by the Asia Foundation, 69.8 percent of Afghans fear for their personal safety. This represents only a slight increase over the 2015 survey's result of 67 percent, but is still the highest number recorded in a decade. According to the 2016 poll, Afghans in the southwest region of the country experienced the greatest fear for their safety (82 percent). Within that region, 55.4 percent residents of Helmand province reported always being afraid for their safety. Overall, 73.5 percent of Afghans living in urban areas said they feared for their safety, compared with 68.6 percent of Afghans living in rural areas. (Sources: [Asia Foundation](#) [728], [Asia Foundation](#) [729])

Public safety fears have negatively affected Afghan civics. In the 2016 survey, 74.8 percent of Afghans believed it dangerous to run for public office. Afghans' fear of voting declined slightly from 55.6 percent in 2015 to 53.7 percent in 2016, though the Asia Foundation noted that no major elections took place in 2016. The Asia Foundation also recorded a slight increase in Afghans' fear of participating in peaceful demonstrations, rising from 69.1 percent in 2015 to 71.6 percent in 2016. (Source: [Asia Foundation](#) [728])

Afghans are also increasingly fearful of travel. The Asia Foundation recorded an all-time high of 81.5 percent of Afghans reported some or a lot of fear when traveling to other regions of the country. This represented an increase of 20.5 percent since 2008. (Source: [Asia Foundation](#) [728])

The Asia Foundation poll found that 53.7 percent of Afghans believed that the Afghan National Army is getting better at providing security, while 20 percent believed the army is getting worse. A smaller 39.6 percent believed that the Afghan Local Police (ALP) were improving, while 26.4 percent believed the ALP was getting worse. Only 34.6 percent of Afghans believe the Afghan National Police (ANP) is getting better at providing security, while 30.7 believe the ANP is getting worse. (Source: [Asia Foundation](#) [728])

ISIS

Almost three out of four Afghans (74.3 percent) polled by the Asia Foundation in 2015 had heard of ISIS. Of that number, 54.2 percent said that ISIS poses or could pose a threat in the future to their home districts. Knowledge of ISIS was higher in Kabul and the southeastern provinces and lower in more remote areas, according to the Asia Foundation. In the 2016 poll, overall knowledge of ISIS increased to 81.3 percent, but perception of ISIS as a security threat decreased from 2015 (54.2 percent) to 2016 (47.9). The 2016 survey found that 94.6 percent of Afghans in general fear an encounter with ISIS. (Sources: [Asia Foundation](#) [729], [Asia Foundation](#) [728])

According to the U.S. State Department's 2016 Country Report on Afghanistan, ISIS has received little support among the Afghan population since the group declared a province in Afghanistan and Pakistan in January 2015. According to the State Department, Afghan militants, including the Taliban, have largely rejected ISIS's ideology and tactics. (Source: [U.S. Department of State](#) [34])

Armed Opposition Groups

A 2016 survey by the Asia Foundation found that 93 percent of Afghans are fearful of encountering the Taliban. As in 2015, the 2016 survey found that 62.9 percent of Afghans believed that a peace process with armed opposition groups could help stabilize Afghanistan, but confidence levels dropped in Kabul and the central region, as well as in the western and northeastern regions. (Source: [Asia Foundation](#) [728])

Sympathy for armed opposition groups fell by 10.8 percent in 2016 to 16.7 percent. When the Asia Foundation asked

Afghanistan: Extremism & Counter-Extremism

Afghans in 2016 why they believed armed opposition groups are fighting against the Afghan government, 23.1 percent responded that the armed opposition groups are seeking power, an increase over 2015 (18.9 percent) and 2014 (15.6 percent). Other reasons cited include: support from Pakistan (12 percent), government corruption (7 percent), unemployment/poverty (2 percent), the presence of foreign troops/foreign community (11 percent), and to support Islam (2 percent). In 2015, Afghans had selected the pursuit of power as the primary motivator for armed opposition groups in the country. In 2014, Afghans had largely believed the presence of foreign troops motivated Afghanistan's armed opposition groups, according to the Asia Foundation. (Sources: [Asia Foundation](#) [728], [Asia Foundation](#) [729])