**Name:** Taliban

**Type of Organization:**
- Insurgent
- non-state actor
- regional
- terrorist
- transnational
- violent

**Ideologies and Affiliations:**
- Deobandi
- Islamist
- jihadist
- Pashtun
- Salafi
- Sunni
- Wahhabi

**Place of Origin:**
Kandahar, Afghanistan

**Year of Origin:**
1994

**Founder(s):**
Mullah Mohammed Omar

**Places of Operation:**
Afghanistan and Pakistan

**Overview**

**Also Known As:**
- De Afghanistan Islami Emarat
- De Talebano Islami Ghurdzang
- Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan
- Islamic Movement of Taliban
- Students of Islamic Knowledge Movement
- Tahrike Islami’a Taliban
- Taleban
- Taliban Islamic Movement
- Talibano Islami Tahrik
- Tehrik

**Executive Summary:**

The Taliban (Pashto for “students”) 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.) In 2014, the “core Taliban” were estimated to include over 60,000 fighters with varying degrees of loyalty. These forces have allowed the Taliban to remain a credible fighting force with the ability to win and hold territory. According to a U.N. report released in September 2015, the Taliban had reclaimed more territory in Afghanistan by that time than at any point since the 2001 U.S.-led coalition invaded in response to the September 11 attacks. By September 2017, the Taliban reportedly controlled or contested up to 45 percent of Afghanistan. According to an October 2018 report by the Special
Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction’s (SIGAR), the Taliban controlled more territory in Afghanistan than it had at any other point since 2001. SIGAR reported that the Afghan government controlled or influenced just 55.5 percent of the country, the lowest level reported since 2015 when the government controlled 72 percent.14

Afghan security forces have suffered immense casualties throughout the war. In an interview on December 4, 2018, U.S. Central Command commander, Lieutenant General Kenneth McKenzie, stated that Afghan “losses are not going to be sustainable.”15 In January 2019, Afghan President Asraf Ghani claimed that 45,000 Afghan security personnel had been killed since 2014, nearly double that of previous estimates.16 Later that month, U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad met with representatives of the Taliban in Doha, Qatar for six days of negotiations around a “comprehensive ceasefire” that would be the first step in an overall negotiated peace.17 On January 28, 2019, the U.S. government and Taliban reportedly agreed to a framework for a peace agreement to end the war in Afghanistan that would include the Taliban preventing “Afghanistan from ever becoming a platform for international terrorist groups or individuals” in return for a U.S. military withdrawal.18 The Taliban delegation then met with Afghan politicians on February 4 in Moscow, Russia, where the two parties discussed a broad plan for ending the war.19

The Taliban’s current leader, announced in May 2016, is Haibatullah Akhundzada [3].20 The Taliban were founded in 1994 by Mullah Mohammed Omar [4] in Kandahar to impose a puritanical Islamic order on Afghanistan. The Taliban’s roots can be traced to the Pakistani-trained mujahideen who fought against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The predominantly Pashtun tribesmen that comprised the Taliban quickly consolidated power by force throughout Afghanistan and, in 1996, seized control of the capital, Kabul. The “Emirate of Afghanistan,” as the Taliban refer to their domain, was born. With generous financial support from Saudi Arabia and Pakistan, especially the latter’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency, the Taliban enforced a strict code of sharia (Islamic law) and harbored al-Qaeda [5] and other jihadist organizations. The Taliban-run government in Afghanistan was recognized by only three countries: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

While the Taliban hosted al-Qaeda, Osama bin Laden’s group ran training camps and planned and executed numerous terrorist attacks, including the multiple airplane hijackings and strikes against the United States on September 11, 2001. In the aftermath of 9/11, the Taliban rejected a U.S. ultimatum to turn over bin Laden and kick out al-Qaeda. In response, the U.S. and allied countries invaded Afghanistan and swiftly deposed the Taliban government.

Since being driven out of Kabul, the Taliban have 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 filled the vacuum. By December 2015, vast swathes of Helmand Province had fallen to the Taliban. U.S. Special Operations forces responded by taking aggressive steps to halt this advance.21 One year later, according to the Pentagon, the Taliban retained control of less than 10 percent of the Afghan population, while another roughly 26 percent remained contested.22 As of October 2018, though, the Afghan government controlled or influenced just 55.5 percent of the country.23

The Taliban’s wing in Pakistan has repeatedly attacked the Pakistani government and the country’s civilians. Such attacks include the October 2012 shooting of 15-year-old education activist Malala Yousafzai as well as the December 2014 massacre of 132 children at an army-run school in Peshawar. On January 20, 2016, the Taliban claimed responsibility for two attacks that together claimed over 20 lives: one targeting a university near Peshawar, and the other on a news crew in Kabul.24 In August 2016, the Taliban forged a ceasefire with ISIS [6] after more than a year of intense combat between the radical Islamist groups.25

Senior American generals have accused Russia of arming the Taliban. General Curtis Scaparrotti, NATO’s Supreme Allied Commander, Europe and the commander of U.S. European Command, warned in March 2017 that “I’ve seen the influence of Russia of late—increased influence in terms of association and perhaps even supply to the Taliban.”26 Likewise, the top American commander in Afghanistan, General John Nicholson, said in April 2017 that Russia is providing weapons to the
Taliban officials claim that the group has had prominent contacts with Russia since at least 2007, but that Russia’s role with respect to the Taliban does not go beyond “moral and political support.” Russia denies that it is aiding the Taliban, claiming that Moscow is simply trying to get the group to engage in diplomatic negotiations.

In July 2018, 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 April 2019, the United States and Taliban had reached a framework agreement that included a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan, but talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government had stalled.

**Doctrine:**

The Taliban are an Islamist movement that seeks to establish a caliphate under sharia (Islamic law). Islamists of this mold embrace Salafism, an austere and radical interpretation of Islam, holding that Muslims should emulate the actions of the first generation of Muslim leaders, who are known as the righteous. The Taliban repudiate more than 1,000 years of Islamic jurisprudence and instead impose a strict code of Islamic law. Under Taliban rule, a religious police force was officially established under the guise of “the Ministry for the Suppression of Vice and the Promotion of Virtue.”

This fundamentalist ideology was evident in the name they adopted. They called themselves Taliban (students) and embraced the strict Deobandi interpretation of the faith. This school was a branch of Sunni Hanafi Islam that developed in the late nineteenth century in the madrassas (religious schools) of British India. The Deobandis emphasized Islamic learning, and aimed to raise a new generation of pious Muslims who would learn the Quran as well as the lived experience of Islam’s prophet Muhammad. The Deobandis’ vision consigned women and Shiite Muslims to the margins of society, and flattened all forms of hierarchy in the ummah (community of believers).

The Taliban’s fundamentalist ideology is overlaid with a strong Pashtun tribal affiliation. In addition to stoking rivalries between Afghanistan’s non-Pashtun ethnic groups, the Taliban’s tribal emphasis on being a good host dictated that it maintain good relations with al-Qaeda despite doctrinal disputes. One of the fiercest disputes between the Taliban and al-Qaeda regarded the Saudi royal family, which simultaneously opposed al-Qaeda’s brand of radicalism while financing the madrassas (Muslim schools) in Pakistan that helped foster and maintain the Taliban’s influence.

After seizing power in Kabul in 1996, the Taliban announced its 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.

The Taliban promotes jihad as a “divine obligation,” while failure to support jihad is a sin, according to a June 2017 propaganda video. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid has particularly encouraged jihad during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, as the heavenly reward is multiplied during that time.

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. Mullah Omar 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 as a “fake caliph,” asserting, “Baghdadi 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
joined ISIS’s Pakistani branch.  

Organizational Structure:

For most of their existence, the Taliban were led by their founder, Mullah Mohammed Omar, a.k.a. the Emir ul-Momineen (commander of the faithful). In July 2015, an Afghan government spokesman reported that Omar had died in April 2013. The Taliban confirmed the leader’s death, and reportedly appointed Deputy Emir Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour [8] as Omar’s successor. On May 25, 2016, four days after Mansour was killed in a U.S. drone strike, the Taliban’s senior leadership announced that Mullah Haibatullah Akhundzada would succeed Mansour as emir of the Taliban.  

As the emir of the Taliban, Akhundzada is responsible for overseeing the courts and judges. He also oversees the 11 Taliban commissions, which deal with the military, politics, culture, economics, health, education, outreach and guidance, prisoners, non-governmental organizations, martyrs and disabled persons, and civilian casualties. In August 2016, Maulvi Ibrahim Sadar was appointed the military commander of the Taliban. The group’s ruling council, called the Quetta Shura, is responsible for much of the Taliban’s operations in southern and western Afghanistan. The Shura consists of an estimated 23 to 46 members. It was founded in the winter of 2002, when Omar allegedly relocated the Taliban organization to Quetta, Pakistan. In November 2016, the Shura reportedly relocated to Afghanistan’s southern Helmand province.  

Below the emir sits the deputy emir, reported to be Sirajuddin Haqqani. The deputy emir oversees the leadership and consultative councils, responsible for determining the “political and military affairs of the Emirate,” according to the United Nations. Below the councils sit the judges, who reportedly run courts inside Afghanistan at the supreme, provincial, and district levels. 

According to a report by General Stanley McChrystal, former commander of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and U.S. forces in Afghanistan, the Quetta Shura reportedly appoints a simulated government structure for Afghanistan, assigning “shadow” governors to many Afghan provinces and reviewing the performance of each governor. In 2009, the Shura established a committee to receive complaints about the governors from Afghani locals. The Shura “[installs] ‘shari’a’ courts to deliver swift and enforced justice in contested and controlled areas. [It levies] taxes and [conscripts] fighters and laborers.” It claims “to provide security against a corrupt government, ISAF forces, criminality, and local power brokers [and] to protect Afghan and Muslim identity against foreign encroachment.”  

According to a 2009 Institute for the Study of War report, “[the Quetta Shura continues] to refer to [itself] as the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, despite being removed from power in 2001…the Taliban see themselves as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and aim to extend their control over the entirety of the country.” While the Quetta Shura runs the Taliban’s insurgency in southern and western Afghanistan, a Taliban military commission in Peshawar, Pakistan, reportedly directs the insurgency in Afghanistan’s north and east. The Peshawar military commission reportedly oversees a total of 20 provinces divided into six command zones, one of which falls under the Haqqani network’s purview.  

In January 2017, Reuters reported that Akhundzada had recently replaced Taliban shadow governors in 16 of Afghanistan’s 34 provinces and appointed eight additional provincial-level officials as part of an effort “to consolidate his influence over the insurgency.” One of the shadow-gubernatorial appointments, Baz Mohammad for Wardak province, was viewed as particularly significant for Akhundzada’s position because Mohammad had been in a splinter group that had rebelled against former Taliban leader Mansour.  

The Pakistani Taliban, formally known as Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), has extensive links to the Taliban, but it remains a distinct organization with its own objectives. TTP distinguishes itself from the Taliban in its primary objective, which is to
Taliban

overthrow the Pakistani state and inaugurate an Islamic state. It is less an organized force than a loose coalition of tribes sympathetic to the broad mission of the Taliban but driven by its own local concerns. 

Financing:

As of December 2017, the U.S. military estimated the Taliban budget to be between $300 million and $500 million a year. Approximately $200 million (60 percent) of that budget is derived from the illegal narcotics trade.

In its early years, the Taliban received substantial financial support from the governments of Pakistan and Saudi Arabia. The Taliban has also generated much of its revenues from opium production. While both the Afghan and Pakistani Taliban accrue funds from narcotics, they also profit from foreign donations, illegal gem mining, lumber trade, kidnapping, and extortion. A 2012 U.N. report estimated that the Taliban collected $400 million in 2011 through extortion, taxes, and drugs. According to that report, the Taliban leadership received $275 million while the rest was misappropriated or spent on local levels.

The Taliban reportedly raked in record profits in 2013, with fighters earning so much that they have had no incentive to quit the insurgency. In Pakistan, however, Tehrik e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) factions struggling for funds have turned to kidnapping “wealthy businessmen for ransom,” according to a 2014 U.N. report.

The Taliban use hawala, a trust-based financial transfer system that predates the time of the prophet Muhammad. U.S. officials suspect that the Taliban make monthly payments to their fighters and receive hefty donations through hawala.

Drugs and Cigarettes

Afghan President Ashraf Ghani has called the Taliban’s drug trade “a very important driver of” the war in Afghanistan. The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime estimated in 2016 that the opium trade in Afghanistan doubled to about $3 billion in 2016, and the Taliban has continuously boosted its involvement in the illicit trade. According to Afghan officials, the Taliban has used increased instability in the country to increase the number of its drug refinement labs and move them closer to Afghanistan’s opium fields. U.S. military officials estimated that the Taliban had 400 to 500 drug labs in the country by the end of 2017.

In 2010, the Pakistani military estimated that the Pakistani Taliban pocketed an average of $200 million every year from Afghan poppy profits. A 2012 U.N. report estimated that the Taliban earned $100 million from the opium trade in 2011-12. According to February 2018 testimony by Deputy Secretary of State John Sullivan, the Taliban derived 65 percent of its revenue from narcotics. The U.S. Department of Defense estimated in 2018 that the Taliban placed “greater emphasis on narcotics as a primary source of revenue” than in the past. A December 2017 U.S. airstrike destroyed 25 illegal drug factories in the Helmand province, representing an $80 million loss to Afghan drug lords. The military estimated that approximately $16 million of that amount would have been transferred to the Taliban.

David Cohen, then U.S. Treasury Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence, said in 2009 that the Taliban profit from every step in opium production. According to Cohen, the Taliban extort “funds from those involved in the heroin trade by demanding ‘protection’ payments from poppy farmers, drug lab operators and the smugglers who transport the chemicals into, and the heroin out of, the country.” According to sources in the Afghan government, the Taliban claims one-third of the proceeds stemming from Afghanistan’s illegal-but-lucrative $2 billion heroin trade. The Taliban have denied involvement in the heroin trade.

The TTP also reportedly control the Pakistani trade of counterfeit cigarettes, which may account for 20 percent of their funding. According to a private security analyst in Pakistan, “[the TTP] simply receive taxes on a regular basis from owners of illegal and legal cigarette factories and later for the safe passage they provide to the convoys.”
Misappropriated foreign funds

Private Afghan security companies hired by the United States have reportedly paid off Taliban insurgents with “protection money,” according to the U.N. A 2010 NPR report claims that “resupply convoys navigating the hazardous Afghan highway system frequently have to hire security firms to protect them, and as often, these security firms pay off militias that control key stretches of road.” In 2009, U.S. military officials in Kabul estimated that at least 10 percent of the Pentagon’s security contracts eventually end up in Taliban hands—amounting to hundreds of thousands of dollars. Reuters has reported that “many Afghans” support the Taliban’s accrualment of foreign funds. According to one Kabul resident, “This is international money. They are not taking it from the people, they are taking it from their enemy.”

In 2017, Afghanistan ranked ninth in the world for pistachio production. As of 2017, the Taliban reportedly made $15 million annually from illegally harvesting Afghanistan’s pistachio trees. The Taliban favors pistachios because they do not require cultivation, like peanuts and other nuts, according to Afghanistan’s Agriculture Ministry. The Taliban and other criminals have illegally harvested up to 40 percent of Afghanistan’s pistachio crops, which are typically ripe for picking in mid-summer. In other areas under Taliban control, the group reportedly collects one-tenth of farmers’ harvests by force. Farmers accuse the Taliban of using the money for weapons, but worry they will be killed if they refuse to turn over their crops. Saad Khatabi, president of the Herat Chamber of Commerce, told Voice of America in May 2017 that the Taliban’s early harvesting of Afghan pistachio crops “damages the agriculture and economy of Afghanistan enormously.”

International Backers

The Taliban reportedly receive donations from oil-rich Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries. According to a 2009 New York Times report, the Taliban collect funds from anonymous citizens in “Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Iran and some Persian Gulf nations.” Haroun Mir of the Afghanistan Center for Research and Policy Studies said in 2010 that “our estimates are in Afghanistan that between $150 [million] to $200 million every year reaches directly to Taliban via this network of charities that exists in the Gulf countries.” Former Taliban finance minister Agha Jan Motasim told the New York Times in December 2016 that he regularly traveled back and forth to Saudi Arabia to collect donations after the fall of the Taliban government.

Taxes

Taliban insurgents have been known to practice forced conscription, taxing locals if they refuse to join. Some Afghans have reportedly been forced to pay $1,000 to the Taliban for refusing to join. According to a displaced local in Lashkar Gah, Afghanistan, in 2015, “Many people join the Taliban simply because they do not have any other option.”

TTP insurgents reportedly offer protection to locals in exchange for high sums of money. If locals refuse the protection, the insurgents threaten to kill them. The extortion has become so commonplace in Karachi, Pakistan, that locals now call it the “terror tax.”

In 2010, a GlobalPost report alleged that the TTP also imposed jizya (a sharia-mandated tax on non-Muslims living in Muslim lands) on the Sikh minority in areas under their control.

In 2005, a television camera crew captured the image of locals paying tax to Taliban insurgents in Swat, Pakistan. According to a 2010 GlobalPost report, “Wooden carts with mounds of cash were parked on the street sides as women were seen dropping their jewelry into bags for masked young men carrying AK47s.”

The New York Times reported in January 2017 that the Taliban were now collecting revenue from electricity bills, as well as taxes on “potato harvests, flour mills, teachers’ salaries, marriage ceremonies, and fuel and vegetable trucks crossing their checkpoints.”
Recruitment:

Most of the early Taliban were trained in the Deobandi or Saudi-funded Wahhabi madrassas of Pakistan. These were especially prevalent in Pakistani refugee camps near the Afghan border. Unsurprisingly, the Taliban initially preferred to build an army of faithful students rather than an army of mercenaries. This tradition has since continued, as madrassas on both sides of the Afghan-Pakistan border are the primary recruiting grounds for the Taliban.

After the Taliban captured Kabul in 1996, they enforced conscription among able-bodied males. Most members of the Taliban are not paid regular salaries. Most of those in its ranks are fed and clothed, and given weapons and ammunition, but actual salaries go only to the upper echelons, the older and battle-hardened Taliban fighters. This threadbare practice was established to encourage a way of life that mirrored that of the prophet Muhammad. By receiving only the barest necessities, Taliban recruits would find it difficult to stray from Islam.

A 2014 estimate by Voice of America gauged that the Taliban included 60,000 fighters. In 2009, the U.S. government estimated that the Taliban’s size was roughly 25,000 fighters of varying allegiance. The quality of these recruits may have diminished over time. The Taliban have even resorted to luring children into their ranks with sweets and then training them to become suicide bombers.

The Taliban have earned a reputation for secrecy, and some analysts believe this has inhibited the group’s recruiting potential. With such an opaque governing structure, in addition to the brutality of their administration, the Taliban failed to engender popular confidence and support.

To create a new generation of fighters, the Taliban have employed the practice of forced marriages, taking Afghan girls as young as 13 as brides. Though child and forced marriages are illegal in Afghanistan, many poor families reportedly volunteer in order to gain dowries. According to Reuters, half of all Afghan girls are married by age 15. In August 2017, Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid estimated that several hundred women married to Taliban fighters become widows each year. Many of these women are forced to become sex slaves at the hands of other Taliban commanders. Their former in-laws will keep them hostage while grooming their male children to become Taliban fighters. Women who unsuccessfully try to escape after a forced marriage often are met with capital punishment. In a 2015 case, for example, the Taliban stoned a 19-year-old Afghan woman to death after she tried to escape her marriage. The Taliban then released a video of the execution to serve as a warning.

The Taliban have also utilized propaganda to spread their message and attract recruits. In addition to print magazines, pamphlets, and other printed materials, the Taliban have utilized online and digital media—reportedly in an attempt to compete with ISIS’s extensive online presence. The Taliban maintain a channel on the messaging service Telegram, a Twitter account, and a website. The group developed its own Android app in 2016, although it was removed from the Google Play store shortly after its launch.

Training:

By 2004, U.S. and NATO intelligence officers had concluded that Pakistan’s ISI was running a full training program for the Afghan Taliban out of the Baluchistan province in Pakistan, which gave it access to funds and arms from the wider Arab world. The Taliban have maintained a network of training camps within Afghanistan, which are often depicted in propaganda videos. Since the end of 2014, the Taliban have advertised at least 16 training camps. In 2015, The Taliban announced that its Khalid bin Walid Camp operates 12 training facilities in eight of Afghanistan’s provinces, employing about 300 trainers and scholars. A June 2017 propaganda video identified four new Taliban camps in the country.


Abubakar Siddique, “The Quetta Shura: Understanding the Afghan Taliban’s Leadership,” *Terrorism Monitor* 12, no. 4 (February 21, 2014), [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42006&cHash=7af7678306a23ff6734f35e261b15b90#VTCVryHBzGe](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42006&cHash=7af7678306a23ff6734f35e261b15b90#VTCVryHBzGe) [45].


Abubakar Siddique, “The Quetta Shura: Understanding the Afghan Taliban’s Leadership,” *Terrorism Monitor* 12, no. 4 (February 21, 2014), [http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42006&cHash=7af7678306a23ff6734f35e261b15b90#VTCVryHBzGe](http://www.jamestown.org/programs/tm/single/?tx_ttnews%5Btt_news%5D=42006&cHash=7af7678306a23ff6734f35e261b15b90#VTCVryHBzGe) [45];


“Fifth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team, submitted pursuant to resolution 2160 (2014) concerning the Taliban and


5 Ahmed Rashid, Taliban (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 226.


5 Khalil Noorzaei, “Effort to Revive Afghan Pistachio Crop Hampered by Taliban,” Voice of America, May 4, 2017,


Ahmed Rashid, Taliban (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 43.


Ahmed Rashid, Taliban (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 100.

Ahmed Rashid, Taliban (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 43.


Ahmed Rashid, Taliban (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 94.


Danielle Moylan, “Afghan woman was stoned to death after ‘attempting to flee a forced marriage,’” Telegraph (London), November 3, 2015, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/11972749/Afghan-woman-was-stoned-to-death-after-attempting-to-flee-a-forced-marriage.html [80].


Key Leaders

Mullah Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada
Emir (leader)

Sirajuddin Haqqani
Reported deputy emir, head of the Quetta Shura

Mohammad Yaqoob
Second deputy emir, head of Taliban military commission overseeing 15 provinces

Abdul Ghani Baradar
Co-founder, head of political office in Qatar

Zabihullah Mujahid
Spokesman and propagandist

Qari Yousef Ahmadi
Spokesman and propagandist

Abdul Qayum Zakir
Former commander of southern Afghanistan

Mohammed Yunis
Explosives expert and former governor of Zhob Province

Agha Jan Mohtasim
Finance minister during Taliban rule and son-in-law of Mullah Omar

Maulana Fazlullah
Emir of Tehrik e-Taliban Pakistan (deceased)

Mullah Mansour
Former emir (deceased)

Muhammad Omar
Founder; former emir and spiritual leader (deceased)

Jalaluddin Haqqani
Founder of the Haqqani network (deceased)

Noor Wali Mehsud
Emir of Tehrik e-Taliban Pakistan
History:

- **April 2019:** The United States and Taliban reach a framework agreement that includes a U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan and discussion to keep Afghanistan from becoming a terrorist base. Qatari-mediated talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government stall. Source: Craig Nelson and Ehsanullah Amri, “Afghan Peace Talks Abruptly Stall Over Guest List to Doha Meeting,” Wall Street Journal, April 18, 2019, [https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghan-peace-talks-stall-after-taliban-object-to-guest-list-11555572762](https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghan-peace-talks-stall-after-taliban-object-to-guest-list-11555572762) [35].

- **February 4, 2019:** Taliban officials meet with prominent Afghan politicians for two days of talks in Moscow, Russia. There are no representatives of the current Afghan government in attendance, but the parties agree to a broad plan for ending the war. Source: Andrew Higgins and Mujib Mashal, “Taliban Peace Talks in Moscow End With Hope the U.S. Exits, if Not Too Quickly,” New York Times, February 6, 2019, [https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/06/world/europe/taliban-peace-talks-moscow.html?module=inline](https://www.nytimes.com/2019/02/06/world/europe/taliban-peace-talks-moscow.html?module=inline) [22].


- **January 21, 2019:** U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad meets with representatives of the Taliban in Doha, Qatar for six days of negotiations around a “comprehensive ceasefire” that would be the first step in an overall negotiated peace. On January 26, Khalilzad claims that the negotiations have been “more productive than they have been in the past,” and that “significant progress on vital issues” had been made. Source: Ehsan Popalzai and Kara Fox, “US-Taliban peace talks in Doha a ‘significant step’,” CNN, January 26, 2019, [https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/27/asia/us-taliban-afghanistan-peace-talks-doha-int/index.html](https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/27/asia/us-taliban-afghanistan-peace-talks-doha-int/index.html) [20].


- **November 2, 2018:** Pakistani cleric Maulana Samiul Haq, also known as the “father of the Taliban,” is killed in a knife attack at his home in Rawalpindi, Pakistan. There are no immediate claims of responsibility. Source: Munir Ahmed and Riaz Khan, “Pakistan’s ‘father of Taliban’ cleric killed in knife attack,” Associated Press, November 2, 2018, [https://apnews.com/7ea77c3b774b76b671a9a9f6c2b3b8](https://apnews.com/7ea77c3b774b76b671a9a9f6c2b3b8) [87].

- **August 2018:** The Taliban withdraw all security guarantees for the International Committee for Red Cross (ICRC) over what it calls the ICRC’s failure to adequately provide medical assistance to Taliban prisoners on a hunger strike in Afghan prisons. The ICRC suspends its programs in Afghanistan as a result. The Taliban restore protection to the ICRC in October after Taliban leaders meet with ICRC representatives in Qatar. Source: Munir Ahmed and Riaz Khan, “Pakistan’s ‘father of Taliban’ cleric killed in knife attack,” Associated Press, November 2, 2018, [https://apnews.com/7ea77c3b774b76b671a9a9f6c2b3b8](https://apnews.com/7ea77c3b774b76b671a9a9f6c2b3b8) [87].


- **April 2018:** The Taliban announce the start of their annual spring offensive and dismiss peace overtures from the Afghan government as “a conspiracy.” The Taliban claim the offensive is in response to an increased U.S. presence in Afghanistan and say they will focus their attacks on U.S. forces. Source: Andrew Higgins and Mujib Mashal, “Taliban announce spring offensive, dismisses peace overtures,” New York Times, April 23, 2018, [https://www.nytimes.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban-announce-spring-offensive-dismisses-peace-overtures-idUSKBN1HW0SG](https://www.nytimes.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban-announce-spring-offensive-dismisses-peace-overtures-idUSKBN1HW0SG) [92].
**February 2018:** The TTP confirms the death of second-in-command Khan Sayed in a U.S. drone strike in Pakistan earlier in the month.


**September 27, 2017:** The Taliban fires missiles at the Kabul International Airport hours after U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis lands on a plane.


**August 2017:** On August 15, the Taliban publicly release an open letter to U.S. President Donald Trump urging him to withdraw U.S. forces from Afghanistan.

The letter says that a full U.S. withdrawal could "truly deliver American troops from harm's way" and result in "an end to an inherited war." On August 21, Trump unveils a new U.S. policy on Afghanistan that includes "preventing the Taliban from taking over the country." On August 30, Taliban emir Hibatullah Akhundzada releases a statement claiming that there will be "peace" if Western forces retreat and Afghanistan is "delivered to the Taliban."


**June 10, 2016:** Al-Qaeda leader Ayman al-Zawahiri pledges allegiance to new Taliban emir in a 14-minute-long video.


**December 2015:** The Taliban make immense territorial gains in Helmand province, prompting the United States to deploy additional Special Operation forces to secure the area.


**September 2015:** On September 4, more than 300 girls are admitted to hospitals after exposure to gas attacks in their schools in Herat, Afghanistan.


**June 29, 2015:** Taliban officials report that Mullah Omar died in a Pakistani hospital in April 2013.


On August 15, Trump unveils a new U.S. policy on Afghanistan that includes "preventing the Taliban from taking over the country." On August 30, Taliban emir Hibatullah Akhundzada releases a statement claiming that there will be "peace" if Western forces retreat and Afghanistan is "delivered to the Taliban."


On 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. On September 28, the Taliban take control of the northern Afghan city of Kunduz. It is the first major city to fall into Taliban hands since the group was forcibly deposed from Kabul in 2001. Source: Vasudevan Sridharan, "Afghanistan: 300 schoolgirls hit by suspected Taliban poison gas attacks in Herat," International Business Times, September 4, 2015, http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/afghanistan-300-schoolgirls-hit-by-suspected-taliban-poison-gas-attacks-herat-1518418.


September 4, 2014: Ashraf Ghani replaces Hamid Karzai as Afghanistan’s new president.

As Ghani is sworn in, the Taliban detonate two bombs, one near the Kabul airport and one in eastern Paktia province. The Taliban refer to Ghani’s presidency as a “U.S.-orchestrated sham.” Source: “Ashraf Ghani sworn in as new Afghan president,” BBC News, September 29, 2014, http://www.bbc.com/news/world/asia-28975438 [100].

August 2014: TTP member Omar Khalid Khorasani and TTP spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan break away from the group to form Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA).


May 31, 2014: The Taliban exchanges U.S. soldier Bowe Bergdahl for five Taliban militants held by the United States at Guantanamo Bay.


November 2013: The U.S. kills Pakistani Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud in a drone strike on November 1.


June 2013: The Taliban open an office in Doha with support from the United States and Afghanistan.


October 9, 2012: TTP insurgents shoot 14-year-old Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai in Mingora, Pakistan, as ‘punishment’ for promoting women’s education.


January 2012: The Taliban announce their agreement to open an office in Doha, Qatar.


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.

According to Michael Semple, a Taliban expert, Rabbani’s death constitutes “one of the biggest blows the peace process in Afghanistan has faced.” After Rabbani was ousted by the Taliban in 1996, Rabbani became head of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, composed predominantly of Tajiks and Uzbeks. As an ethnic Tajik, Rabbani had been selected to lead the High Peace Council, a committee established to hold peace talks with the Taliban. In New York, Afghan President Hamid Karzai says, “This will not deter us from continuing down the path we have started.” Sources: “Former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani killed in Kabul blast,” Telegraph (London), September 20, 2011, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/8776911/Former-Afghanistap-president-Burhanuddin-Rabbani-killed-in-Kabul-blast.html [112]; Laura King, “Former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani assassinated,” Los Angeles Times, September 20, 2011, BFP/articles.latimes.com/2011/sep/20/world/lfa-fr-afghanistan-rabbani-20110921 [113].
33. **April 25, 2011**: Taliban insurgents carry out a plot to free nearly 500 Talibans from a prison in southern Afghanistan. The inmates escape through a tunnel that took over five months to build, furnished with electricity and air pipes. Afghan parliament member Muhammad Naimeh Laly Hamidzai says, “The Talibans gain two things from this jailbreak. First… it sends a message that they can do whatever they want, even at the heart of the most secure and important jail, and it allows them to strengthen their ranks with more manpower.” Source: Taimoor Shah and Alissa J. Rubin, “Taliban Breach Afghan Prison; Hundreds Free,” *New York Times*, April 25, 2011, [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/26/world/asia/26afghanistan.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/26/world/asia/26afghanistan.html) [114].

34. **February 18, 2011**: U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton advocates for an Afghan-led peace process that would include talks with the Talibans. Clinton says, “Today, the escalating pressure of our military campaign is sharpening a similar decision for the Talibans: Break ties with al-Qaida, renounce violence, and abide by the Afghan constitution, and you can rejoin Afghan society.” Source: “Remarks at the Launch of the Asia Society’s Series on Richard C. Holbrooke Memorial Addresses,” U.S. Department of State, February 18, 2011, [http://www.state.gov/s/rls/res/st/120236.htm](http://www.state.gov/s/rls/res/st/120236.htm) [115].

35. **May 2010**: TTP claim responsibility for a failed car bombing in New York City’s Times Square. TTP’s top bomb maker, Qari Hussain Mehsud, says that the attack “is a revenge for the great [and] valuable martyred leaders of mujahideen,” as well as a “revenge for the Global American interference [and] terrorism in Muslim countries.” Mehsud warns that NATO must condemn the United States and “apologize for ‘the massacres in Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan and Pakistani tribal areas otherwise be prepared for the worst destruction and devastation in their regions.” Source: Bill Roggio, “Pakistani Taliban claim credit for failed NYC Times Square car bombing,” *Long War Journal*, May 2, 2010, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/05/pakistani_taliban_cl.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2010/05/pakistani_taliban_cl.php) [116].


44. **2008:** The United States increases airstrikes in Pakistan, targeting al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders as well as unidentified suspects.


45. **April 2006 - June 2006:** A new Taliban insurgency appears in Afghanistan with an uptick in suicide bombings and the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).


46. **March 2004:** The Pakistani military re-enters FATA, targeting insurgents more aggressively than in 2002.


47. **May 2003:** As the Iraq war begins, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announces the end of “major combat activity” in Afghanistan.


48. **January 2002:** NATO deploys the first round of foreign troops, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).


49. **2002:** Between late 2001 and early 2002, half of the 60,000 Taliban are estimated to be killed, wounded, or captured by the U.S.-led coalition.


51. **October 14, 2001:** The Taliban offer to send bin Laden to a neutral third country if the United States halts its airstrikes on Afghanistan.


52. **October 7, 2001:** The United States and United Kingdom launch Operation Enduring Freedom following the Taliban’s refusal to cooperate in the destruction of al-Qaeda.


53. **September 22, 2001:** The Taliban refuse to hand over Osama bin Laden and other al-Qaeda leaders.

The Taliban ambassador in Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, says that giving up bin Laden would be an “insult to Islam,” and that “if there is no possibility of trial in court, we’re not prepared, we give up Osama bin Laden.” According to Zaeef, Mullah Omar believed “there was less than a ten-per-cent chance that America would resort to anything beyond threats.” The Taliban’s refusal to extradite bin Laden disregards a call by over 1,000 Afghan Islamic clerics that bin Laden should be “asked to leave voluntarily.” Sources: Azez Spillius, “We won’t hand over bin Laden, say defiant Taliban,” Daily Telegraph (London), September 22, 2001, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/world/asia/afghanistan/1341340/We-wont-hand-over-bin-Laden-say-defiant-Taliban.html [140]; Steve Coll, "Revived Taliban waging ‘full-blown insurgency,’” USA Today, last modified June 20, 2006, http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2006-06-19-taliban-afghanistan-cover_x.htm."
54. **September 21, 2001:** In a speech to Congress, U.S. President George W. Bush issues a string of demands to the Taliban.


55. **September 11, 2001:** Nineteen al-Qaeda operatives hijack U.S. commercial airliners and fly them into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C.


56. **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 U.S., the EU, Russia, India, and Pakistan.


58. **October 15, 1999:** The United Nations passes Resolution 1267 (1999), an arms and air embargo on the Taliban for as long as the group refuses to surrender bin Laden.


59. **March 1999:** The Taliban and its main remaining enemy, the Northern Alliance, enter into a U.N.-brokered peace agreement.


60. **August 1998:** Taliban forces capture the city of Mazar in northwest Afghanistan, slaughtering 5,000 to 6,000 people.


61. **September 1996:** Taliban fighters capture Kabul, driving out Ahmed Shah Massoud’s mujahideen forces and communist President Mohammad Najibullah.


62. **May 1996:** Osama bin Laden moves to the eastern province of Nangarhar, Afghanistan, from Sudan.


63. **April 4, 1996:** Standing of a mosque before a jubilant crowd, Mullah Omar declares himself *Emir ul-


Violent history:

- **1994**: By 1994, the mujahideen have “carved [Kandahar, Afghanistan] and neighboring districts into criminal fiefs.” The Taliban emerge as a united force in Kandahar, Afghanistan, with Mullah Mohammed Omar as their leader. The group soon absorps over 15,000 students and clerics from western Pakistan and begins implementing sharia. By the end of 1994, the Taliban have complete control over Kandahar and Helmand province, the center of opium cultivation. During this time, Pakistan’s intelligence bureau, the Inter-Service Intelligence (ISI), secretly funnel money to the Taliban.

- **September 1996**: Taliban fighters capture Kabul, driving out Ahmed Shah Massoud’s mujahideen forces and communist President Mohammad Najibullah. The Taliban murder Najibullah and his brother, hanging their bodies from traffic poles in Kabul. Saudi Arabia and Pakistan quickly recognize the Taliban-led government. The Taliban implement a hardline version of sharia based on Hanafi Islamic jurisprudence, implementing Islamic punishments such as public executions, amputations, and stonings. Men are required to grow beards and women must be completely covered by the burka. The Taliban ban all television, movies, and music, disallowing girls and women from attending school or working. One Taliban decree declares, “Women you should not step outside your residence. If women are going outside with fashionable, ornamental, tight and charming clothes to show themselves, they will be cursed by the Islamic Sharia and should never expect to go to heaven.” The Taliban also ban kite flying, dog racing, pork, satellite dishes, cinematography, televisions, alcohol, computers, statues, pictures, and “anything made from human hair,” among other seemingly random items.

- **August 1998**: Taliban forces capture the city of Mazar in northwest Afghanistan, slaughtering 5,000 to 6,000 people. Human Rights Watch notes that during the seizure of the city, Taliban troops 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.

- **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 U.S., the EU, Russia, India, and Pakistan.

- **September 11, 2001**: Nineteen al-Qaeda operatives hijack U.S. commercial airliners and fly them into the World Trade Center in New York and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C. A fourth hijacked airplane, whose target may have been the U.S. Capitol building, was brought down by passengers in rural Pennsylvania. Almost 3,000 civilians are killed and thousands injured in the worst ever attack on U.S. soil. The Taliban had knowingly harbored al-Qaeda operatives since 1996, enabling the terror group to plan the attack.

- **April 2006**: A neo-Taliban insurgency appears in Afghanistan with an uptick in suicide bombings and the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).

- **May-June 2006**: Amidst a period of Taliban violence, Afghan, Canadian, and British troops launch Operation Mountain Thrust. The operation seeks to degrade Taliban activity in southern and eastern Afghanistan.

- **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.

- **July 19, 2007**: Taliban insurgents kidnap 23 South Korean missionaries in Ghazni Province, Afghanistan. The Taliban kills two Korean hostages before the Taliban and the South Korean government reach a deal. The Taliban releases 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.

- **December 27, 2007**: The Pakistani Islamist group Tehreek-e-Nafaz-e-Shariate-Mohammadi dispatches a suicide bomber to blow up an army convoy in Swat, Pakistan, killing five Pakistani soldiers and six civilians. The group claims responsibility for the attack “on behalf of the TTP.”

- **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.

- **July 7, 2008**: A suicide bomber attacks the Indian embassy in Kabul, Afghanistan, killing 41 and injuring over 140. U.S. intelligence agencies conclude that the ISI helped plan the attack, a claim that Pakistan strongly denies.

- **August 17-18, 2008**: At least 10 Taliban suicide bombers attack the U.S. military base Camp Salerno in Bamiyan,
Taliban

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.”

- **August 21, 2008**: Simultaneous TTP suicide bombs explode at Pakistan’s main munitions factory northwest of Islamabad, killing at least 63 people. The TTP claims responsibility, stating that the bombings are in retaliation to army violence in the tribal area of Bajaur.

- **March 31, 2009**: In an interview with BBC News, TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud says his group was responsible for an attack on Lahore’s police academy the day prior. Mehsud says that the attack was “in retaliation for the continued drone strikes by the US in collaboration with Pakistan on our people.” The attack killed 10 and injured 95.

- **April 4, 2009**: TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud claims responsibility for an attack on an immigration center in Binghamton, New York, in which 13 people are killed. Mehsud tells Reuters reporters, “I accept responsibility. They were my men. I gave them orders in reaction to U.S. drone attacks.”

- **June 20, 2009**: New York Times reporter David Rohde escapes from captivity after being held by the Taliban for over seven months, since his capture on November 10, 2008. Rohde’s family asserts that there was no ransom paid, or Taliban prisoners released, in exchange for Rohde’s release.

- **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. On July 18, 2009, the Taliban release a 28-minute video on the Internet in which Bergdahl says he is scared and wishes to return home. Taliban allege that Bergdahl was drunk and off base at the time of his capture, but U.S. officials refute that claim, stating, “The Taliban are known for lying and what they are claiming (is) not true.”

- **May 2010**: The TTP claim responsibility for a failed car bombing in New York City’s Times Square. TTP’s top bomb maker, Qari Hussain Mehsud, says that the attack “is a revenge for the great [and] valuable martyred leaders of mughjideen,” as well as a “revenge for the Global American interference [and] terrorism in Muslim countries.” Mehsud warns that NATO must condemn the United States and apologize for “the massacres in Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, and Pakistani tribal areas otherwise be prepared for the worst destruction and devastation in their regions.”

- **August 5, 2010**: Taliban gunmen murder ten 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.”

- **February 10, 2011**: A young suicide bomber attacks an army compound in Pakistan, killing at least 31. The TTP claim responsibility.

- **April 3, 2011**: Suicide bombers attack a Pakistani shrine of a 13th century Sufi saint, killing at least 41. The TTP claim responsibility.

- **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. According to Michael Semple, a Taliban expert, Rabbani’s death constitutes “one of the biggest blows the peace process in Afghanistan has faced.” After Rabbani was ousted by the Taliban in 1996, Rabbani became head of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance, composed predominantly of Tajiks and Uzbeks. As an ethnic Tajik, Rabbani had been selected to lead the High Peace Council, a committee established to hold peace talks with the Taliban. In New York, Afghan President Hamid Karzai says, “This will not deter us from continuing down the path we have started.”

- **September 10, 2011**: A Taliban suicide bomber detonates an IED at the entrance of 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.

- **September 13, 2011**: Taliban gunmen strike the U.S. embassy and NATO’s ISAF headquarters in Kabul, killing three police and one civilian. Taliban spokesman Zabulullah 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. According to the New York Times, “Hallmarks of attacks linked to the Haqqani network include multiple fighters, targets that are often symbols of the Afghan government and their Western backers, careful planning, and, often, instructions delivered by telephone as the attackers carry out their


• **September 14, 2011:** The TTP ambush a school bus in Peshawar, Pakistan, killing four boys and the driver, and wounding two seven-year-old girls.

• **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.

• **April 2012:** The Taliban launch a “spring offensive” in Afghanistan in which they 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.

• **August 16, 2012:** TTP militants stop three buses in a remote mountain pass in northern Pakistan, and pull 22 Shiites off board, executing them all.

• **October 9, 2012:** TTP insurgents shoot 14-year-old Pakistani activist Malala Yousafzai in Mingora, Pakistan, as ‘punishment’ for promoting women’s education. Taliban spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan confirms that Yousafzai was the target, calling her activism for women’s education an “obscenity.” Ehsan says, “[W]hom so ever leads a campaign against Islam and Shariah is ordered to be killed by Shariah.”

• **September 15, 2013:** Pakistani General Sanaullah Khan Niazi dies in a roadside bomb in northwest Pakistan. The TTP claim responsibility.

• **January 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.

• **June 8, 2014:** TTP militants attack the Jinnah International Airport in Karachi, Pakistan, killing 26 people. The TTP later claim responsibility for the attack alongside the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), an Uzbekistan-based al-Qaeda-linked militant organization that works closely with the Taliban.

• **December 2014:** NPR lists 2014 as Afghanistan’s bloodiest year since 2001.

• **December 16, 2014:** Nine TTP gunmen attack an army-run school in Peshawar, Pakistan, killing 145, 132 of them schoolchildren. The gunmen run through the hallways of the school, throwing grenades, firing at random, and exploding suicide vests. The gunmen line up some of the children and slaughter them. The attack prompts an international outcry. It is the deadliest attack in TTP’s history.

• **February 13, 2015:** Taliban militants attack worshippers at a Shiite mosque in Peshawar, killing at least 20.

• **May 14, 2015:** The Taliban attack a popular hotel in Kabul, killing 14, including an American.

• **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.

• **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.

• **October 11-14, 2015:** The Taliban storm two check points in the southern Helmand province, killing 29 Afghan border police officers.

• **November 9, 2015:** Rival Taliban factions battle in southern Afghanistan, leaving dozens dead.
December 8, 2015: The Taliban assault Kandahar International Airport, leaving more than 50 dead, including children.  

January 20, 2016: Taliban agents storm Bacha Khan University in northwestern Pakistan outside Peshawar, killing at least 22 people. In Kabul, a motorcycle-bound suicide bomber targets Tolo News, an Afghan news channel. The attack kills seven employees.  

March 7, 2016: A bomber associated with the Pakistani Taliban attacks the entrance to a judicial court in northwestern Pakistan, killing 11.  

March 28, 2016: The Afghan Taliban claims responsibility for firing three rockets at the country’s parliament in Kabul.  

May 14, 2016: Taliban insurgents ambush Afghan police forces and cut off the main highway that links Kabul with northern Afghanistan.  

May 31, 2016: Taliban gunmen kill 10 passengers and kidnap 18 more. The victims were traveling on buses headed toward the Afghan city of Kunduz.  

July 21, 2016: After clashing with Afghan government forces, Taliban insurgents overrun the remote northern district of Qala-e-Zal in Kunduz province.  

August 1, 2016: A truck bomb explodes outside a hotel compound used by foreign contractors in Kabul. The Afghan Taliban claim responsibility.  

August 4, 2016: Taliban gunmen attack a convoy of foreign travelers as they travel through Herat province, wounding seven people.  

August 8, 2016: A suicide bomber targets a mourning ceremony in Quetta, killing at least 70 people and wounding at least 120 others. A breakaway faction of the Pakistani Taliban claims responsibility for the attack.  

August 24, 2016: Taliban terrorists attack American University in Kabul, killing 13 people and wounding 45 others.  

September 5, 2016: Taliban suicide bombers strike near the Defense Ministry in Kabul, killing 24 people, including a number of senior security officials, and wounding 91 others.  

November 12, 2016: A Taliban suicide bomber kills four U.S. soldiers and wounds 17 at Bagram Airfield.  

December 22, 2016: Three Taliban militants storm the house of prominent Afghan legislator Mir Wali Khan, killing eight, including two of Khan’s young grandchildren. Khan and his wife are wounded in the attack. Afghan police kill the Taliban fighters after a night-long struggle.  

January 10, 2017: Two Taliban suicide bombings in Kabul kill more than 30 and wound about 70 in an attack near the new Afghan parliament building. Most of the victims are reportedly parliamentary staff.  

February 13, 2017: A suicide bomber from a Taliban splinter faction kills at least 13 and wounds almost 60 at a protest rally in Lahore, Pakistan.  

February 28, 2017: Taliban fighters attack a checkpoint in Helmand province with silenced weapons and hand grenades, killing 12 police officers. The attackers also steal arms and ammunition.  

March 5, 2017: Taliban fighters kill at least five members of the Afghan security forces at a checkpoint in Kunduz province.  

March 14, 2017: The Taliban cut off the hand and foot of an alleged thief in Afghanistan’s western Herat province.  

March 23, 2017: The Taliban capture the key Sangin district, a major opium market in Afghanistan’s southern Helmand province.
March 23, 2017: An Afghan police officer who had defected to the Taliban kills nine of his fellow officers in northern Kunduz province before escaping.  

April 3, 2017: A Taliban attack on provincial intelligence service agents kills at least four.  

April 5, 2017: A Taliban suicide bombing targeting a vehicle of census workers kills six in eastern Pakistan.  

April 17, 2017: Taliban militants in the Mohammad Agha district of Afghanistan’s Logar province stone to death a man and woman accused of adultery. In Sari Pul province, other Taliban militants kill four suspected spies—a young boy and three women.  

April 21, 2017: Taliban militants disguised as Afghan army personnel attack an army base in Mazar-i-Sharif, Balkh province, killing more than 100 soldiers and other personnel. Multiple suicide bombers and gunmen perpetrate the attack. Afghanistan’s defense minister and army chief of staff resign afterward.  

April 25, 2017: A roadside bombing by the breakaway Taliban faction Jamaat-ul-Ahrar in Pakistan kills 14 people, including five women and four children. The bombing targets a minivan in a Shiite part of the Kurram tribal region bordering Afghanistan.  

April 25, 2017: The Taliban kill eight policemen in Afghanistan’s northern Takhar province after overrunning three checkpoints. The same day, the group claims a suicide bombing in the eastern Khost province that kills four Afghan security guards protecting the U.S. military’s Camp Chapman base.  

April 26, 2017: Taliban fighters clash with their ISIS rivals in Afghanistan’s northern Jawzjan province, leading to 76 Taliban militants dead and 15 dead from ISIS.  

April 28, 2017: The Taliban announce the beginning of their spring offensive as they capture a district in Afghanistan’s Badakhshan province.  

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.  

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.  

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.  

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.  

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.  

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.  

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.  

June 18, 2017: A suicide car bomber and accompanying gunmen attack the police headquarters in the Spin Ghar
region in Paktia province. Five Afghan police officers are killed and 18 people are wounded. The Taliban claim responsibility in a WhatsApp message to journalists.188

- **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.189

- **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.190

- **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.191

- **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.192

- **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.193

- **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.194

- **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—are killed 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.195

- **August 23, 2017**: A suicide car bomber attacks an Afghan National Army convoy in Lashkar Gar, killing at least seven and wounding 38 others—including civilians. The Taliban claim responsibility.196

- **August 27, 2017**: A suicide car bomber attacks a convoy of Afghan soldiers in Helmand province, killing at least 13 and wounding even more. The Taliban claim responsibility.197

- **August 29, 2017**: A suicide car bomber attacks a bank in Kabul, killing five and wounding nine others. The Taliban claim responsibility.198

- **September 19, 2017**: The Taliban kill three Afghan government workers abducted in Herat province in late August.199

- **September 24, 2017**: The Taliban retake the Kohistan district in Afghanistan’s province of Faryab.200

- **September 28, 2017**: Taliban militants storm the compounds of the Maruf district governor in Afghanistan’s Kandahar province, killing 12 and wounding four others.201

- **October 15, 2017**: Taliban militants attack checkpoints in Afghanistan’s Maruf district after hours of fighting, killing four policemen.202

- **October 15-17, 2017**: The Taliban seize the Shibkho district in Afghanistan’s Farah province and the Maruf district in Kandahar as it continues to gain ground in Afghanistan.203

- **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
Taliban

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. 

- **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.

- **October 23, 2017**: Taliban militants attack a security post in Kabul, killing four policemen and wounding two others.

- **November 13-14, 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.

- **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.

- **January 20-21, 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. 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.

- **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.

- **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.

- **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.

- **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.

- **March 8-9, 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.

- **April 14-15, 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.

- **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
Taliban fighters are killed and two are wounded during the two-hour gun battle.216

- **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.217

- **April 25-26, 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 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.218

- **May 15-16, 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.219

- **May 30, 2018:** At least three are killed and 12 are wounded when Taliban suicide bombers attack a police station in the Logar province.220

- **June 11-12, 2018:** On June 11, 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.221

- **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.222

- **June 27-28, 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.223

- **July 15-17, 2018:** On July 15, Taliban fighters attack a police checkpoint in the Nangarhar province, killing seven. Five Taliban militants are also killed. 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.224

- **July 19-20, 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.225

- **August 10-14, 2018:** Taliban fighters dressed as Afghan soldiers attack the city of Ghazni. 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.226

- **August 13, 2018:** Taliban fighters attack a military base known in the Faryab province, killing 17 soldiers and wounding 19 others.227

- **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.228

- **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.229

- **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.230

- **September 13-14, 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.231

- **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.232

- **October 6-7, 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.233

- **October 19, 2018:** A gunman opens fire at a security meeting between Kandahar's police chief, General Abdul Raziq Achakza, and U.S. military leaders, killing Achakza and wounding three members of the NATO coalition forces. Two Americans are among the wounded. 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.234

- **October 2018:** At least 56 people killed and 370 wounded during the parliamentary voting period starting on October 20. The U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) largely blames a Taliban for a “deliberate campaign” to disrupt the elections. UNAMA accuses the Taliban of forcing Afghans to choose between participation in the electoral process and their own safety.235

- **November 11, 2018:** The Taliban advance on the Jaghori district, an area dominated by the ethnic Shiite Hazara minority. Militants kill 30 Afghan special forces soldiers along with 50 police and local militia fighters in 24 hours.236

- **November 13, 2018:** Local government and security officials flee Malistan district, Ghazni province, as Taliban fighters launch attacks there.237

- **November 25, 2018:** Taliban fighters kill ten Afghan National Army soldiers, including the unit commander, in Qaisar district, Faryab province. The Taliban also capture two armored Humvees.238

- **November 27, 2018:** Four U.S. soldiers are killed in a Taliban IED attack in Ghazni city.239

- **November 28, 2018:** Five Taliban fighters detonate a car bomb outside of the compound for British security firm G4S in Kabul. The attack kills 10 people, including five G4S employees, and injures 32. The Taliban also launch a nighttime attack on the district Dara-i-Sauf Payeen, Samangan province, but Afghan security forces push them back. The clashes erupted after 9 p.m. and lasted approximately five hours.240

- **December 3, 2018:** Taliban fighters kill a police chief and one other when they storm a police checkpoint in Sari Pul province.241

- **December 6, 2018:** Taliban fighters kill 14 and capture 21 soldiers in coordinated attacks on two Afghan National
Army bases in Herat province.\textsuperscript{241}

- **December 8, 2018:** Taliban fighters kill eight and capture nine soldiers in an attack on an Afghan National Army outpost in Farah province.\textsuperscript{243}

- **December 11, 2018:** The Taliban kill at least 40 in attacks in five provinces. At least four security forces and eight civilians are killed in a suicide bombing on a security convoy in the outskirts of Kabul. In the Chardara District of Kunduz, the Taliban kill 10 police officers and wound 12 in coordinated attacks on 15 security outposts. In Kandahar the Taliban kill eight police officers. In the Pashtun Zarghun district of Herat, the Taliban kill six police officers. The Taliban kill four additional members of the security forces in various attacks across Kunduz and Badghis Provinces.\textsuperscript{244}

- **December 20, 2018:** Taliban fighters assassinate the commander of the Afghan Local Police in Dahana-i-Ghori district, Baghlan Province.\textsuperscript{245}

- **December 24, 2018:** Militants kill 43 in an attack on the Ministry of Public Works and Ministry for Martyrs and Disabled Persons in Kabul involving a suicide bombing and small arms. There were no immediate claims of responsibility.\textsuperscript{246}

- **January 1, 2019:** Taliban fighters kill more than 21 security personnel and capture two outposts as they advance on the oil fields in Sayyad district, Sar-e-Pol Province. The Taliban also kill six and wound seven police officer in an attack in Chental District, Balkh Province.\textsuperscript{247}

- **January 2, 2019:** Taliban fighters kill five Afghan soldiers at a military base in Maiwand district, Kandahar Province. On the same day, Afghan forces repel an attack on Italian military advisors in Herat province. One Taliban fighter is killed and one captured in the attempted attack. Meanwhile, the Taliban carry out an overnight attack on two security checkpoints in Pul-e Khumri, the capital of Baghlan Province. Eleven security personnel are killed and the checkpoints destroyed.\textsuperscript{248}

- **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.\textsuperscript{249}

- **January 6, 2019:** Taliban fighters kill at least 21 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.\textsuperscript{250}

- **January 9, 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.\textsuperscript{251}

- **January 13, 2019:** A U.S. Army Ranger is wounded in Baghdis province and dies of wounds several days later.\textsuperscript{252}

- **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.\textsuperscript{253}

- **January 22, 2019:** A second U.S. soldier is killed in fighting in Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan Province.\textsuperscript{254}

- **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.\textsuperscript{255}

- **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.\textsuperscript{256}

- **February 5, 2019:** Taliban fighters kill 30 Afghan security personnel and wound 20 more when they storm a checkpoint in the Talawak area of Kunduz City. The Taliban also capture a security outpost and kill 11 security
Taliban personnel in the Hasan Tal area of Baghlan-e-Markazi District, Baghlan Province.  

- **February 6, 2019:** Taliban fighters kill seven soldiers in an attack on a military outpost in Arghandab District, Zabul Province.  

- **February 12-13, 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.  

- **February 17, 2019:** Taliban gunmen open fire on a police vehicle in the Baghlan province, killing at least two civilians and wounding five others.  

- **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.  

- **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.  

- **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.  

- **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.  

- **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.  

- **March 23, 2019:** Twin explosions at an agricultural show in Lashkar Gah kill at least four and wound 31. The Taliban claim responsibility.  

- **March 28-29, 2019:** Taliban forces attack security outposts in Badakhshan, Zabul, and Ghazni provinces, killing at least 17. The Taliban claim responsibility for all three attacks.  

- **March 30-31, 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.  

- **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.  

- **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.  

- **April 8-9, 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 least 20 soldiers. A Taliban spokesman claims credit and claims the group also stole weapons.
**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. In Baghlan province, militants kill seven and wound eight in attacks on police checkpoints. Militants kill at least two officers in an attack on a district police headquarters in Nangarhar province.272

**April 13, 2019:** Taliban militants attack the city of Kunduz, killing at least six and wounding at least 50.273

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Designations:

Designations by the U.S. Government:

Afghan Taliban


July 2, 2002: The White House labeled the Taliban a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) on July 2, 2002.


Pakistani Taliban

September 1, 2010: The U.S. Secretary of State designated Tahrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) on September 1, 2010.

September 1, 2010: The U.S. Department of the Treasury designated Tahrik-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) pursuant to Executive Order 134224 on September 1, 2010.

September 1, 2010: The U.S. State Department listed top TTP leaders Hakimullah Mehsud and Wali ur-Rehman as Specifically Designated Global Terrorists on September 1, 2010.


Designations by Foreign Governments and Organizations:

Afghan Taliban
July 5, 2011: Canada listed the Pakistani Taliban as a terrorist organization on July 5, 2011.\textsuperscript{231}

May 27, 2002: The European Union implemented United Nations Security Council Resolution 1267 (1999), 1390 (2002) on May 27, 2002. The resolution imposed “certain specific restrictive measures directed against certain persons and entities associated with Usama bin Laden, the Al-Qaeda network and the Taliban” and froze “funds and other financial resources in respect of the Taliban of Afghanistan.”\textsuperscript{232} The E.U. implemented Council Decision 2011/486/CFSP, which put the following restrictions on the Taliban: embargo on arms and related materiel, ban on provision of certain services, freezing of funds and economic resources, restrictions on admission.\textsuperscript{233}

October 12, 2006: Kazakhstan listed the Taliban as a terrorist organization on October 12, 2006.\textsuperscript{234}

October 17, 2002: New Zealand designated the Taliban as a terrorist organization on October 17, 2002 as part of the Terrorism Suppression Act of 2002.\textsuperscript{235}

February 14, 2003: Russia listed the Taliban as a terrorist organization on February 14, 2003.\textsuperscript{236}

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Pakistani Taliban

July 5, 2011: Canada listed the Pakistani Taliban as a terrorist organization on July 5, 2011.289

July 29, 2011: France designated the Pakistani Taliban as a terrorist organization on July 29, 2011.290

November 15, 2014: The United Arab Emirates listed the Pakistani Taliban as a terrorist organization on November 15, 2014.291

January 2011: The United Kingdom listed the Pakistani Taliban as a terrorist organization in January 2011.292


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Ties to Extremist Entities:

The Taliban provided a safe haven for al-Qaeda insurgents in Afghanistan prior to the September 11, 2001, terror attacks. In 1996, Osama bin Laden met with Taliban leader Mullah Omar and formally pledged his allegiance and financial backing in exchange for protection from the Taliban.

During this time, 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 describe the brigade as bin Laden’s “primary battle formation supporting Taliban objectives,” with bin Laden “participating closely in the command and control of the brigade.”

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 the 55th Arab Brigade was destroyed by coalition forces in late 2001, bin Laden and al-Qaeda rebuilt the organization as the Lashkar al Zil, or “the Shadow Army,” recruiting from jihadist groups in Pakistan.

Al-Qaeda maintained a close relationship with the Taliban following the U.S. invasion. A U.S. intelligence report acquired by Bill Roggio and Thomas Joscelyn from Guantanamo Bay 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 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.”

Despite the increasing number of drone attacks in the Pakistani tribal areas under the Obama administration, the death of bin Laden in 2011, and continued killing of many senior al-Qaeda leaders, the alliance between al-Qaeda and the Taliban is likely to endure. Both organizations have proven they are adept at reforming their structure and tactics even while weakened and vulnerable. Following the death of bin Laden in 2011, Ayman al-Zawahiri, the new emir of al-Qaeda, has repeatedly renewed his oath of allegiance to the leader of the Taliban. Al-Qaeda leaders have also been featured in Taliban propaganda videos, confirming the continued alliance between the two groups.

The Taliban maintain particularly close ties with al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), an al-Qaeda branch formed in September 2014. AQIS’s emir, Asim Omar, was a former commander in the Pakistani Taliban and reported directly to Taliban leader Mullah Mohammad Omar before the latter’s death. AQIS fights alongside the Taliban in the Afghan insurgency. AQIS published a “Code of Conduct” in June 2017, in which it reiterated its allegiance to the emir of the Taliban and revealed that its members fight “shoulder-to-shoulder” with the Taliban—and sometimes even under its banner. It also revealed that AQIS is so closely integrated with the Taliban that some AQIS members are part of the Taliban’s chain-of-command.
Shortly after the Taliban assumed governance of Afghanistan in 1996, Jalaluddin Haqqani accepted an appointment as Minister of Tribal Affairs. Ever since, the Haqqani Network has been “officially subsumed under the larger Taliban umbrella organization led by Mullah Omar,” although the Haqqanis “maintain distinct command and control, and lines of operations.” In 2008, Haqqani stated that “all the Mujahideen wage Jihad under the leadership of the Ameer ul-Momineen Mullah Mohammed Omar Mujahid against the American invaders and their lackeys.”

In September 2012, Haqqani’s son Sirajuddin declared, “We are one of the fronts of the Islamic Emirate... and we are proud of our pledge to its Emir [Mullah Omar] and we carry out its orders and all its regulations... and we obey completely in good deeds the Emir of the Believers Mullah Muhammad Omar.” The Taliban also released a statement on its website stating that there is “no separate entity or network in Afghanistan by the name of Haqqani” and that Jalaluddin Haqqani is “a member of the Leadership Council of Islamic Emirate and is a close, loyal and trusted associate” of Mullah Omar.

**Ties to Other Entities:**

**Pakistan**

Throughout the 1990s, Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) provided support and training to Mullah Omar while he organized the Taliban in Kandahar.

By 2001, Pakistan was providing the Taliban regime in Kabul with hundreds of military advisers, thousands of Pakistani Pashtuns to serve in the Taliban’s infantry, and Special Services Group commandoes to help fight the Northern Alliance. The ISI also facilitated the alliance between Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden prior to 9/11.

Although Pakistani officials deny supporting the Taliban after 9/11, a leaked 2006 report from a British Defense Ministry think tank concluded, “Pakistan (through the ISI) has been supporting terrorism and extremism--whether in London on 7/7 [the July 2005 attacks on London's transit system], or in Afghanistan, or Iraq.”

Similarly, a NATO study published in 2012 based on the interrogations of 4,000 captured Taliban, al-Qaeda, and other fighters in Afghanistan concluded that “ISI support was critical to the survival and revival of the Taliban after 2001 just as it was critical to its conquest of Afghanistan in the 1990s.”

The NATO report also determined that the ISI is “thoroughly aware of Taliban activities and the whereabouts of all senior Taliban personnel.” While he was alive, Mullah Omar was believed to be hiding in Quetta and Karachi under the protection of the ISI.

**Qatar**

In January 2012, the Taliban announced their agreement to open an office in Doha, Qatar. Western observers viewed the decision as a sign of the Taliban’s possible willingness to enter formal talks with the West. The U.S. government reportedly approved the move in 2011. The Taliban opened its Doha office, the group’s first overseas, in June 2013. In 2017, a Taliban official told Al Jazeera that Qatar played a significant role in initiating peace talks between the terror group and Afghanistan by allowing the group to open its Doha office.

In July 2017, the New York Times revealed 2011 e-mails between Yousef al-Otaiba, the United Arab Emirates’ ambassador to the United States, and the UAE foreign ministry showing that the UAE had sought to host the Taliban office instead of Qatar. Otaiba responded the following month in a letter-to-the-editor alleging that the UAE had insisted the Taliban first

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**The Haqqani Network** [381]

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renounce its ties to al-Qaeda before opening an office in its country. According to Otaiba, the Taliban refused and Qatar made no similar demand of the group.\textsuperscript{215}

In December 2016, the Taliban demanded direct talks with the United States and official recognition of its Doha office as a political office.\textsuperscript{216} In February 2017, Afghan President Ashraf Gani met with Qatari Foreign Minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani and demanded the closure of the Taliban’s Doha office until the group ceased its violent activities in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{217}

Russia

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.\textsuperscript{218} 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.\textsuperscript{219} Nicholson has previously criticized Russia for providing “legitimacy” to the Taliban.\textsuperscript{220}

Taliban officials claim that the group has had prominent contacts with Russia since at least 2007, but that Russia’s role with respect to the Taliban does not go beyond “moral and political support.”\textsuperscript{221} In December 2016, Afghan officials accused Russian of providing—mostly—political support to the Taliban. Russia’s ambassador to Afghanistan, Alexander Mantytskiy, denied “intensive contacts” with the Taliban and claimed that his country’s engagement with the group was aimed solely at protecting Russians in Afghanistan and furthering peace talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government. Nonetheless, Afghan and U.S. security officials called Russian contacts with the Taliban a “dangerous new trend” that gives Russia “malign influence” in Afghanistan.\textsuperscript{222}

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia maintained diplomatic and financial ties to the Taliban when the group controlled the Afghan government in the 1990s. In 1998, the Taliban rejected a Saudi demand to deport Osama bin Laden.\textsuperscript{223} Nonetheless, Saudi Arabia maintained its relationship with the Taliban government until its overthrow in 2001.\textsuperscript{224}

After the fall of the Taliban government, Saudi Arabia became a source of private funding for the Taliban. Former Taliban Finance Minister Agha Jan Motasim told the New York Times that after the Taliban fell from power in 2001, he would frequently travel from Pakistan to Saudi Arabia to raise money as the Taliban regrouped. Motasim claimed he traveled to Saudi Arabia two to three times a year from 2002 to 2007 to raise money from foundations, wealthy Saudis, and other individuals who traveled to the country on pilgrimage to Mecca. Motasim also claimed that Saudi Arabia provided the only location where he could meet with donors from other countries. In 2009, then-Secretary of State Hillary Clinton called Saudi Arabia the “most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide.”\textsuperscript{225} Former Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki al-Faisal denied that his government provided any support for the Taliban.\textsuperscript{226}

Saudi Arabia reportedly sought to host the Taliban’s political office before Qatar, according to Abdullah Anas, a former mujahideen fighter with ties to Osama bin Laden who laid early groundwork for the Afghan peace process. With the alleged support of Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Saudi intelligence, Anas traveled between Saudi Arabia and Afghanistan between 2006 and 2008 in an attempt to launch a dialogue that included the Taliban.\textsuperscript{227}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{218} Bill Roggio and Thomas Joscelyn, “The al-Qaeda-Taliban Connection,” \textit{Weekly Standard}, July 4, 2011,
\end{itemize}


Taliban

Media Coverage:

Arab Media

Qatari state-funded news outlet Al Jazeera has frequently approached the Taliban with empathy, referring to the group’s actions as “armed resistance” and framing the U.S. coalition in Afghanistan as a “military presence.”

While discussing burgeoning Afghan opium exports in an October 2014 article, Al Jazeera noted the Taliban’s “success” and “strong authority” in reducing the opium trade in 2000. Al Jazeera’s description of the Taliban’s success lies in stark contrast to its framing of the Afghan government’s “minimal reach and legitimacy” in terms of combating Afghanistan’s rural corruption and drug production.

Al Jazeera articles on the struggling peace process blamed the collapse of the 2013 negotiations on the Afghan government, stating that attempts “came to nothing after the Afghan government objected to fanfare surrounding the opening of a Taliban office” in Qatar.

When reporting on Taliban attacks, Al Jazeera is careful to omit the word “terrorism” from its articles (unless it is quoting an Afghan or U.S. official in a statement) and instead frames the attacks as retaliation to military operations or in response to a “contested presidential election.”

The Saudi-owned Al Arabiya news outlet regularly carries pieces by Reuters, the Associated Press, and Agence France Presse (AFP). A December 2014 AFP article reported that approximately “10,000 non-combatants [were] killed or wounded” in 2014, “75 percent of them by the Taliban.” The article expressed the Taliban’s unwillingness to negotiate for a political solution, quoting Afghan President Ashraf Ghani as saying that the Taliban “would ‘continue its Jihad and struggle so long as a single foreigner remains in Afghanistan in a military uniform.’”

While reporting on the recent TTP attack on the primary school in Peshawar, (which resulted in more than 140 casualties, most of them children), Al Jazeera wrote that “It was not immediately clear whether some or all of the casualties were killed by the gunmen or in the ensuing battle with Pakistani security forces.”

Asharq al-Awsat, a pan-Arab daily based in London, called it a “horrific attack, carried out by a relatively small number of militants from the Tehreek-e-Taliban, a Pakistani militant group trying to overthrow the government.” The article also questioned whether the TTP has been crippled by the Pakistani military, or whether it will have the strength to regroup, though the article failed to reach a conclusion.

While covering the same attack, Al Arabiya put emphasis on the Afghan Taliban’s condemnation of the killing of children and innocents in Pakistan, although the article was quick to note that the Afghan Taliban “often target civilians.” Written by an Al Arabiya staff writer, the article sought to frame the terror attack as coming from a place of weakness, stating the militants “don’t have the capacity” to “strike at the heart of the [Pakistani] military” and instead “are going for soft targets.” The stance of denouncing terrorism and framing militants as weak coincides with the goals of the Saudi government, which has been vocal in its condemnation of terrorism as it seeks to bolster its security against foreign and domestic opposition.
Iranian Media

As the U.S. announced its plan to decrease the number of U.S. soldiers in Afghanistan, Iran’s state-owned PressTV described the U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan as the Taliban’s “pretext to justify and expand the violence and attacks against [Afghanistan’s] human and financial resources.” The article warned that “instability remains…despite the presence of thousands of U.S.-led troops.” This slant is unsurprising considering Iran’s desire for increased influence in Afghanistan versus the U.S.’s goal of a democratic and Western-oriented Afghan ally. PressTV emphasized “Tehran’s preparedness to enhance its security and economic cooperation with Kabul” while simultaneously declaring the U.S. occupation as a failed policy.

Western Media

Western media recognized the Taliban’s origin as a rebel Islamist force early on. An October 1995 New York Times article described the Taliban as “an Islamic fundamentalist force.” Media also recognized the chaos in Afghanistan caused by various warlords and contrasted that with the Taliban’s goals. An October 1996 CNN article, for example, acknowledged the Taliban’s fundamentalism but noted that the group “emerged as a reformist force—honest, fierce, and devoutly Islamic.”

During the Taliban’s 1996-2001 reign of Afghanistan, Western news outlets often addressed issues resulting from the group’s implementation of sharia. The Taliban instituted restrictions on women, outdoor activity, and businesses. Taliban rule of law was “intent on returning the capital to the Middle Ages,” according to a 1996 article in Britain’s Independent. In 2000, the BBC asserted that the Taliban’s rule caused “some resentment among ordinary Afghans.” However, western media analysis highlighted the group’s popularity due to its alleged efforts to fight corruption, restore order, and reinstate commerce. In 2001, the New York Times described the Taliban as a “militia” that “craves recognition.”

The Taliban’s destruction of Afghanistan’s ancient Buddhist statues in March 2001 earned widespread condemnation from Western governments and grabbed headlines in those countries. However, a New York Times piece that month by Barbara Crossette told the Taliban’s side of the story. Crossette acknowledged the Taliban’s restrictions on women and enforcement of strict Islamic laws, but offered no counter perspective and relied solely on a Taliban spokesman as a source. Another New York Times article in December 2001, after the Taliban’s fall, painted a picture of an Afghanistan suffering under fundamentalist rules.
By the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Taliban had already featured in international headlines for its refusal to turn over Osama bin Laden. Five days after the attacks, a piece in the London-based *Guardian* called the Taliban “a ‘virtual state’ wrecked by 20 years of war in a state abandoned by the trappings of the modern era.” On September 21, 2001, then-President of the United States George W. Bush gave a final ultimatum to the Taliban to turn over bin Laden. It received widespread international coverage.

Following the Taliban’s removal from power in late 2001, *New York Times* columnist Thomas L. Friedman likened bin Laden’s image in the Arab world to that of Robin Hood. Given this image, Friedman wrote, there could be open debate on him only after his removal—just as the Taliban had been recently removed.

After the fall of the Taliban regime, the western media often portrayed the Taliban as a harmful force in regard to the Afghan populace. The *Wall Street Journal*’s Yaroslav Trofimov discussed in March 2010 how the Taliban forced cell phone carriers to suspend their services during the night to make it harder for informants to alert coalition troops about their movements. Trofimov highlighted the harm that this brought to businesses and the population’s dampened ability to access medical care.

Another example can be seen leading up to Afghanistan’s elections in 2010, when Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid stated that “presidential elections expected this year are a sham” and that attacks on parliamentary members and civilians would occur if elections proceeded. The western media also discussed the Taliban in terms of Pakistani ISI support and relations to the Pakistani Taliban, citing statements by Afghan officials such as “the [Pakistani] ISI was ‘part of the landscape of destruction’ in Afghanistan” or reports of Taliban leader Mullah Omar hiding out in Quetta, Pakistan. Reports on the Taliban have therefore become increasingly international in scope as the U.S. coalition has come under heavy attacks by Afghan insurgents and the Taliban’s ties to Pakistan have become clearer.

As the Taliban returned to their roots as a rebel force and increased their violent attacks, the Western media dropped their reference to the Taliban as a governing entity. Reuters, the *New York Post*, the Associated Press, and other media outlets regularly refer to the Taliban as an insurgent or militant group. An April 2015 Reuters article, for example, makes no mention that the Taliban once controlled Afghanistan. A reader unfamiliar with Afghanistan’s history could infer that the Taliban is nothing more than a violent rebel group.

An April 2015 *New York Post* article painted both the Taliban and ISIS in a negative light. Author Bill Sanderson wrote that ISIS’s bombing of a Kabul bank “was even denounced by the murderous Taliban.” While Sanderson gave details of the Taliban’s condemnation, the article clearly regarded the Taliban as no better than ISIS.

Even during the Taliban’s rule of Afghanistan, Western media typically acknowledged the group’s violent path to power and the refusal of global powers to recognize the Taliban government. While the Western media report on groups such as Hezbollah and Hamas mixing politics with their extremist goals, media outlets appear to have wholly recognized the Taliban as nothing more than a violent, Islamist insurgency.
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http://www.nytimes.com/2001/03/19/world/19TALI.html [421].


Rhetoric:

**Taliban fighters, September 28, 2017** [430]
Addressing U.S. President Trump and American soldiers:

“With the permission of Allah we will play with your skulls.”²⁶⁹

**Taliban fighters, September 28, 2017** [431]

In a propaganda video:

“The brave and Mujahid of Afghanistan rejects disbelief, apostasy, democracy, and slavery! Last half century proves that this land was and will be the land of Islam and Jihad.”²⁷⁰

**Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman, August 22, 2017** [432]

“If America does not withdraw its forces from Afghanistan, the day will not be far when Afghanistan shall transform into a graveyard for the American Empire.”²⁷¹

**Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman, August 22, 2017** [433]

“Instead of continuing of war in Afghanistan, Americans should have thought about withdrawing their soldiers from Afghanistan. As long as there is even one American solder [sic] in our country [Taliban soldiers will] continue our jihad.”²⁷²

**Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman, May 27, 2017** [434]

“Our fight is Jihad & obligatory worship, reward for every obligatory act of worship is multiplied x70 in #Ramadan.” (Tweet)²⁷³

**Taliban member, December 2016** [435]

In propaganda video:

“Allah will shake the White House [with] your [the Muhajideen’s] religious zeal by the permission of Allah.”²⁷⁴

**Taliban member, December 2016** [436]

In propaganda video:

“Muhajideen want to completely eliminate democracy.”²⁷⁵

**Jihad Yar Wazir, Taliban commander, December 16, 2014** [437]

“The parents of the army school are army soldiers and they are behind the massive killing of our kids and indiscriminate bombing in North and South Waziristan…To hurt them at their safe haven and homes—such an attack is perfect revenge.”²⁷⁶
“Those who have faith in infidels are friends of America and follow the system of the infidels. Praise be to God, we have targeted those who are with the infidels, America, and we will continue to target them.”

Hakimullah Mehsud, then-Emir of TTP, October 9, 2013

“We will stand with the Muslims. We call on both governments and the Muslim people to submit themselves to the Islamic system, which guarantees success in this world as well as in the hereafter. We will stand by the Muslims.”

Hakimullah Mehsud, then-Emir of TTP, October 9, 2013

“During the holy month of Ramadan, jihad has major rewards. And mujahideen will continue to employ all their fighting techniques to mount attacks on the enemy.”

Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman, July 2013

“We have given sacrifices so that a Sharia system comes. Security can’t come without a Sharia system, the whole world - enemies and friends - has realized that...in a Sharia system, you first get rid of the infidels and then those who committed big sins - the traitors. They fought alongside the infidels against Islam.”

Mullah Dawran, Taliban commander, April 4, 2012

“Those who cry of human rights or call themselves democrats say they give rights. The rights that Islam has given to a woman, no other religion has - that she sit quietly in her home, veiled. That she take care of food and clothes for her husband.”

Mullah Dawran, Taliban commander, April 4, 2012

“Same with prayer: that is what separates a Muslim and an infidel. We will be soft - but they will have to pray, it is not like we will pardon them.”

Mullah Dawran, Taliban commander, April 4, 2012

“We must give sacrifices in the fight against the crusaders. In this fight, whether we are killed, martyred or thrown in jail we are proud of it.”

Siraj Haqqani, Reported deputy emir, 2010

“When we have the direction of Islam with us, we do not need the spoiled and filthy civilization of the West to tell us about women’s education.”

Siraj Haqqani, Reported deputy emir, 2010
Qari Bashir Haqqani, Taliban commander, May 21, 2008 [446]

“It is not important what kind of soldiers they were. What’s important is to kill and hammer out the Germans in Kunduz.”

Qari Bashir Haqqani, Taliban commander, May 21, 2008 [447]

“If they leave their bases, we will be waiting for them with improvised explosive devices (IED) and fedayeen (suicide bombers) on every road.”

Qari Bashir Haqqani, Taliban commander, May 21, 2008 [448]

“There is no need for special orders anymore. The mujahedeen are just doing what they are responsible for doing. To kill and attack Germans is the goal and that is clear to everyone. The entire chain and network is responsible.”

Qari Bashir Haqqani, Taliban commander, May 21, 2008 [449]

“They will have to carry many more bodies in coffins on their shoulders if they don’t come to the realistic conclusion that their forces must withdraw from our country. We view [German] soldiers as being the stooges of the Americans and Jews.”

Qari Bashir Haqqani, Taliban commander, May 21, 2008 [450]

“My guidance to the people of Kunduz is that they should avoid meeting or getting near the Germans or people from other foreign countries. Those who work for the invader in any capacity will be seen by the Taliban as enemies, just like the Germans, the Canadians and the Americans.”

Taliban government, 1996 [451]

“Unclean things [are prohibited]: pork, pig, pig oil, anything made from human hair, satellite dishes, cinematography, any equipment that produces the joy of music, pool tables, chess, masks, alcohol, tapes, computers, VCRs, televisions, anything that propagates sex and is full of music, wine, lobster, nail polish, firecrackers, statues, sewing catalogues, pictures, Christmas cards.”

Mullah Wakil, then-spokesman for the Taliban, 1996 [452]

“The Sharia does not allow politics or political parties. That is why we give no salaries to officials or soldiers, just food, clothes, shoes, and weapons. We want to live a life like the Prophet lived 1400 years ago, and jihad is our right. We want to recreate the time of the Prophet, and we are only carrying out what the Afghan people have wanted for the past 14 years.”

Taliban government, 1996 [453]

“Women should not step outside your residence. If women are going outside with fashionable, ornamental, tight and charming clothes to show themselves, they will be
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cursed by the Islamic Sharia and should never expect to go to heaven.\textsuperscript{392}

\textit{Taliban government, 1996} \textsuperscript{454}

“Throw reason to the dogs. It stinks of corruption.”\textsuperscript{393}


\textsuperscript{394} “Taliban condemn Trump's decision on Afghanistan war, vow ‘jihad’ will go on,” Reuters, August 22, 2017, \url{http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-afghanistan-taliban-idUSKCN1B20ES?il=0} \textsuperscript{[456]}.


\textsuperscript{398} “Taliban: We Slaughtered 100+ Kids Because Their Parents Helped America,” Daily Beast, December 16, 2014, \url{http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/12/16/pakistani-taliban-massacre-more-than-80-schoolchildren.html} \textsuperscript{[457]}.

\textsuperscript{399} “Interview with a Taliban Commander: ‘What’s Important Is to Kill the Germans,’” Spiegel Online, May 21, 2008, \url{http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-a-taliban-commander-what-s-important-is-to-kill-the-germans-a-554545.html} \textsuperscript{[462]}.

\textsuperscript{400} “Interview with a Taliban Commander: ‘What’s Important Is to Kill the Germans,’” Spiegel Online, May 21, 2008, \url{http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-a-taliban-commander-what-s-important-is-to-kill-the-germans-a-554545.html} \textsuperscript{[462]}.

\textsuperscript{401} “Interview with a Taliban Commander: ‘What’s Important Is to Kill the Germans,’” Spiegel Online, May 21, 2008, \url{http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-a-taliban-commander-what-s-important-is-to-kill-the-germans-a-554545.html} \textsuperscript{[462]}.

\textsuperscript{402} “Interview with a Taliban Commander: ‘What’s Important Is to Kill the Germans,’” Spiegel Online, May 21, 2008, \url{http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-a-taliban-commander-what-s-important-is-to-kill-the-germans-a-554545.html} \textsuperscript{[462]}.

\textsuperscript{403} “Interview with a Taliban Commander: ‘What’s Important Is to Kill the Germans,’” Spiegel Online, May 21, 2008, \url{http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-a-taliban-commander-what-s-important-is-to-kill-the-germans-a-554545.html} \textsuperscript{[462]}.

