

## *Taliban*

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**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<sup>1</sup>
- De Talebano Islami Ghurdzang<sup>2</sup>
- Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan<sup>3</sup>
- Islamic Movement of Taliban<sup>4</sup>
- Students of Islamic Knowledge Movement<sup>5</sup>
- Tahrike Islami'a Taliban<sup>6</sup>
- Taleban<sup>7</sup>
- Taliban Islamic Movement<sup>8</sup>
- Talibano Islami Tahrik<sup>9</sup>
- Tehrik<sup>10</sup>

*Executive Summary:*

The Taliban (Pashto for “students”) are the predominant umbrella group for the Afghan insurgency, including the semi-autonomous [Haqqani network](#) [1]. (The Taliban’s offspring across the border, the Pakistani Taliban, share the ideology and objectives of its namesake but operate independently and focus on overthrowing the Pakistani government.) January 2018 estimates by Afghan and U.S. officials gauged that the Taliban included at least 60,000 fighters, up from 2014 U.S.

estimates of 20,000 fighters.<sup>11</sup> 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](#) [2] by that time than at any point since the 2001 U.S.-led coalition invaded in response to the September 11 attacks.<sup>12</sup> By September 2017, the Taliban reportedly controlled or contested up to 45 percent of Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup> According

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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.<sup>14</sup>

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."<sup>15</sup> 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.<sup>16</sup> 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.<sup>17</sup> 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.<sup>18</sup> 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.<sup>19</sup>

The Taliban's current leader, announced in May 2016, is [Haibatullah Akhundzada](#) [3].<sup>20</sup> 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.<sup>21</sup> 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.<sup>22</sup> As of October 2018, though, the Afghan government controlled or influenced just 55.5 percent of the country.<sup>23</sup> On February 29, 2020, U.S. and Taliban representatives meeting in Doha, Qatar, signed an agreement for a staggered U.S. troop withdrawal in exchange for a Taliban commitment to prevent terror groups such as al-Qaeda and ISIS from using Afghanistan as a base from which to plot against the United States. The Taliban also agreed to negotiate a permanent ceasefire with other Afghan militants and the Afghan government.<sup>24</sup> The Afghan government voiced immediate objections a clause calling for a prisoner swap with the Taliban as a precondition for negotiations.<sup>25</sup>

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.<sup>26</sup> In August 2016, the Taliban forged a ceasefire with [ISIS](#) [6] after more than a year of intense combat between the

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radical Islamist groups.<sup>27</sup>

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."<sup>28</sup> Likewise, the top American commander in Afghanistan, General John Nicholson, said in April 2017 that Russia is providing weapons to the Taliban.<sup>29</sup> 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."<sup>30</sup> Russia denies that it is aiding the Taliban, claiming that Moscow is simply trying to get the group to engage in diplomatic negotiations.<sup>31</sup>

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.<sup>32</sup> 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.<sup>33</sup> Beginning in April 2019, Doha hosted a series of talks between U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and top Taliban official Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar that have centered on withdrawing thousands of U.S. troops in exchange for the Taliban's agreement to a ceasefire and their participation in negotiating a larger peace deal directly with the Afghan government.<sup>34</sup>

In February 2020, U.S. and Taliban negotiators reached a preliminary deal that demanded a reduction in violence from the insurgent camp in exchange for a drawdown of U.S. troops in Afghanistan. The United States agreed to draw its forces down from 13,000 to 8,600 in the next three to four months, with the remaining U.S. forces withdrawing in 14 months. In exchange, the Taliban agreed to renounce al-Qaeda and prevent al-Qaeda and other groups from using Afghanistan as a base for terrorism against the United States. The Taliban also agreed to negotiate a permanent ceasefire with other Afghan militants and the Afghan government. The U.S. troop drawdown is dependent on the Taliban maintaining its commitments. The agreement also called for permanent ceasefire and power-sharing talks that March between Afghan militant groups as well as between the Taliban and the Afghan government.<sup>35</sup>

Although the Taliban have not attacked U.S. and NATO troops since the signing of the agreement, the Taliban have instead continued to direct their attacks toward Afghan security forces.<sup>36</sup> On April 30, 2020, the U.S. Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) released a quarterly assessment that called Taliban attacks in March "above seasonal norms."<sup>37</sup> NATO's Resolute Support mission noted that the Taliban had refrained from targeting coalition forces but had increased attacks on Afghan forces. The Afghan National Security Council found that the Taliban had carried out an average of 55 attacks per day since March 1. According to the council, the Taliban has continued its "campaign of terror against Afghans" and done nothing for peace.<sup>38</sup> On May 3, U.S. military officials warned the Taliban would face consequences if it did not cease its attacks.<sup>39</sup> The Afghan government initially objected to clauses within the U.S.-Taliban agreement calling for prisoner exchanges as a precondition to negotiations with the Taliban.<sup>40</sup> Despite these objections and continued violence, as of early May 2020, the Afghan government had released 933 Taliban prisoners in exchange for dozens of captive Afghan security personnel.<sup>41</sup>

### *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.<sup>42</sup> 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."<sup>43</sup>

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This fundamentalist ideology was evident in the name they adopted. They called themselves Taliban (students) and embraced the strict Deobandi interpretation of the faith.<sup>44</sup> This school was a branch of Sunni Hanafi Islam that developed in the late nineteenth century in the madrassas (religious schools) of British India.<sup>45</sup> 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).<sup>46</sup>

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.<sup>47</sup> 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.<sup>48</sup>

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."<sup>49</sup> 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.<sup>50</sup>

The Taliban promotes jihad as a "divine obligation," while failure to support jihad is a sin, according to a June 2017 propaganda video.<sup>51</sup> Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid has particularly encouraged jihad during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, as the heavenly reward is multiplied during that time.<sup>52</sup>

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.<sup>53</sup> 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](#) [7] 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.'"<sup>54</sup> Despite these warnings, hundreds of Taliban members have joined ISIS's Pakistani branch.<sup>55</sup>

### *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.<sup>56</sup>

As the emir of the Taliban, Akhundzada is responsible for overseeing the courts and judges.<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> In August 2016, Maulvi Ibrahim Sadar was appointed the military commander of the Taliban.<sup>59</sup>

The group's ruling council, called the Quetta Shura, is responsible for much of the Taliban's operations in southern and western Afghanistan.<sup>60</sup> 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.<sup>61</sup> In November 2016, the Shura reportedly relocated

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to Afghanistan's southern Helmand province.<sup>62</sup>

Below the emir sits the deputy emir, reported to be Sirajuddin Haqqani.<sup>63</sup> 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.<sup>64</sup> Below the councils sit the judges, who reportedly run courts inside Afghanistan at the supreme, provincial, and district levels.<sup>65</sup>

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.<sup>66</sup> 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."<sup>67</sup>

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.<sup>68</sup>

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.<sup>69</sup>

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 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.<sup>70</sup>

### *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.<sup>71</sup>

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.<sup>72</sup> 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.<sup>73</sup> 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.<sup>74</sup>

The Taliban reportedly raked in record profits in 2013, with fighters earning so much that they have had no incentive to quit the insurgency.<sup>75</sup> 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.<sup>76</sup>

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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.<sup>77</sup>

### *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.<sup>78</sup>

In 2010, the Pakistani military estimated that the Pakistani Taliban pocketed an average of \$200 million every year from Afghan poppy profits.<sup>79</sup> A 2012 U.N. report estimated that the Taliban earned \$100 million from the opium trade in 2011-12.<sup>80</sup> 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.<sup>81</sup> 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.<sup>82</sup>

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."<sup>83</sup> 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.<sup>84</sup> The Taliban have denied involvement in the heroin trade.<sup>85</sup>

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."<sup>86</sup>

### *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.<sup>87</sup> 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."<sup>88</sup> 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.<sup>89</sup> Reuters has reported that "many Afghans" support the Taliban's accrual 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."<sup>90</sup>

In 2017, Afghanistan ranked ninth in the world for pistachio production.<sup>91</sup> 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.<sup>92</sup> 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.<sup>93</sup> 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."<sup>94</sup>



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### *International Backers*

The Taliban reportedly receive donations from oil-rich Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries.<sup>95</sup> 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.”<sup>96</sup> 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.”<sup>97</sup> 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.<sup>98</sup>

### *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.”<sup>99</sup>

TPP 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.”<sup>100</sup>

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.<sup>101</sup>

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.”<sup>102</sup>

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.”<sup>103</sup>

### *Recruitment:*

Most of the early Taliban were trained in the Deobandi or Saudi-funded Wahhabi madrassas of Pakistan.<sup>104</sup> 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.<sup>105</sup>

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.<sup>106</sup> 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.<sup>107</sup>

January 2018 estimates by Afghan and U.S. officials gauged that the Taliban included at least 60,000 fighters, up from 2014 U.S. estimates of 20,000 fighters.<sup>108</sup> In 2009, the U.S. government estimated that the Taliban’s size was roughly 25,000 fighters of varying allegiance.<sup>109</sup> 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.<sup>110</sup>

The Taliban have earned a reputation for secrecy, and some analysts believe this has inhibited the group’s recruiting

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potential. With such an opaque governing structure, in addition to the brutality of their administration, the Taliban failed to engender popular confidence and support.<sup>111</sup>

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.<sup>112</sup> 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.<sup>113</sup>

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.<sup>114</sup>

### *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.<sup>115</sup> 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.<sup>116</sup> A June 2017 propaganda video identified four new Taliban camps in the country.<sup>117</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “Currently Listed Entities,” Public Safety Canada, accessed April 16, 2015, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrtr/ctr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx#2044> [9].

<sup>2</sup> “Currently Listed Entities,” Public Safety Canada, accessed April 16, 2015, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrtr/ctr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx#2044> [9].

<sup>3</sup> “Currently Listed Entities,” Public Safety Canada, accessed April 16, 2015, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrtr/ctr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx#2044> [9].

<sup>4</sup> Exec. Order No. 13,268, 67 Fed. Reg. 128 (July 3, 2002), <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2002-07-03/pdf/02-16951.pdf> [10].

<sup>5</sup> Melissa McNamara, “The Taliban in Afghanistan,” CBS News, August 31, 2006, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-taliban-in-afghanistan/> [11].

<sup>6</sup> Exec. Order No. 13,268, 67 Fed. Reg. 128 (July 3, 2002), <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2002-07-03/pdf/02-16951.pdf> [10].

<sup>7</sup> Adam Curtis, “From ‘Taleban’ to ‘Taliban’,” BBC News, June 2, 2009, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/legacy/theeditors/2009/06/from\\_taleban\\_to\\_taliban.html](http://www.bbc.co.uk/blogs/legacy/theeditors/2009/06/from_taleban_to_taliban.html) [12].

<sup>8</sup> Exec. Order No. 13,268, 67 Fed. Reg. 128 (July 3, 2002), <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2002-07-03/pdf/02-16951.pdf> [10].

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<sup>10</sup> “Currently Listed Entities,” Public Safety Canada, accessed April 16, 2015, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrtr/ctr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx#2044> [9].

<sup>11</sup> Courtney Kube, “The Taliban is gaining strength and territory in Afghanistan,” NBC News, January 30, 2018, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/numbers-afghanistan-are-not-good-n842651> [13].

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**Key Leaders**



**Mullah Mawlawi Haibatullah Akhundzada**  
Emir (leader)



**Sirajuddin Haqqani**  
Reported deputy emir, head of the Quetta Shura



**Mohammad Yaqoob**  
Deputy emir, head of Taliban military commission



**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 Zabul 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)



**Mohammed 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



## Taliban

### History:

- **July 8, 2020:** Afghan authorities report that they will not follow through with the release of over 600 Taliban prisoners deemed “too dangerous.”  
However, under the conditions of the February 2020 U.S.-Taliban peace deal, Kabul pledged to release over 5,000 Taliban prisoners in exchange for 1,000 Afghan security force captives. According to Javid Faisal, the spokesman for the National Security Council, the prisoners the Taliban asked to be released still had “serious criminal cases” against them. Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, claimed the criminal cases against the specific prisoners were fabricated, but Faisal stated that the Afghan government will continue with the release of other Taliban prisoners, but only those considered not as significant of a threat. Source: “Afghanistan Says Will Not Release 600 ‘Too Dangerous’ Taliban,” *Military.com*, July 9, 2020, <https://www.military.com/daily-news/2020/07/09/afghanistan-says-will-not-release-600-too-dangerous-taliban.html> [99].
- **June 26, 2020:** American intelligence officials report that an unidentified Russian military intelligence unit secretly offered bounties to Taliban-linked militants to kill coalition forces in Afghanistan, including American troops.  
The Russian unit has been linked to attacks and covert operations meant to destabilize the West. According to American intelligence officials, successful attacks carried out by militants were provided with rewards from the Russian intelligence unit. Zabihullah Mujahid, a spokesman for the Taliban, denied that the insurgents have “any such relations with any intelligence agency” and called the report an attempt to defame the Taliban. Source: Charlie Savage, Eric Schmitt and Michael Schwartz, “Russia Secretly Offered Afghan Militants Bounties to Kill U.S. Troops, Intelligence Says,” June 26, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/26/us/politics/russia-afghanistan-bounties.html> [100].
- **June 22, 2020:** The National Security Council reports that the Taliban have killed at least 291 Afghan security personnel and wounded 550 others in the past week—the “deadliest” week of the 19-year Afghan war.  
Despite the increase in violence, President Ashraf Ghani claims he will continue with a Taliban prisoner release—about an additional 2,000 Taliban inmates on top of the already freed 3,000—in order to begin peace negotiations with the Taliban. Source: “Taliban Kills At Least 14 Afghan Forces In Raids On Checkpoints,” *Gandhara*, June 23, 2020, <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/taliban-kills-at-least-14-afghan-forces-in-raids-on-checkpoints/30686391.html> [101].
- **June 9, 2020:** Radio Free Europe reports that a group of Taliban militants have broken off from the mainstream Taliban to form the Hezb-e Walayat-e Islami (Party of Islamic Guardianship).  
The splinter group formed following the Taliban-U.S. peace agreement that was signed on February 29. According to an Afghan intelligence official, the group has yet to be “officially announced,” but it is alleged that the group has close ties to Iran—a country which the U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency reported in November 2019 as having provided financial, political, training, and military support to the Taliban. Members of the splinter group include radical Taliban commanders and members of other Taliban factions. Despite the formation of Hezb-e Walayat-e Islami, the Taliban has begun to put together an agenda for negotiations with the Afghan government. Sediq Sediqi, a spokesman for President Ashraf Ghani, claims the president would like for the talks to commence in July 2020. Sources: Frud Bezhanm “Iranian Links: New Taliban Splinter Group Emerges That Opposes The U.S.-Afghan Peace Deal,” *Radio Free Europe*, June 9, 2020, <https://www.rferl.org/a/afghanistan-taliban-splinter-group-peace-deal-iranian-links/30661777.html> [102]; Kathy Gannon, “Taliban say they are readying for talks with Kabul leaders,” *Military Times*, June 9, 2020, <https://www.militarytimes.com/news/your-military/2020/06/08/taliban-say-they-are-readying-for-talks-with-kabul-leaders/> [103].
- **June 7, 2020:** U.S. Special Representative for Afghan Reconciliation Zalmay Khalilzad meets with Pakistani army Chief General Qamar Javed Bajwa in Islamabad to discuss restarting intra-Afghan peace talks.  
Although the Taliban continues to carry out attacks despite the brief Eid ceasefire in May 2020, the two sides are also hoping to address issues surrounding repatriating more than 2 million Afghan refugees currently in Pakistan, and managing the border between Afghanistan and Pakistan. Source: “Pakistan, US hold talks on restarting intra-Afghan peace talks,” *Al Jazeera*, June 8, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/pakistan-hold-talks-restarting-intra-afghan-peace-talks-200608065815806.html> [104].
- **June 5, 2020:** The U.S. recommences air raids against the Taliban following the brief Eid ceasefire in May 2020.  
U.S. air forces hit an unknown number of Taliban militants in southern Kandahar province, as well as three senior Taliban commanders and at least 13 other fighters in Farah. Source: “U.S. conducts first air raids against Taliban since ceasefire ends,” *Al Jazeera*, June 5, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/06/condicts-air-raids-taliban-ceasefire-ends-200605121833558.html> [105].
- **May 27, 2020:** The United Nations releases a report claiming that the Taliban continues to work closely with al-Qaeda, despite the Taliban’s peace deal with the American government.  
According to the report, about 400 to 600 armed al-Qaeda operatives are stationed in Afghanistan. The February 29 peace agreement saw the Taliban agree to prevent al-Qaeda from operating in Afghanistan in order for U.S. troops to gradually withdraw from Afghanistan. Despite the conditions of the negotiations, the U.N. report claims that the Taliban regularly consulted with al-Qaeda during the peace process, promising to not break its “historical ties” with al-Qaeda for any price. Source: Ryan Browne and Jennifer Hansler, “UN report says Taliban is maintaining relations with al-Qaeda despite deal with US,” *CNN*, June 1, 2020, [https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/01/politics/un-report-taliban-al-qaeda/index.html?utm\\_source=iterable&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=1259405](https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/01/politics/un-report-taliban-al-qaeda/index.html?utm_source=iterable&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=1259405) [106].
- **May 27, 2020:** Reuters reports that two senior U.S. officials in Kabul claimed that the United States will significantly reduce the number of troops in Afghanistan from 13,000 to about 8,600 by early June 2020.  
Due to ongoing concerns regarding the spread of the coronavirus pandemic, the withdrawal is ahead of the original mid-July deadline agreed upon by the U.S. and the Taliban on February 29 in Doha, Qatar. Sources: Idrees Ali and Rupam Jain, “Exclusive: U.S. troop strength in Afghanistan down to close to 8,600 ahead of schedule – sources,” *Reuters*, May 27, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-afghanistan-taliban-exclusive/exclusive-u-s-troop-strength-in-afghanistan-down-to-close-to-8600-ahead-of-schedule-u-s-and-nato-officials-idUSKBN233147> [107]; John Bowden, “US withdrawing troops from Afghanistan ahead of schedule: report,” *The Hill*, May 27, 2020, <https://thehill.com/policy/defense/499698-us-withdrawing-troops-from-afghanistan-ahead-of-schedule-report> [108]; Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Julian E. Barnes, “Trump Wants Troops in Afghanistan Home by Election Day. The Pentagon Is Drawing Up Plans,” *New York Times*, May 26, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/26/world/asia/afghanistan-troop-withdrawal-election-day.html> [109].
- **May 26, 2020:** Following a three-day Eid ceasefire, National Security Council spokesman, Javid Faisal, announces that Afghan authorities will release as many as 900 Taliban prisoners.  
The Afghan government also urges the Taliban to extend the Eid ceasefire. As of May 2020, Kabul has released about 1,000 Taliban inmates, whereas the Taliban has released about 300 Afghan security forces. Source: “Afghanistan to free 900 more Taliban prisoners: Government,” *Al Jazeera*, May 26, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/05/afghanistan-free-900-taliban-prisoners-government-200526070348775.html> [110].

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- May 23, 2020:**The Taliban announce a three-day Eid ceasefire. The statement instructs Taliban fighters to refrain from entering government areas, and also states that Kabul forces should not enter territories under their control. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani accepts the ceasefire, and orders his forces to comply, also announcing plans to release up to 2,000 Taliban prisoners. Despite the ceasefire, according to Javid Faisal, a spokesman for the country's main intelligence and security office in Kabul, at least 146 civilians were killed and another 430 were wounded by the Taliban during Ramadan. Source: "Afghan Taliban announces three-day Eid ceasefire," Al Jazeera, May 23, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/05/afghan-taliban-announces-day-eid-ceasefire-200523190953783.html> [111].
- April 17, 2020:**U.S. officials announce that, in an effort to reduce violence in the midst of the U.S.-Taliban peace agreement, the U.S. will pull back front-line C.I.A. personnel from bases in Afghanistan. Top Taliban leaders have continuously demanded a reduction in the C.I.A.'s presence in the country—it is assumed there are over hundreds of C.I.A. officers and contractors in Afghanistan—that up until now, U.S. officials have resisted. Source: Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Julian E. Barnes, "To Save Afghan Peace Deal, U.S. May Scale Back C.I.A. Presence," *New York Times*, April 17, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/17/world/asia/afghanistan-cia-peace-treaty.html> [112].
- April 7, 2020 - April 8, 2020:**Taliban officials walk out of peace talks with the Afghan government. According to Suhail Shaheen, the spokesman for the Taliban's Qatar office, the first face-to-face discussions with the government were "fruitless" as the talks broke down over a prisoner swap that was previously agreed upon between the U.S. and the Taliban in February 2020. The Taliban allegedly wanted the release of 15 commanders involved in what the Afghan government considered major attacks. However, the Afghan government did not agree to the conditions and was only willing to release 400 low-threat Taliban prisoners in exchange for a reduction in violence from the jihadist camp. On April 8, Javid Faisal, spokesman for Afghanistan's Office of the National Security Council, announced that the Afghan government will release 100 Taliban prisoners in an effort to keep the peace talks moving forward. Sources: "Afghanistan peace deal: Taliban walk out of 'fruitless' talks," BBC News, April 7, 2020, [https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52199398?intlink\\_from\\_url=&link\\_location=live-reporting-story](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-52199398?intlink_from_url=&link_location=live-reporting-story) [113]; "Taliban halt 'fruitless' prisoner swap talks with Kabul," Anadolu Agency, April 7, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/taliban-halt-fruitless-prisoner-swap-talks-with-kabul/1795717> [114]; "Afghan government says will release 100 Taliban prisoners," Al Jazeera, April 8, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/04/afghan-government-release-100-taliban-prisoners-200408102844277.html> [115].
- February 29, 2020:**Following an agreed seven-day reduction in violence period, U.S. and Taliban representatives meeting in Doha, Qatar, sign an agreement for a U.S. troop withdrawal. The United States agreed to draw its forces down to 8,600 from 13,000 in the next three to four months, with the remaining U.S. forces withdrawing in 14 months. In exchange, the Taliban agreed to renounce al-Qaeda and prevent al-Qaeda and other groups from using Afghanistan as a base for terrorism against the United States. The Taliban also agreed to negotiate a permanent ceasefire with other Afghan militants and the Afghan government. The troop drawdown is dependent on the Taliban maintaining its commitments. Pakistani Foreign Minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi praised the deal but warned of "spoilers" both in and outside Afghanistan who could derail the agreement. The Afghan government objects to a clause calling for a prisoner swap with the Taliban as a precondition for negotiations. Sources: Asad Hashim, "Pakistan warns US of 'spoilers' on US-Taliban deal in Afghanistan," Al Jazeera, March 1, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/03/pakistan-warns-spoilers-taliban-deal-afghanistan-200302093650382.html> [29]; Matthew Lee and Kathy Gannon, "US and Taliban sign deal aimed at ending war in Afghanistan," Associated Press, February 29, 2020, <https://apnews.com/491544713df4879f399d0ff5523d369e> [30]; "Susannah George and Dan Lamothe, "Afghan government objects to elements of U.S.-Taliban peace deal," *Washington Post*, March 1, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/afghan-government-questions-aspects-of-us-taliban-peace-deal/2020/03/01/0a973228-5a68-11ea-8efd-0f904bdd8057\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/afghan-government-questions-aspects-of-us-taliban-peace-deal/2020/03/01/0a973228-5a68-11ea-8efd-0f904bdd8057_story.html) [32].
- February 21, 2020:**The U.S. government and the Afghan Taliban reach an agreement to initiate a reduction in violence. The agreement is to take effect later the same day. U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has suggested that a permanent peace deal will follow as soon as the following week if the Taliban commits to the partial truce. To demonstrate commitment to the terms, the Taliban will have to prevent instances of roadside bombs, suicide bombs, and rocket attacks. Sources: "Afghanistan war: US and Afghan Taliban to start partial truce," BBC News, February 21, 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-51584126> [116]; Courtney McBride and Ehsanullah Amiri, "U.S., Taliban Reach Agreement That Could Precede Peace Deal," *Wall Street Journal*, February 21, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-taliban-reach-agreement-for-weeklong-reduction-in-violence-in-afghanistan-11582285704> [117].
- February 14, 2020 - February 17, 2020:**On February 14 in Munich, Germany, the U.S. government and the Taliban agree on the first step of a peace deal that could end the 18-year long Afghan war. U.S. and Taliban officials agree to a reduction in violence over a seven-day period, with the U.S. military monitoring the progress of the violence reduction. If the reduction in violence is successful, the negotiations will enter into the next stage which will include talks between the Taliban and the Afghan government and a reduction in the 13,000 U.S. troops that are currently stationed in the country. However, the peace process faces a new obstacle in the face of Ashraf Ghani's second term win as the president of Afghanistan. The Taliban have been vocal in their rejection of Ghani's win and have consistently announced their rejection of any Afghan government supported by the United States. On February 17, Abdul Salam Hanafi, a senior Taliban leader and member of the political commission in Doha, Qatar, announces that a peace deal with the United States will be signed by the end of the month. U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, the chief negotiator with the Taliban, asserts that he's "cautiously optimistic" about the peace talks breakthrough. Sources: Ehsanullah Amiri and Sune Engel Rasmussen, "Afghanistan Confirms Ashraf Ghani Has Won Second Term as President," *Wall Street Journal*, February 18, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/afghanistan-confirms-ashraf-ghani-has-won-second-term-as-president-11582042973?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=1> [118]; Josh Rogin, "Big questions surround the coming U.S.-Taliban peace deal," *Washington Post*, February 18, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2020/02/18/big-questions-surround-coming-us-taliban-peace-deal/> [119]; Courtney McBride, "U.S. and Taliban Reach First Step of Peace Deal," *Wall Street Journal*, February 14, 2020, [https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-and-taliban-reach-first-step-of-peace-deal-11581700744?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=1&mod=article\\_in\\_line](https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-and-taliban-reach-first-step-of-peace-deal-11581700744?mod=searchresults&page=1&pos=1&mod=article_in_line) [120]; Susannah George and Haq Nawaz Khan, "Taliban says peace agreement with U.S. to be signed by month's end," *Washington Post*, February 17, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/taliban-says-peace-deal-with-us-to-be-signed-at-months-end/2020/02/17/ed898604-5143-11ea-9e47-59804be1dcfb\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/taliban-says-peace-deal-with-us-to-be-signed-at-months-end/2020/02/17/ed898604-5143-11ea-9e47-59804be1dcfb_story.html) [121].
- January 21, 2020:**The U.S. and Taliban leaders are still in the process of peace negotiations in Doha. Given the progress, U.S. special envoy on Afghan reconciliation, Zalmay Khalilzad, imposes a communications blackout on his team to prevent any leaks that may result in the deal unraveling at the last minute. According to Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, "after the deal, the U.S. will only have an embassy in Kabul for diplomatic relations" and "all their military will leave the country," adding that the U.S. would pull out some 5,000 of the 13,000 American troops within 135 days of signing a finalized agreement. Source: Eltaf Najafizada and Nick Wadhams, "U.S., Taliban Negotiators Inch Closer to a Deal, Officials Say," *January 21, 2020*, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-01-21/u-s-taliban-negotiators-close-to-peace-deal-officials-say> [122].

## Taliban

- January 11, 2020:** Former Pakistani Taliban spokesman, Ehsanullah Ehasn, escapes from a maximum-security military prison after detained for three years. Ehsan, a high-profile local Taliban figure, announced and justified the 2012 attack on Malala Yousafzai, and also claimed responsibility on behalf of the Taliban for scores of attacks. Ehsan later tells Reuters that he has escaped to Turkey with his family. Source: Asif Shahzad, "Pakistan confirms escape of Taliban leader who justified Malala shooting," Reuters, February 17, 2020, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-militant/pakistan-confirms-escape-of-taliban-leader-who-justified-malala-shooting-idUSKBN20B1IR123>].
- December 29, 2019:** The Taliban's ruling council agrees to a temporary ceasefire in Afghanistan, which opens a window for continued peace negotiations with the United States. The U.S. demanded a ceasefire before resuming peace talks with the insurgent group. The commencement or duration of the ceasefire was not specified. However, on December 30, 2019, Zabiullah Mujahid, the main Taliban spokesman, claims that the Taliban never had any intention of declaring a ceasefire. Mujahid states the United States asked for a reduction in the scale of violence, and discussions held throughout the Taliban reflect that request. Sources: Kathy Gannon and Rahim Faiez, "Taliban council agrees to cease-fire in Afghanistan," Associated Press, December 29, 2019, <https://apnews.com/caa4c5aaf88e982ed0cdb4e132b0d89c> [124].; Pamela Constable, "Conflicting reports over a Taliban truce offer Afghans the first chance for a glimpse of peace since a 2018 cease-fire," *Washington Post*, January 1, 2020, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/conflicting-reports-over-a-taliban-truce-offer-afghans-the-first-chance-for-a-glimpse-of-peace-since-a-2018-cessate-fire/2020/01/01/826af6d8-2bea-11ea-bffe-020c88b3f120\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/conflicting-reports-over-a-taliban-truce-offer-afghans-the-first-chance-for-a-glimpse-of-peace-since-a-2018-cessate-fire/2020/01/01/826af6d8-2bea-11ea-bffe-020c88b3f120_story.html) [125].
- December 11, 2019:** The *Washington Post* publishes thousands of pages of documents revealing that senior U.S. officials misrepresented the reality of the 18-year military campaign in Afghanistan. According to the documents, the U.S. military achieved a quick but short-term victory over the Taliban and al-Qaeda in early 2002, and the Pentagon's focus then shifted toward Iraq. However, the Taliban returned in greater numbers. Despite U.S. troops on the ground voicing concerns about the American strategy's growing shortcomings, senior American officials almost always said that progress was being made. Sources: Craig Whitlock, "At War With The Truth," *Washington Post*, December 9, 2019, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/graphics/2019/investigations/afghanistan-papers/afghanistan-war-confidential-documents/> [126]; Thomas Gibbons-Neff, "Documents Reveal U.S. Officials Misled Public on War in Afghanistan," *New York Times*, December 9, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/12/09/world/asia/afghanistan-war-documents.html> [127].
- December 7, 2019:** Qatar hosts a new round of peace talks between the United States and the Taliban. These negotiations between the U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and Afghanistan's Taliban are the first talks between the two camps since U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the dialogue in September. Among the participants of the current talks is Anas Haqqani, one of three senior Taliban figures freed last month in exchange for kidnapped American University of Afghanistan professors—American Kevin King and Australian Timothy Weeks. The meetings held in Qatar, where the Taliban maintain a political office, follow several days of talks in Afghanistan's capital, Kabul, where Khalilzad met with Afghan President Ashraf Ghani. The talks will initially focus on getting a Taliban promise to reduce violence, with a permanent cease-fire being the eventual goal. If the negotiations are successful, Khalilzad hopes to open lines of communication between the Taliban and Ghani to directly address and resolve intra-Afghan conflict. Source: Kathy Gannon, "US opens first round of resurrected peace talks with Taliban," *Washington Post*, December 7, 2019, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia\\_pacific/us-opens-first-round-of-resurrected-peace-talks-with-taliban/2019/12/07/cbdbaa2c-18d7-11ea-80d6-d0ca7007273f\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/asia_pacific/us-opens-first-round-of-resurrected-peace-talks-with-taliban/2019/12/07/cbdbaa2c-18d7-11ea-80d6-d0ca7007273f_story.html) [128].
- November 19, 2019:** The Taliban free two Western academics held hostage since 2016 in exchange for three imprisoned senior militants. The swap includes Haji Mali Khan, Hafiz Rashid, and Anas Haqqani, a leading figure and fund-raiser in the Haqqani militant group. The militants had been held in prison by Afghan authorities and were sent to Qatar as part of the exchange. The Taliban also releases 10 captured Afghan National Security Force members, saying the prisoner exchange had been "successfully executed." Source: "US and Australian hostages freed in Taliban prisoner swap," BBC News, November 19, 2019, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-50471186> [129].
- October 5, 2019:** In an effort to revive U.S.-Taliban peace negotiations, Taliban officials meet with U.S. envoy Zalmay Khalilzad in Pakistan to discuss confidence-building measures that could include a possible prisoner swap or a reduction in violence. The discussions between the two sides were informal, the Taliban members said, and did not indicate the beginning of a new round of peace discussions, only that one may take place in the future. Source: Thomas Gibbons-Neff and Taimoor Shah, "Taliban and U.S. Envoy Meet for First Time Since Peace Talks Collapsed," *New York Times*, October 5, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/05/world/asia/us-taliban-talks.html> [130].
- September 7, 2019:** U.S. President Trump cancels a secret meeting at Camp David with Taliban leaders and the president of Afghanistan, effectively canceling the U.S.-Taliban months-long peace negotiations. The decision follows a Taliban-sponsored attack a few days prior in which one U.S. soldier and 11 others were killed. The Taliban issues a threatening statement in response to the canceled talks claiming that "the Americans will suffer more than anyone else for cancelling the talks." Sources: Michael Crowley, Lara Jakes and Mujib Mashal, "Trump Says He's Called Off Negotiations With Taliban After Afghanistan Bombing," *New York Times*, September 7, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/07/us/politics/trump-taliban-afghanistan.html> [131].; "Trump says he 'called off' peace talks with Taliban over attack," Al Jazeera, September 8, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/09/trump-called-peace-talks-taliban-attack-190908014028311.html> [132].
- July 8, 2019:** Qatar and Germany sponsor a two-day intra-Afghan meeting in Doha. The high-profile meeting features Afghan leaders and Taliban representatives. Around 50 Afghan politicians, activists, and journalists join the Taliban in discussions on ways to find lasting peace in Afghanistan. As the Taliban repeatedly refuses to negotiate with the Western-backed government of Ashraf Ghani, they agree to join the meeting on the condition that the attendees are there only in a personal capacity. The talks are informal and are not expected to result in concrete settlements or policies, but attendees are hopeful that the meeting will set the groundwork for future negotiations. Source: Shareena Qazi, "Intra-Afghan peace talks under way amid more Taliban attacks," Al Jazeera, July 8, 2019, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2019/07/intra-afghan-peace-talks-taliban-attacks-continue-190707175827231.html> [133].
- April 2019 - September 2019:** The United States and the Taliban engage in multiple rounds of peace negotiations. The conditions of the negotiations have focused on issues including U.S. troop withdrawal, a ceasefire, intra-Afghan negotiations to follow the U.S.-Taliban peace agreement, and guarantees by the militant group to no longer harbor terrorist groups. Sources: "Renewed Taliban-U.S. Peace Talks Enter Their Fifth Day," Radio Free Europe, August 26, 2019, <https://www.rferl.org/a/taliban-u-s-peace-talks-enter-their-fifth-day/30130249.html> [134].; Deb Reichmann, "Trump: Taliban Deal Close, U.S. Troops to Drop to 8,600," Associated Press, August 29, 2019, <https://www.apnews.com/c46f2768343d4474b259b6d5b6026626> [135].



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- 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 Amiri, "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-objects-to-guest-list-11555572767> [39].
- 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/asia/taliban-afghanistan-peace-talks-moscow.html?module=inline> [22].
- January 28, 2019:**The U.S. government and Taliban reportedly agree 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.  
Source: Kylie Atwood and Nic Roberston, "US and Taliban agree in principle to framework for peace deal, US envoy says," CNN, January 28, 2019, <https://www.cnn.com/2019/01/28/politics/us-taliban-peace-negotiations-intl/index.html> [21].
- 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-afghan-peace-talks-doha-intl/index.html> [20].
- December 21, 2018:**The U.S. government announces that it plans to withdraw 7,000 soldiers from Afghanistan in early 2019.  
Source: "President Trump 'to pull thousands of troops' from Afghanistan," BBC News, December 21, 2018, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-46643500> [136].
- December 1, 2018:**The Taliban shadow governor of the Nawzad district of Helmand province is killed alongside four other commanders in a U.S. airstrike.  
Source: Carlo Munoz, "U.S. drone strike takes out top Taliban leader," *Washington Times*, December 2, 2018, <https://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2018/dec/2/mullah-abdul-manan-taliban-leader-killed-us-drone/> [137].
- November 11, 2018:**The Taliban advance on the district of Jaghori, 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. Source: Rod Nordland, "Taliban Slaughter Elite Afghan Troops, and a 'Safe' District Is Falling," *New York Times*, November 12, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/12/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-attack-jaghori-district.html> [138].
- 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/7ea77c93fb774b76b671a0a9f6c2b58a> [139].
- 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: Rupam Jain, "Taliban restore Red Cross security guarantee in Afghanistan," Reuters, October 12, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban-aid/taliban-restore-red-cross-security-guarantee-in-afghanistan-idUSKCN1MM17T> [140].
- July 2018:**U.S. and Taliban officials meet to begin discussions on peace talks to end the war in Afghanistan.  
Source: Jessica Donati and Dion Nissenbaum, "U.S. Envoy, Taliban Officials Meet to Discuss Afghan Peace Talks," *Wall Street Journal*, July 25, 2018, [https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-envoy-taliban-officials-meet-to-discuss-afghan-peace-talks-1532547118?mod=article\\_inline](https://www.wsj.com/articles/u-s-envoy-taliban-officials-meet-to-discuss-afghan-peace-talks-1532547118?mod=article_inline) [38].
- June 2018:**On June 12, Akhundzada blames the U.S.-led "foreign occupation" of Afghanistan for continuing violence in the country and calls for direct negotiations with the United States to end the war in Afghanistan.  
The U.S. government rejects the offer of negotiations, saying the United States cannot replace the Afghan government in the process. A U.S. drone strike on June 14 kills TTP leader Fazlullah and four other senior commanders in Kunar, Afghanistan, near the Pakistani border. A June 23 TTP statement names Mehsud as the group's new leader. Sources: Ihsanullah Tipu Mehsud, "U.S. Drone Strike Kills Leader of Pakistani Taliban, Pakistan Says," *New York Times*, June 15, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/15/world/asia/drone-pakistani-taliban-mullah-fazlullah.html?module=inline> [141]; Saeed Shah and Ehsanullah Amiri, "Pakistani Taliban Head Killed by U.S. Airstrike in Afghanistan," *Wall Street Journal*, June 15, 2018, [https://www.wsj.com/articles/pakistani-taliban-head-killed-by-u-s-airstrike-in-afghanistan-1529060487?mod=hp\\_listc\\_pos2](https://www.wsj.com/articles/pakistani-taliban-head-killed-by-u-s-airstrike-in-afghanistan-1529060487?mod=hp_listc_pos2) [142]; Zia ur-Rehman and Maria Abi-Habib, "Pakistan's Taliban Names New Leader After U.S. Drone Strike," *New York Times*, June 24, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/24/world/asia/pakistan-taliban-leader.html> [143].
- 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: James Mackenzie and David Alexander, "Taliban announce spring offensive, dismisses peace overtures," Reuters, April 25, 2018, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban/taliban-announce-spring-offensive-dismisses-peace-overtures-idUSKBN1HW0SG> [144].
- February 2018:**The TTP confirms the death of second-in-command Khan Sayed in a U.S. drone strike in Pakistan

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earlier in the month.

Mufti Noor Wali Mehsud is named as the new second-in-command. Sources: Ihsanullah Tipu Mehsud and Ismail Khan, "Pakistani Taliban Say Deputy Leader Was Killed in U.S. Airstrike," *New York Times*, February 13, 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/02/13/world/asia/pakistan-taliban-commander.html?module=inline> [145]; Ayaz Gul, "Afghan Taliban Chief Renews Call for Direct Talks with America," *Voice of America*, June 12, 2018, <https://www.voanews.com/a/afghan-taliban-chief-renews-call-for-direct-talks-with-america/4435516.html> [146].

- **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. The Taliban claim that Mattis was the target of the attack. Mattis is unharmed. Source: Euan McKirdy, Keith Allen, and Ryan Browne, "Mattis target of failed Kabul airport rocket attack, Taliban says," *CNN*, September 27, 2017, <http://edition.cnn.com/2017/09/26/politics/mattis-afghanistan/index.html>.
- **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 Akhundzda releases a statement claiming that there will be "peace" if Western forces retreat and Afghanistan is delivered to the Taliban. Sources: "Taliban 'open letter' to Trump urges US to leave Afghanistan," *Associated Press*, August 15, 2017, <https://apnews.com/2f58ca5144d84d0a9f85e67a2eb18b48/Taliban-'open-letter'-to-Trump-urges-US-to-leave-Afghanistan>; David Nakamura and Abby Phillip, "Trump announces new strategy for Afghanistan that calls for a troop increase," *Washington Post*, August 21, 2017, [https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-expected-to-announce-small-troop-increase-in-afghanistan-in-prime-time-address/2017/08/21/e/b3a513e-868a-11e7-a94f-3139abce39f5\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.df2d0a5f585a](https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/trump-expected-to-announce-small-troop-increase-in-afghanistan-in-prime-time-address/2017/08/21/e/b3a513e-868a-11e7-a94f-3139abce39f5_story.html?utm_term=.df2d0a5f585a); Thomas Joscelyn, "US must retreat from Afghanistan for there to be 'peace,' Taliban leader says," *Long War Journal*, August 30, 2017, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/08/us-must-retreat-from-afghanistan-for-there-to-be-peace-taliban-leader-says.php>.
- **April 2017:**Ehsanullah Ehsan, a leader in the JuA faction and the TTP's spokesman, allegedly surrenders to Pakistani security forces. Authorities do not reveal the details of his arrest.
- 42. **June 10, 2016:**Al-Qaeda leader Aymen al-Zawahiri pledges allegiance to new Taliban emir Haibatullah Akhundzada in a 14-minute-long video. Akhundzada publicly accepts this pledge within hours of the video's release. Source: Thomas Joscelyn, "Ayman al Zawahiri swears allegiance to the Taliban's new leader," *Long War Journal*, June 11, 2016, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/06/ayman-al-zawahiri-swears-allegiance-to-the-talibans-new-leader.php> [147].
- 43. **May 2016:**Mansour is killed in a May 21 U.S. drone strike in Pakistan near the Afghan border. U.S. officials say Mansour was supervising plans for new attacks on U.S. forces in Kabul. Haibatullah Akhundzada is named as the Taliban's new emir later in the month. Sources: James MacKenzie and Matt Spetalnick, "Afghan Taliban meet on succession as Obama confirms leader's death," *Reuters*, May 23, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-afghanistan-taliban-idUSKCN0Y0CP6>; Mujib Mashal, "Taliban Name New Leader After Confirming Predecessor Died in U.S. Strike," *New York Times*, May 25, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/26/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-new-leader.html>.
- 44. **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. On December 8, the Taliban assault Kandahar International Airport, leaving more than 50 dead, including children. The attack lasts for 26 hours before the Afghan army reclaims control of the airport. Sources: James MacKenzie and Matt Spetalnick, "Afghan Taliban meet on succession as Obama confirms leader's death," *Reuters*, May 23, 2016, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-afghanistan-taliban-idUSKCN0Y0CP6>; Mujib Mashal, "Taliban Name New Leader After Confirming Predecessor Died in U.S. Strike," *New York Times*, May 25, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/26/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-new-leader.html>.
- 45. **September 2015:**On September 4, 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>. Source: "Taliban tighten grip on Afghan city of Kunduz," *BBC News*, September 30, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34398371>.
- 46. **July 29, 2015:**Afghan officials report that Mullah Omar died in a Pakistani hospital in April 2013. The following day, Taliban leaders confirm Mullah Omar's death—though they do not reveal his time or location of death—and refer to him as "the late leader of the faithful" in a Pashto-language video. The Taliban reportedly appoint Deputy Emir Akhtar Mohammad Mansour as the group's new leader, and Sirajuddin Haqqani as deputy emir. The appointments come amid an internal power struggle between top Taliban leaders, a number of whom back Omar's eldest son, Mulla Mohammad Yaqoob, as the next in line. A biography of Mansour reveals that the Taliban had concealed Omar's death since 2013. Source: Rod Nordland and Joseph Goldstein, "Taliban Leader Mullah Omar Died in 2013, Afghans Declare," *New York Times*, July 29, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/30/world/asia/mullah-omar-taliban-death-reports-prompt-inquiry-by-afghan-government.html> [148]; Masoud Popalzai, Jason Hanna and Laura Smith-Spark, "Taliban confirm Mullah Omar's death," *CNN*, July 30, 2015, <http://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/30/world/asia/mullah-omar-taliban-death-reports-prompt-inquiry-by-afghan-government.html> [148]; Adam Withnall, "Taliban appoints Mullah Omar's deputy Akhtar Mohammad Mansour as its new Afghan leader," *Independent (London)*, July 30, 2015, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/middle-east/taliban-appoints-mullah-omars-deputy-akhtar-mohammad-mansour-as-its-new-afghan-leader-10427082.html> [149]; Rahimullah Yusufzai, "Amid uncertainty over Mulla Omar's fate....Power struggle flares up in Afghan Taliban movement," *The News International (Karachi)*, July 27, 2015, <http://www.thenews.com.pk/Todays-News-13-38799-Amid-uncertainty-over-Mulla-Omars-fatePower-struggle-flares-up-in-Afghan-Taliban-movement> [150]; "Taliban admit covering up death of Mullah Omar," *BBC News*, August 31, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34105565>.
- 47. **March 2015:**JuA merges back into TTP. The group continues to act independently and carry out deadly attacks in Pakistan. Sources: Katharine Houreld and Saud Mehsud, "Pakistani splinter group rejoins Taliban amid fears of isolation," *Reuters*, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-pakistan-militants-alliance/pakistani-splinter-group-rejoins-taliban-amid-fears-of-isolation-idUSKBN0M81WF>

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- 20150312;Zulfiqar Ali, "Pakistani Taliban claims responsibility for bombing at a Shiite mosque that kills 22," *Los Angeles Times*, March 31, 2017, <http://www.latimes.com/world/la-fg-pakistan-bombing-20170331-story.html>;Asad Hashim, "Pakistani Taliban leader Ehsanullah Ehsan 'surrenders,'" *Al Jazeera*, April 17, 2017, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/04/pakistani-taliban-leader-ehsanullah-ehsan-surrenders-170417131146226.html>.
48. **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.Source: Declan Walsh, "Taliban Besiege Pakistan School, Leaving 145 Dead," *New York Times*, December 16, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/17/world/asia/taliban-attack-pakistani-school.html> [151].
49. **September 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-29375438> [152].
50. **August 2014:**TTP member Omar Khalid Khorasani and TTP spokesman Ehsanullah Ehsan break away from the group to form Jamaat-ul-Ahrar (JuA).  
Maulana Qasim Khorasani is named the group's emir and Ehsan becomes its spokesman. Omar Khorasani says that "the leadership of the Movement of the Taliban in Pakistan is a victim of narrow, personal objectives."Source: Bill Roggio, "Taliban splinter group Jamaat-ul-Ahrar forms in northwestern Pakistan," *Long War Journal*, August 26, 2014, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/08/taliban\\_splinter\\_gro.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/08/taliban_splinter_gro.php).
51. **June 15, 2014:**The Pakistani military launches Operation Zarb e-Azb in Pakistan's FATA region.  
The operation targets TTP, al-Qaeda, and Uzbek militants. The *Wall Street Journal* reports that Haqqani network militants had already fled over the border into Afghanistan before the operation starts.Sources: Aqil Shah, "Pakistan Fights Back," *Foreign Affairs*, June 19, 2014, <http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/141584/aqil-shah/pakistan-fights-back> [153]; Safed Shah, Safdar Dawar and Adam Entous, "Militants Slip Away Before Pakistan Offensive," *Wall Street Journal*, July 17, 2014, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/militants-slip-away-before-pakistan-offensive-1405637710> [154].
52. **May 31, 2014:**The Taliban exchanges U.S. soldier Bowe Bergdahl for five Taliban militants held by the United States at Guantanamo Bay.  
The United States transfers the detainees to Qatar, where they will be met with a one-year travel ban.Source: Eric Schmitt and Charlie Savage, "Bowe Bergdahl, American Soldier, Freed by Taliban in Prisoner Trade," *New York Times*, May 31, 2014, <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/06/01/us/bowe-bergdahl-american-soldier-is-freed-by-taliban.html> [155].
53. **November 2013:**The U.S. kills Pakistani Taliban leader Hakimullah Mehsud in a drone strike on November 1.  
The strike comes as the Pakistani government and Taliban attempt to reach a peace deal. Pakistani Taliban spokesman Azam Tariq tells the Associated Press, "We are proud of the martyrdom of Hakimullah Mehsud. We will continue our activities." On November 7, Maulana Fazlullah is elected the new commander of TTP.Sources: "Death of Hakimullah Mehsud, Pakistani Taliban leader, confirmed by militant group," *CBS News*, November 2, 2013, <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/death-of-hakimullah-mehsud-pakistani-taliban-leader-confirmed-by-militant-group/> [156]; "Terrorist Designations of Mualana Fazlullah," U.S. Department of State, January 13, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/01/235901.htm> [157].
54. **June 2013:**The Taliban open an office in Doha with support from the United States and Afghanistan.  
It is the Taliban's first overseas office. Earlier in the year, Afghan President Hamid Karzai and Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari announced public support for the opening of a Taliban office in Doha. On June 20, the United States cancels its planned talks with the Taliban at their new Doha, Qatar office following opposition from Afghan President Mohammad Karzai.Sources: Agence France-Presse, "Afghan peace in 6 months: Zardari, Karzai set an ambitious target," *Express Tribune* (Karachi), February 5, 2013, <http://tribune.com.pk/story/502839/afghan-peace-in-6-months-zardari-karzai-set-an-ambitious-target/> [158]; "Q&A: Afghan Taliban open Doha office," *BBC News*, June 20, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-22957827> [159]; Dan Roberts and Emma Graham-Harrison, "US-Taliban Afghanistan peace talks in Qatar cancelled," *Guardian* (London), June 20, 2013, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/20/afghanistan-talks-taliban-qatar-cancelled> [160].
55. **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."Sources: Declan Walsh, "Taliban Gun Down Girl Who Spoke Up For Rights," *New York Times*, October 9, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/10/world/asia/teen-school-activist-malala-yousafzai-survives-hit-by-pakistani-taliban.html> [161]; "Taliban use Islamic Shariah to defend Malala attack," *Dawn* (Karachi), October 10, 2012, <http://www.dawn.com/news/755657/taliban-use-islamic-shariah-to-defend-malala-attack> [162].
56. **January 2012:**The Taliban announce their agreement to open an office in Doha, Qatar.  
Many see the move as a sign that the Taliban may be willing to enter formal talks with the West.Source: Matthew Rosenberg, "Taliban Opening Qatar Office, and Maybe Door to Talks," *New York Times*, January 3, 2012, <http://www.nytimes.com/2012/01/04/world/asia/taliban-to-open-qatar-office-in-step-toward-peace-talks.html> [163].
57. **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 Afghanistan president Burhanuddin Rabbani killed in Kabul blast," *Telegraph* (London), September 20, 2011, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/8776911/Former-Afghanistan-president-Burhanuddin-Rabbani-killed-in-Kabul-blast.html> [164]; Laura King, "Former Afghan President Burhanuddin Rabbani assassinated," *Los Angeles Times*, September 20, 2011, <http://articles.latimes.com/2011/sep/20/world/la-fg-afghanistan-rabbani-20110921> [165].



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58. **April 25, 2011:**Taliban insurgents carry out a plot to free nearly 500 Taliban inmates 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 Naiem Layal Hamidzai says, "The Taliban 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> [166].
59. **February 18, 2011:**U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton advocates for an Afghan-led peace process that would include talks with the Taliban.  
Clinton says, "Today, the escalating pressure of our military campaign is sharpening a similar decision for the Taliban: 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 of Richard C. Holbrooke Memorial Addresses," U.S. Department of State, February 18, 2011, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/20092013clinton/rm/2011/02/156815.htm> [167].
60. **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) [168].
61. **February 18, 2010:**Approximately 15,000 American, Canadian, British, Danish, and Estonian forces launch Operation Moshtarak in the town of Marjah, in Afghanistan's Helmand province.  
The operation is designed to remove the Taliban from Marjah, which lies in the center of Taliban poppy cultivation. By December 2010, a top U.S. Marine commander says that the fight against the Taliban in Marjah is "essentially over," and that U.S. troops have been successful in pushing the Taliban into surrounding areas. Sources: "Operation Moshtarak: Assault in Helmand province," BBC News, February 18, 2010, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/8500903.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/8500903.stm) [169]; Luis Martinez, "Marine General: The Fight for Marjah is 'Essentially over,'" ABC News, December 7, 2010, <http://abcnews.go.com/International/Afghanistan/general-marjah-fight-essentially/story?id=12338362> [170].
62. **August 5, 2009:**TTP leader Baitullah Mehsud is killed in a CIA airstrike.  
Hakimullah Mehsud is named TTP's new leader. Sources: Declan Walsh, "Air strike kills Taliban leader Baitullah Mehsud," *Guardian* (London), August 7, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/aug/07/baitullah-mehsud-dead-taliban-pakistan> [171]; Ismail Khan and Lydia Polgreen, "New Leader of Pakistan's Taliban Is Named, Though Officials Believe He Is Dead," *New York Times*, August 22, 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/23/world/asia/23pstan.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/23/world/asia/23pstan.html?_r=0) [172].
63. **July 2, 2009:**The U.S. and Afghan militaries launch Operation Khanjar, or Operation Strike of the Sword, in the Taliban stronghold of Helmand province, Afghanistan.  
About 4,000 U.S. marines and 650 Afghan soldiers participate in the operation. Source: Stephanie Gaskell, "U.S. Marines launch Operation Khanjar- largest military offensive since 2004 battle of Fallujah," *New York Daily News*, July 2, 2009, <http://www.nydailynews.com/news/world/u-s-marines-launch-operation-khanjar-largest-military-offensive-2004-battle-fallujah-article-1.425865> [173].
64. **June 30, 2009:**The Taliban takes U.S. soldier Private Bowe Bergdahl hostage.  
Days after his capture, a senior U.S. military official says 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." Sources: "U.S. soldier captured by Taliban: 'I'm afraid,'" CNN, July 19, 2009, <http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/asiapcf/07/19/afghanistan.soldier.hostage/> [174]; Declan Walsh, "Taliban release vide of captured US soldier," *Guardian* (London), July 19, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/jul/19/afghanistan-captured-american-soldier-video> [175].
65. **June 20, 2009:***New York Times* reporter David Rohde escapes from captivity after being held by the Taliban since his capture on November 10, 2008.  
Rohde's family asserts that there were no ransoms paid or Taliban prisoners released in exchange for Rohde's release. Source: "Times Reporter Escapes Taliban After 7 Months," *New York Times*, June 20, 2009, [http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/21/world/asia/21taliban.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2009/06/21/world/asia/21taliban.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0) [176].
66. **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." Source: "Pakistani Taliban chief Mehsud claims U.S. shooting," Reuters, April 4, 2009, <http://in.reuters.com/article/2009/04/04/idINIndia-38880020090404> [177].
67. **March 2009:**New U.S. President Barack Obama says he would welcome talks with "moderate" Taliban forces.  
Afghan President Hamid Karzai says this policy is "good news because this has been the stand of the Afghan government." Obama also announces his plan to send an additional 4,000 U.S. personnel to train the Afghan army and police. This comes a month after Obama announces the deployment of an additional 17,000 U.S. troops to Afghanistan—a nearly 50 percent increase to the force of 36,000 American troops stationed in Afghanistan. Sources: Audrey Gillan, "Obama would welcome talks with Taliban moderates," *Guardian* (London), March 8, 2009, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2009/mar/08/barack-obama-talks-taliban-afghanistan> [178]; Peter Baker and Thom Shanker, "Obama Sets New Afghan Strategy," *New York Times*, March 26, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/27/washington/27prexy.html?gwt=pay> [179]; Helene Cooper, "Putting Stamp on Afghan War, Obama Will Send 17,000 Troops," *New York Times*, February 17, 2009, <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/18/washington/18web-troops.html> [180].
68. **August 17, 2008 - August 18, 2008:**At least 10 Taliban suicide bombers attack the U.S. military base Camp Salerno in Bamiyan, Afghanistan.  
In a twin attack, approximately 100 Taliban insurgents kill 10 elite French paratroopers in a district near Kabul. NATO and American military officers reportedly blame the increased Taliban insurgency on "the greater freedom of movement the militants have in Pakistan's tribal areas on the Afghan border." Source: Carlotta Gall and Sangar Rahimi, "Taliban Escalate Fighting With Assault on U.S. Base," *New York Times*, August 19, 2008, <http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/20/world/asia/20afghan.html?pagewanted=all> [181].

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69. **2008:**The United States increases airstrikes in Pakistan, targeting al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders as well as unidentified suspects.  
Source: "The Taliban," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\_use-taliban\\_infoguide-012115#!](http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#!) [67].
70. **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).  
Amidst a period of Taliban violence in May and June, Afghan, Canadian, and British troops launch Operation Mountain Thrust. The operation seeks to degrade Taliban activity in southern and eastern Afghanistan.Sources: "The Taliban," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\_use-taliban\\_infoguide-012115#!](http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#!) [67]; "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](http://usatoday30.usatoday.com/news/world/2006-06-19-taliban-afghanistan-cover_x.htm).
71. **March 2004:**The Pakistani military re-enters FATA, targeting insurgents more aggressively than in 2002.  
The military's bombardment of FATA fosters popular anti-state sentiment. The Pakistani government negotiates with "militant leaders and radical clerics" rather than *maliks*, the official tribal authorities. This weakens the tribal system and enables the Taliban movement in the region to grow stronger.Source: "The Taliban," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\_use-taliban\\_infoguide-012115#!](http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#!) [67].
72. **May 2003:**As the Iraq war begins, U.S. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announces the end of "major combat activity" in Afghanistan.  
NATO later assumes control of the coalition as well as the German and Dutch-led ISAF. A new Taliban uprising begins to form in the Afghan provinces of Zabul, Paktia, Uruzgan, Kadahar, and northern Helmand.Sources: "Secretary Rumsfeld Joint Media Availability with President Karzai," U.S. Department of Defense, May 1, 2003, <http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2562> [182]; "Nato takes control of Afghanistan peace mission," *Guardian* (London), August 11, 2003, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2003/aug/11/afghanistan> [183]; "The Taliban," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\_use-taliban\\_infoguide-012115#!](http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#!) [67].
73. **January 2002:**NATO deploys the first round of foreign troops, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).  
The ISI detains the Taliban's ambassador to Pakistan, Mullah Abdul Salam Zaeef, and transfers him to U.S. custody. He is held in Guantanamo Bay until 2006.Sources: "Afghanistan profile-Timeline," BBC News, March 31, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12024253> [184]; Bill Roggio, "Afghan Taliban denounces former senior official, denies involvement in peace talks," *Long War Journal*, February 22, 2014, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/02/afghan\\_taliban\\_denou\\_1.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/02/afghan_taliban_denou_1.php) [185].
74. **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.  
The remaining Taliban fighters fade back into society or flee to Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) in northwestern Pakistan. In early 2002, Pakistani forces begin military operations against al-Qaeda and other foreign fighters in FATA. As the war in Afghanistan rages, FATA-based insurgencies strengthen into what will eventually form the Tahrir-e Taliban (Pakistani Taliban or TTP) in 2007.Sources: "The Taliban," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\_use-taliban\\_infoguide-012115#!](http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#!) [67]; Seth G. Jones and C. Christine Fair, "Counterinsurgency in Pakistan," RAND Corporation, accessed April 14, 2015, 33, [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND\\_MG982.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/monographs/2010/RAND_MG982.pdf) [186].
75. **December 2001:**On December 7, the Taliban lose their hold on Kandahar to coalition forces, and Mullah Omar reportedly travels 70 miles away over the Pakistani border.  
Later in the month, Afghan factions attend a U.N.-led conference in Bonn, Germany. Hamid Karzai, a Pashtun, is chosen to lead the interim Afghan government. Non-Pashtun warlords are assigned to ministerial positions in the new interim government.Sources: "Operation Enduring Freedom Fast Facts," CNN, last modified December 21, 2014, <http://www.cnn.com/2013/10/28/world/operation-enduring-freedom-fast-facts/> [187]; Steve Coll, "Looking for Mullah Omar," *New Yorker*, January 23, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/01/23/looking-for-mullah-omar> [188]; "The Taliban," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\_use-taliban\\_infoguide-012115#!](http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#!) [67].
76. **October 14, 2001:**The Taliban offer to send bin Laden to a neutral third country if the United States halts its airstrikes on Afghanistan.  
Bush dismisses the Taliban's offer within an hour, saying, "There's no need to negotiate. There's no discussion. I told them exactly what to do. All they've got to do is turn [bin Laden] over."Source: "Bush shuns latest Taleban offer," BBC News, October 14, 2001, [http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south\\_asia/1599443.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/south_asia/1599443.stm) [189].
77. **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.  
President George W. Bush announces the commencement of American strikes on al-Qaeda training camps and Taliban military installations in Afghanistan. The strikes target Kabul and other Afghan cities with cruise missiles and laser-guided bombs. Pakistan signs onto the U.S.-led war on terror, receiving billions of dollars in assistance. In the following months, NATO joins the United States and the United Kingdom, and the collective campaign drives the Taliban from power. Many al-Qaeda and Taliban operatives cross over the border to Pakistan, where they set up bases from which they launch operations against the coalition.Sources: "Text: Bush Announces Strikes Against Taliban," *Washington Post*, October 7, 2001, [http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress\\_100801.htm](http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/nation/specials/attacked/transcripts/bushaddress_100801.htm) [190]; Agence France-Presse, "Afghanistan marks 10 years since war started," Yahoo News, October 6, 2011, <http://web.archive.org/web/20111010055026/http://news.yahoo.com/afghanistan-marks-10-years-since-war-started-211711851.html> [191]; "The Taliban," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\_use-taliban\\_infoguide-012115#!](http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#!) [67]; Tom Lansford, *9/11 and the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq: A Chronology and Reference Guide* (ABC-CLIO: California, 2011), 58.
78. **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 evidence and proof, we're not prepared to 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: Alez Spillius, "We won't hand over bin Laden, say defiant Taliban," *Daily Telegraph* (London), September 22, 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/1341340/We-wont-hand-over-bin-Laden-say-defiant-Taliban.html> [192]; Steve Coll,

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- "Looking for Mullah Omar," *New Yorker*, January 23, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/01/23/looking-for-mullah-omar> [188]; John F. Burns, "A Nation Challenged: The Taliban; Afghans Coaxing bin Laden, But U.S. Rejects Clerics' Bid," *New York Times*, September 21, 2001, <http://www.nytimes.com/2001/09/21/world/nation-challenged-taliban-afghans-coaxing-bin-laden-but-us-rejects-clerics-bid.html> [193]; Norman Kempster and Tyler Marshall, "Taliban Rejects Bush Ultimatum," *Los Angeles Times*, September 22, 2001, <http://articles.latimes.com/2001/sep/22/news/mn-48537> [194].
79. **September 21, 2001:**In a speech to Congress, U.S. President George W. Bush issues a string of demands to the Taliban.  
The five ultimatums include: "deliver to the U.S. all al-Qaeda leader in Afghanistan; release all imprisoned foreign nations; protect foreign journalists, diplomats and aid workers; close immediately every terrorist training camp, and hand over every terrorist and their supporters; give the United States full access to terrorist training camps for inspection." Bush declares, "These demands are not open to negotiation or discussion. The Taliban must act and act immediately. They will hand over the terrorists, or they will share in their fate." White House spokesman Ari Fleischer says, "If [the Taliban] harbor terrorists, the president's message is clear: We will defeat you." Sources: "Bush gives Taliban ultimatum," *Daily Telegraph* (London), September 21, 2001, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/1341196/Bush-gives-Taliban-ultimatum.html> [195]; "White House warns Taliban: 'We will defeat you,'" CNN, September 21, 2001, <http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/central/09/21/ret.afghan.taliban/index.html> [196]; "The US refuses to negotiate with the Taliban," BBC History, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/the\\_us\\_refuses\\_to\\_negotiate\\_with\\_the\\_taliban](http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/events/the_us_refuses_to_negotiate_with_the_taliban) [197].
80. **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 attacks on U.S. soil. The Taliban had knowingly harbored al-Qaeda operatives since 1996, enabling the terror group to plan the attack under its watch. Sources: "Timeline: Al-Qaeda," BBC News, last modified August 7, 2008, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7546355.stm> [198]; "The Taliban," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\_use-taliban\\_infoguide-012115#/> \[67\].](http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#/)
81. **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.  
Sources: Luke Harding, "Taliban blow apart 2,000 years of Buddhist history," *Guardian* (London), March 3, 2001, <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2001/mar/03/afghanistan.lukeharding> [199]; Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 381.
82. **December 19, 2000:**The United Nations passes Resolution 1333 (2000), calling for the "closure of [Taliban] training camps, end to provision of sanctuary [of al-Qaeda operatives]," and the banning of military assistance to the Taliban.  
Source: "SECURITY COUNCIL IMPOSES WIDE NEW MEASURES AGAINST TALIBAN AUTHORITIES IN AFGHANISTAN, DEMANDS ACTION ON TERRORISM Resolution 1333 (2000) Calls for Closure of Training Camps, End to Provision of Sanctuary; Ban Imposed on Military Assistance," United Nations Security Council, December 19, 2000, <http://www.un.org/press/en/2000/sc6979.doc.htm> [200].
83. **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.  
Sources: "Resolution 1267 (1999)," United Nations Security Council, October 15, 1999, [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1267\(1999\)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1267(1999)) [201]; "GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE," United Nations Security Council, accessed April 13, 2015, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/information.shtml> [202].
84. **March 1999:**The Taliban and its main remaining enemy, the Northern Alliance, enter into a U.N.-brokered peace agreement.  
Source: "Timeline: Taliban in Afghanistan," Al Jazeera, July 4, 2009, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2009/03/2009389217640837.html> [203].
85. **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. Sources: "The Massacre in Mazar-I Sharif," Human Rights Watch, November 1998, <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports98/afghan/Afrep00.htm> [204]; Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 304.
86. **September 1996:**Taliban fighters capture Kabul, driving out Ahmed Shah Massoud's mujahideen forces and communist President Mohammad Najibullah.  
The Taliban kill 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. Sources: "Who are the Taliban?" BBC News, November 1, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11451718> [205]; "The Taliban," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\_use-taliban\\_infoguide-012115#/> \[67\]; "The Taliban," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, \[http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\\_use-taliban\\\_infoguide-012115#/> \\[67\\]; Lawrence Wright, \\*The Looming Tower\\* \\(New York: Vintage Books, 2006\\), 261.\]\(http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\_use-taliban\_infoguide-012115#/\)](http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#/)
87. **May 1996:**Osama bin Laden moves to the eastern province of Nangarhar, Afghanistan, from Sudan.  
He pledges loyalty to Mohammed Omar in exchange for hospitality from the Taliban. In the same month, mujahideen leader Jalaluddin Haqqani pledges allegiance to Mullah Omar. According to the Council on Foreign Relations, the Haqqani Network "links the Afghan Taliban to Pakistani intelligence, al-Qaeda, and a variety of militant groups." Sources: Steve Coll, "Looking for Mullah Omar," *New Yorker*, January 23, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/01/23/looking-for-mullah-omar> [188]; "The Taliban," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\_use-taliban\\_infoguide-012115#/> \[67\].](http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#/)
88. **April 4, 1996:**Standing on the roof of a mosque before a jubilant crowd, Mullah Omar declares himself *Emir ul-*

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- Momineen*, “commander of the faithful”—the legitimate spiritual leader of Muslims in Afghanistan. He wears a cloak alleged to have belonged to the Prophet Muhammad that has been locked inside a “series of chests” in Kandahar’s royal mausoleum. Many Muslims believe that the chests unlock only by the touch of the true Emir ul-Momineen. Following this event, the Taliban declare the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Deobandi Pakistani clerics encourage their students to join the Taliban’s ranks. Sources: Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 259; Patrick Healy, “Kandahar residents feel betrayed,” SF Gate, December 19, 2001, <http://www.sfgate.com/news/article/Kandahar-residents-feel-betrayed-2837764.php> [206]; “The Taliban,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\_use-taliban\\_infoguide-012115#!/](http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#!/) [67].
89. **1995 - 1996:**The Taliban earn public support in Kandahar and expand into other regions of Afghanistan. According to the Council of Foreign Relations, the Taliban are “welcomed by a war-weary public as [they expand] out from Kandahar.” In March 1995, the Taliban are pushed out of Kabul and subsequently shell the city. Source: “The Taliban,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\_use-taliban\\_infoguide-012115#!/](http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#!/) [67].
90. **1994:**By 1994, the mujahideen have “carved [Kandahar, Afghanistan] and neighboring districts into criminal fiefs,” according to the *New Yorker’s* Steve Coll. The Taliban emerge as a united force in Kandahar, Afghanistan, with Mullah Mohammed Omar as their leader. The group soon absorbs 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 Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) agency secretly funnels money to the Taliban. Sources: Steve Coll, “Looking for Mullah Omar,” *New Yorker*, January 23, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/01/23/looking-for-mullah-omar> [188]; Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 259; “The Taliban,” Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13, 2015, [http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing\\_use-taliban\\_infoguide-012115#!/](http://www.cfr.org/terrorist-organizations-and-networks/taliban/p35985?cid=marketing_use-taliban_infoguide-012115#!/) [67].
91. **1992:**The mujahideen, led by Ahmed Shah Massoud, overthrow Najibullah’s Soviet-backed regime. Soon after Najibullah’s ouster, an ethnic Tajik Islamic scholar, Burhanuddin Rabbani, becomes president and institutes strict Islamic laws. Infighting between rival factions continues as the 1992-1996 Afghan civil war commences. Sources: “Timeline: Taliban in Afghanistan,” Al Jazeera, July 4, 2009, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2009/03/2009389217640837.html> [203]; Melinda C. Shepard, “Burhanuddin Rabbani,” Encyclopaedia Britannica Online, last modified January 1, 2015, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/853392/Burhanuddin-Rabbani> [207].
92. **1988 - 1989:**The Soviet Union withdraws its troops from Afghanistan, and the Afghanistan civil war rages as mujahideen fight to overthrow Najibullah. Source: “Afghanistan profile-Timeline,” BBC News, March 31, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12024253> [184].
93. **1986:**Mohammad Najibullah replaces Babrak Karmal as president of the Soviet puppet regime in Afghanistan. Source: “Afghanistan profile-Timeline,” BBC News, March 31, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12024253> [184].
94. **1985:**An estimated half of the Afghan population is displaced, with many Afghans finding refuge in Iran and Pakistan. Mujahideen factions assemble in Pakistan, forming an alliance against the Soviets. Source: “Afghanistan profile-Timeline,” BBC News, March 31, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12024253> [184].
95. **1980:**The Soviet Union establishes a puppet regime in Afghanistan headed by Babrak Karmal. The United States, China, Iran, Pakistan, and Saudi Arabia lend support to the Muslim Afghan fighters (mujahideen) fighting Soviet troops in Afghanistan. Source: “Timeline: Taliban in Afghanistan,” Al Jazeera, July 4, 2009, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2009/03/2009389217640837.html> [203].
96. **1979:**The Soviet Union invades Afghanistan. Source: “Timeline: Taliban in Afghanistan,” Al Jazeera, July 4, 2009, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2009/03/2009389217640837.html> [203].



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### **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 absorbs 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.<sup>118</sup>
- **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.<sup>119</sup>
- **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.<sup>120</sup>
- **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.<sup>121</sup>
- **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.<sup>122</sup>
- **April 2006:** A neo-Taliban insurgency appears in Afghanistan with an uptick in suicide bombings and the use of improvised explosive devices (IEDs).<sup>123</sup>
- **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.<sup>124</sup>
- **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.<sup>125</sup>
- **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.<sup>126</sup>
- **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.”<sup>127</sup>
- **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.<sup>128</sup>
- **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.<sup>129</sup>
- **August 17-18, 2008:** At least 10 Taliban suicide bombers attack the U.S. military base Camp Salerno in Bamiyan,

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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.”<sup>130</sup>

- **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.<sup>131</sup>
- **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.<sup>132</sup>
- **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.”<sup>133</sup>
- **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.<sup>134</sup>
- **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.”<sup>135</sup>
- **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 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.”<sup>136</sup>
- **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.”<sup>137</sup>
- **February 10, 2011:** A young suicide bomber attacks an army compound in Pakistan, killing at least 31. The TTP claim responsibility.<sup>138</sup>
- **April 3, 2011:** Suicide bombers attack a Pakistani shrine of a 13th century Sufi saint, killing at least 41. The TTP claim responsibility.<sup>139</sup>
- **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.”<sup>140</sup>
- **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.<sup>141</sup>
- **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 Zabiullah Mujahid tells CNN that the Taliban are targeting “the U.S. Embassy, governmental organizations and other foreign organizations.”<sup>142</sup> 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



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mission.”<sup>143</sup> Later in September, senior U.S. military officer Mike Mullen tells a Senate panel that the Haqqani network carried out the attack on the U.S. embassy, saying, “With ISI support, Haqqani operatives planned and conducted... the assault on our embassy.” He continues, “The Haqqani network... acts as a veritable arms of Pakistan’s Inter-Services Intelligence Agency.”<sup>144</sup>

- **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.<sup>145</sup>
- **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.<sup>146</sup>
- **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.<sup>147</sup>
- **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.<sup>148</sup>
- **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.”<sup>149</sup> Ehsan says, “[W]hom so ever leads a campaign against Islam and Shariah is ordered to be killed by Shariah.”<sup>150</sup>
- **September 15, 2013:** Pakistani General Sanaullah Khan Niazi dies in a roadside bomb in northwest Pakistan. The TTP claim responsibility.<sup>151</sup>
- **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.<sup>152</sup>
- **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.<sup>153</sup>
- **December 2014:** NPR lists 2014 as Afghanistan’s bloodiest year since 2001.<sup>154</sup>
- **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.<sup>155</sup>
- **February 13, 2015:** Taliban militants attack worshippers at a Shiite mosque in Peshawar, killing at least 20.<sup>156</sup>
- **May 14, 2015:** The Taliban attack a popular hotel in Kabul, killing 14, including an American.<sup>157</sup>
- **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.<sup>158</sup>
- **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.<sup>159</sup>
- **October 11-14, 2015:** The Taliban storm two check points in the southern Helmand province, killing 29 Afghan border police officers.<sup>160</sup>
- **November 9, 2015:** Rival Taliban factions battle in southern Afghanistan, leaving dozens dead.<sup>161</sup>

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- **December 8, 2015:** The Taliban assault Kandahar International Airport, leaving more than 50 dead, including children.<sup>162</sup>
- **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.<sup>163</sup>
- **March 7, 2016:** A bomber associated with the Pakistani Taliban attacks the entrance to a judicial court in northwestern Pakistan, killing 11.<sup>164</sup>
- **March 28, 2016:** The Afghan Taliban claims responsibility for firing three rockets at the country's parliament in Kabul.<sup>165</sup>
- **May 14, 2016:** Taliban insurgents ambush Afghan police forces and cut off the main highway that links Kabul with northern Afghanistan.<sup>166</sup>
- **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.<sup>167</sup>
- **July 21, 2016:** After clashing with Afghan government forces, Taliban insurgents overrun the remote northern district of Qala-e-Zal in Kunduz province.<sup>168</sup>
- **August 1, 2016:** A truck bomb explodes outside a hotel compound used by foreign contractors in Kabul. The Afghan Taliban claim responsibility.<sup>169</sup>
- **August 4, 2016:** Taliban gunmen attack a convoy of foreign travelers as they travel through Herat province, wounding seven people.<sup>170</sup>
- **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.<sup>171</sup>
- **August 24, 2016:** Taliban terrorists attack American University in Kabul, killing 13 people and wounding 45 others.<sup>172</sup>
- **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.<sup>173</sup>
- **November 12, 2016:** A Taliban suicide bomber kills four U.S. soldiers and wounds 17 at Bagram Airfield.<sup>174</sup>
- **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.<sup>175</sup>
- **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.<sup>176</sup>
- **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.<sup>177</sup>
- **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.<sup>178</sup>
- **March 5, 2017:** Taliban fighters kill at least five members of the Afghan security forces at a checkpoint in Kunduz province.<sup>179</sup>
- **March 14, 2017:** The Taliban cut off the hand and foot of an alleged thief in Afghanistan's western Herat province.<sup>180</sup>
- **March 23, 2017:** The Taliban capture the key Sangin district, a major opium market in Afghanistan's southern Helmand province.<sup>181</sup>

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- **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.<sup>182</sup>
- **April 3, 2017:** A Taliban attack on provincial intelligence service agents kills at least four.<sup>183</sup>
- **April 5, 2017:** A Taliban suicide bombing targeting a vehicle of census workers kills six in eastern Pakistan.<sup>184</sup>
- **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.<sup>185</sup>
- **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.<sup>186</sup>
- **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.<sup>187</sup>
- **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.<sup>188</sup>
- **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.<sup>189</sup>
- **April 28, 2017:** The Taliban announce the beginning of their spring offensive as they capture a district in Afghanistan's Badakhshan province.<sup>190</sup>
- **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.<sup>191</sup>
- **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.<sup>192</sup>
- **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.<sup>193</sup>
- **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.<sup>194</sup>
- **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.<sup>195</sup>
- **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.<sup>196</sup>
- **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.<sup>197</sup>
- **June 18, 2017:** A suicide car bomber and accompanying gunmen attack the police headquarters in the Spin Ghar

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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.<sup>198</sup>

- **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.<sup>199</sup>
- **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.<sup>200</sup>
- **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.<sup>201</sup>
- **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.<sup>202</sup>
- **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.<sup>203</sup>
- **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.<sup>204</sup>
- **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.<sup>205</sup>
- **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.<sup>206</sup>
- **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.<sup>207</sup>
- **August 29, 2017:** A suicide car bomber attacks a bank in Kabul, killing five and wounding nine others. The Taliban claim responsibility.<sup>208</sup>
- **September 19, 2017:** The Taliban kill three Afghan government workers abducted in Herat province in late August.<sup>209</sup>
- **September 24, 2017:** The Taliban retake the Kohistan district in Afghanistan's province of Faryab.<sup>210</sup>
- **September 28, 2017:** Taliban militants storm the compounds of the Maruf district governor in Afghanistan's Kandahar province, killing 12 and wounding four others.<sup>211</sup>
- **October 15, 2017:** Taliban militants attack checkpoints in Afghanistan's Maruf district after hours of fighting, killing four policemen.<sup>212</sup>
- **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.<sup>213</sup>
- **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



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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.<sup>214</sup>

- **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.<sup>215</sup>
- **October 23, 2017:** Taliban militants attack a security post in Kabul, killing four policemen and wounding two others.<sup>216</sup>
- **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.<sup>217</sup>
- **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.<sup>218</sup>
- **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.<sup>219</sup>
- **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.<sup>220</sup>
- **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.<sup>221</sup>
- **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.<sup>222</sup>
- **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.<sup>223</sup>
- **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.<sup>224</sup>
- **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.<sup>225</sup>
- **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

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fighters are killed and two are wounded during the two-hour gun battle.<sup>226</sup>

- **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.<sup>227</sup>
- **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 attack an Afghan army security post in Dashti Archi district in the Kunduz province, killing at least seven soldiers and wounding one, according to the military. At least 15 Taliban fighters are killed and 13 wounded, according to the military’s account. A local hospital chief disputes the army’s figures, telling the Associated Press that 13 soldiers were killed and nine were wounded. On April 26, Taliban fighters ambush a government convoy in the Logar province, killing the deputy provincial governor and his two bodyguards. The Taliban claim credit in a media statement.<sup>228</sup>
- **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.<sup>229</sup>
- **May 30, 2018:** At least three are killed and 12 are wounded when Taliban suicide bombers attack a police station in the Logar province.<sup>230</sup>
- **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.<sup>231</sup>
- **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.<sup>232</sup>
- **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.<sup>233</sup>
- **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.<sup>234</sup>
- **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.<sup>235</sup>
- **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.<sup>236</sup>
- **August 13, 2018:** Taliban fighters attack a military base known in the Faryab province, killing 17 soldiers and wounding 19 others.<sup>237</sup>
- **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

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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.<sup>238</sup>

- **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.<sup>239</sup>
- **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.<sup>240</sup>
- **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.<sup>241</sup>
- **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.<sup>242</sup>
- **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.<sup>243</sup>
- **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.<sup>244</sup>
- **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.<sup>245</sup>
- **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.<sup>246</sup>
- **November 13, 2018:** Local government and security officials flee Malistan district, Ghazni province, as Taliban fighters launch attacks there.<sup>247</sup>
- **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.<sup>248</sup>
- **November 27, 2018:** Four U.S. soldiers are killed in a Taliban IED attack in Ghazni city.<sup>249</sup>
- **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.<sup>250</sup>
- **December 3, 2018:** Taliban fighters kill a police chief and one other when they storm a police checkpoint in Sari Pul province.<sup>251</sup>
- **December 6, 2018:** Taliban fighters kill 14 and capture 21 soldiers in coordinated attacks on two Afghan National

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Army bases in Herat province.<sup>252</sup>

- **December 8, 2018:** Taliban fighters kill eight and capture nine soldiers in an attack on an Afghan National Army outpost in Farah province.<sup>253</sup>
- **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.<sup>254</sup>
- **December 20, 2018:** Taliban fighters assassinate the commander of the Afghan Local Police in Dahana-i-Ghori district, Baghlan Province.<sup>255</sup>
- **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.<sup>256</sup>
- **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 Chemtal District, Balkh Province.<sup>257</sup>
- **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.<sup>258</sup>
- **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.<sup>259</sup>
- **January 6, 2019:** Taliban fighters kill at least 21 security personnel in attacks on a military base in Qadis district and a police checkpoint in Ab Kamis district, Baghdis Province.<sup>260</sup>
- **January 9, 2019:** Taliban militants attack multiple security positions in three separate provinces, killing a total of at least 21 police officers and wounding 23 officers. In Badghis province, militants kill six policemen. Militants also kill seven police officers in Baghlan province and eight officers in Takhar province. Taliban forces also take control of 30 villages and strategic areas, according to Afghan officials.<sup>261</sup>
- **January 13, 2019:** A U.S. Army Ranger is wounded in Baghdis province and dies of wounds several days later.<sup>262</sup>
- **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.<sup>263</sup>
- **January 22, 2019:** A second U.S. soldier is killed in fighting in Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan Province.<sup>264</sup>
- **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.<sup>265</sup>
- **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.<sup>266</sup>
- **February 5, 2019:** Taliban fighters kill 30 Afghan security personnel and wound 20 more when they storm a checkpoint in the Telawaki area of Kunduz City. The Taliban also capture a security outpost and kill 11 security

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personnel in the Hasan Tal area of Baghlan-e-Markazi District, Baghlan Province.<sup>267</sup>

- **February 6, 2019:** Taliban fighters kill seven soldiers in an attack on a military outpost in Arghandab District, Zabul Province.<sup>268</sup>
- **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.<sup>269</sup>
- **February 17, 2019:** Taliban gunmen open fire on a police vehicle in the Baghlan province, killing at least two civilians and wounding five others.<sup>270</sup>
- **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.<sup>271</sup>
- **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.<sup>272</sup>
- **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.<sup>273</sup>
- **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.<sup>274</sup>
- **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.<sup>275</sup>
- **March 23, 2019:** Twin explosions at an agricultural show in Lashkar Gah kill at least four and wound 31. The Taliban claim responsibility.<sup>276</sup>
- **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.<sup>277</sup>
- **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.<sup>278</sup>
- **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.<sup>279</sup>
- **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.<sup>280</sup>
- **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.<sup>281</sup>



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- **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.<sup>282</sup>
- **April 13, 2019:** Taliban militants attack the city of Kunduz, killing at least six and wounding at least 50.<sup>283</sup>
- **April 14 - 15, 2019:** On April 14, the Benafsha Girls High School in the Farah province’s Tosak village is burned down by unidentified militants. Overnight on April 15, militants blow up the Nawdeh Girls High School, also in Farah province. There are no casualties in the attacks. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, though the Taliban had recently warned that it would attack girls’ schools. Approximately 2,000 students attended the two schools altogether.<sup>284</sup>
- **April 27, 2019:** The Taliban attacks a security outpost in Feroz Koh City. Nine security forces are killed and five others are wounded.<sup>285</sup>
- **May 5, 2019:** A suicide car bomber strikes the entrance of a police headquarters in Pul-e-Khmuri with eight gunmen rushing in after the explosion, killing 13 officers and injuring 55. The Taliban claims responsibility. The attack comes two days after President Ashraf Ghani demands an immediate ceasefire between the Taliban and government forces.<sup>286</sup>
- **May 8, 2019:** Four Taliban insurgents detonate an explosive-laden vehicle and then break into American NGO Counterpart International’s offices in Kabul. At least nine are killed, including the attackers, and 24 are injured.<sup>287</sup>
- **May 10, 2019:** Taliban militants overrun two government outposts in Murghab. The exact number of casualties is not released, but it is reported that more than 20 Afghan soldiers are dead including several officers from an elite police unit.<sup>288</sup>
- **May 15, 2019:** The Afghan Ministry of the interior confirms that Mullah Khadem, a key Taliban commander, is killed in a military operation in Balkh Province. Khadem commanded over 10 insurgents in the area.<sup>289</sup>
- **May 27, 2019:** The Taliban captures and burns down Qashqari military base while also attacking several outposts in Sar-i-Pul City. During the five-hour attack, eight security officials are killed, 29 are wounded, and three soldiers are taken prisoner by the Taliban.<sup>290</sup>
- **May 28, 2019:** Taliban insurgents attack security checkpoints in western Ghor province and eastern Logar province. Eighteen are killed and seven are wounded in Ghor, while five soldiers are killed, four wounded, and four captured in Logar.<sup>291</sup>
- **May 31, 2019:** A car bomb hits a convoy of foreign forces in Kabul. It is reported that at least four bystanders are killed, and seven are wounded, including four U.S. troops. The Taliban-sponsored attack came as a delegation of Taliban officials met Senior Afghan politicians in Moscow to discuss a possible peace process to end the almost two-decade war in Afghanistan.<sup>292</sup>
- **June 11, 2019:** Afghan security forces launch clearance operations in Kohistanat, killing 16 insurgents including Abdul Bashir, the commander of the Taliban’s Red Unit Force and wounding 23 others. Two security personnel are killed and four others are injured during the operation.<sup>293</sup>
- **June 30, 2019:** The Taliban attacks a military base in Kandahar. The insurgents detonate an explosive-filled Humvee and then drive a stolen police pickup truck filled with explosives into the base. The attack leaves 45 of the 60 police officers, 8 civilians, and 25 Taliban fighters dead.<sup>294</sup>
- **July 1, 2019:** Five Taliban members detonate a car bomb and storm an area housing military and government buildings in Kabul. The attack leaves 105 people wounded and at least 16, including the five insurgents, dead.<sup>295</sup>
- **July 2, 2019 - July 3, 2019:** Taliban forces—comprised of 130 militants—capture Qosh Tepa, killing 20 security forces, including N.D.S. officers and soldiers. A day later, the Taliban ambush Darzab District, killing the head of the National Directorate of Security and five officers who fled Qosh Tepa the day before. Two others are wounded.<sup>296</sup>
- **July 9, 2019:** The Taliban attack and eventually capture two military bases and three security outposts in Imam Sahib

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District. Nine security forces are killed, and 11 are injured. 10 border force members are taken hostage.<sup>297</sup>

- **July 13, 2019:** The Taliban plant a roadside bomb in Sayedabad which strikes an American armored personnel carrier. One U.S. soldier is killed in the attack. The same day, a group of suicide bombers storm a police base in Qala-e-Naq, killing at least three security personnel and wounding eight others. The Taliban claims responsibility for the attack.<sup>298</sup>
- **July 16, 2019:** Afghan commandos raid a Taliban prison near the house of the Taliban shadow governor in Aab Kamari District. Thirty-five commandos and four civilians are killed. Four civilians are taken prisoner by the insurgents. Thirty Taliban fighters are killed and another 50 are wounded.<sup>299</sup>
- **July 18, 2019:** Taliban fighters detonate a car bomb outside the police headquarters in Kandahar city. At least 11 are killed and nearly 90 others are wounded. Two Taliban attackers blew themselves up and six others are shot dead.<sup>300</sup>
- **July 25, 2019:** The Taliban detonate a car bomb in Kabul, killing 11 civilians. On the same day, A Taliban Red Unit attacks two security bases in Ishkamish District. Thirty-seven soldiers and police officers are killed, and six officers are wounded. Afghan reinforcements later recapture both bases.<sup>301</sup>
- **July 27, 2019:** A suicide bomber attacked the Ab Band police headquarters in southeastern Ghazni Province. There were three casualties and 12 injuries. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the bombing.<sup>302</sup>
- **July 29, 2019:** In an insider attack, an Afghan soldier opens fire on American troops in Kandahar. Two U.S. soldiers are killed, and the perpetrator, reportedly a member of the Taliban, is wounded.<sup>303</sup>
- **July 31, 2019:** A roadside bomb tears through a bus in western Afghanistan. At least 34 people are killed and 15 are injured. It is suspected that the Taliban are behind the attack.<sup>304</sup>
- **August 1, 2019:** ISIS releases a video of its members publicly beheading a Taliban member. According to the Middle East Media Research Institute, "ISIS considers Taliban members to be apostates who can thus be lawfully killed."<sup>305</sup>
- **August 3, 2019:** An airstrike kills three Taliban leaders, including Mullah Abdul Bari, the shadow governor, in Farah province. It is uncertain whether the strike was conducted by the Afghan Air Force or NATO-led coalition forces.<sup>306</sup>
- **August 5, 2019:** A policeman in Kandahar opens fire on his colleagues. The attacker fled the scene after killing seven officers. Taliban spokesperson Qari Yusouf Ahmadi claims the attacker is a member of the Taliban. Separately, the Afghan special forces conduct airstrikes in Uruzgan, Ghazni, Paktika and Faryab provinces. At least 16 militants are killed within 24 hours.<sup>307</sup>
- **August 7, 2019:** A suicide car bomb explodes outside of a police station in Kabul. The attack kills 18 and injures at least 145. The Taliban claims responsibility for the attack. The blast comes a day after the insurgents call for a boycott of the presidential election on September 28. Separately, security forces conduct raids on two Islamic State hideouts in Kabul. The raids kill five, including two militants and three members of the security forces.<sup>308</sup>
- **August 9, 2019:** The Afghan National Police launch an operation in eastern Logar province, arresting two Taliban suspects involved in terror attacks. The suspects were using walkie-talkie radio signals to report the location and commute of government officials along the Kabul-Logar highway.<sup>309</sup>
- **August 10, 2019:** Taliban forces attack a military convoy on the highway connecting Kabul and Kandahar. During the battle, the military Humvee hits a roadside bomb, killing four soldiers in the process. Also that day, the Taliban attacks Qarqin district center where fighting ensues for five hours. One soldier and one pro-government militia member are killed in the clash, and two other members are wounded.<sup>310</sup>
- **August 11, 2019:** Taliban militants surrender to security forces in northern Badakhshan. Among the 15 who surrendered was Taliban commander Mullah Asho, the second in command in Badakhshan province. The same day, Special Forces of the National Directorate of Security raid the Kolalgo area of Zurmat District. The operation kills at least 11 civilians.<sup>311</sup>
- **August 14, 2019:** Afghan security forces ambush a group of Taliban fighters in Kunduz province. The ambush kills five militants and injures five others. The militants were trying to establish a checkpoint on a road leading to the border town of Shir Kham Port.<sup>312</sup>

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- **August 16, 2019:** A bomb detonates at a mosque in southwestern Pakistan, killing Hafiz Ahmadullah, the brother of Afghan Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhunzada. At least four others were killed in the attack. The mosque served as a headquarters for a council of Taliban leaders to meet and discuss issues. Also that day, NATO-led aircrafts strike Ghazni province, killing six Taliban militants and injuring four others.<sup>313</sup>
- **August 19, 2019:** A series of bombings strike restaurants and public squares in Jalalabad on Afghanistan's 100<sup>th</sup> Independence Day. At least 66 people are wounded. No group claims responsibility for the 10 bombs, but both ISIS and the Taliban operate in the area.<sup>314</sup>
- **August 20, 2019:** Taliban fighters and security forces clash in Firouz Koh. Two police officers and one pro-government militia member are killed. Local authorities claim that 38 members of the Taliban are killed, eight are wounded, and seven others are arrested by security forces. Also that day, in Zareh District, the Taliban ambushes a military convoy of Afghan forces, killing three officers and one member of the National Directorate of Security. Six Taliban fighters are killed in the ensuing battle.<sup>315</sup>
- **August 27, 2019:** Taliban fighters launch multi-pronged offensives on security checkpoints in Faizabad. At least 11 pro-government militia and three militants are killed. Another 11 militia members are injured.<sup>316</sup>
- **August 28, 2019:** Taliban fighters storm security checkpoints in the Chahardara area. At least 14 members of the pro-government militia are killed and several civilians are also wounded.<sup>317</sup>
- **August 31, 2019:** A suicide bomber strikes a busy roundabout in Kunduz with other Taliban fighters launch a major assault on the city from multiple sides. The suicide attack kills a police spokesman and the multi-sided assault provokes a day-long standoff with Afghan forces. Dozens of Taliban fighters, 20 members of the security forces and five civilians are killed in the standoff.<sup>318</sup>
- **September 1, 2019:** Taliban fighters attack Pol-e-Khomri, blocking a key highway linking Kabul with the rest of the north. Taliban fighters hide out in civilian homes and use residents as "human shields." There are an unconfirmed number of casualties.<sup>319</sup>
- **September 2, 2019:** A car bomb detonates in front of the Green Village compound in Kabul. At least five civilians are killed and 50 are wounded. The Taliban claims responsibility for the attack. The compound was targeted as it houses several international organizations and guesthouses.<sup>320</sup>
- **September 5, 2019:** A suicide car bomb detonates near the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. One American soldier and 11 others are killed. The Taliban claims responsibility for the attack.<sup>321</sup>
- **September 12, 2019:** The Taliban claims responsibility for a car-bomb attack on the Afghan Army Special Operation Corp in the Reshkhora area of Kabul. The explosion kills four soldiers and wounds three others.<sup>322</sup>
- **September 17, 2019:** A suicide bomber on a motorcycle detonates outside a Presidential rally in Charikar. At least 26 people are killed and another 30 are injured. Later that day, a Taliban suicide bomber detonates outside the Ministry of Defense in Kabul. The attack kills 22 and wounds another 38. The Taliban claims responsibility for both attacks.<sup>323</sup>
- **September 19, 2019:** A Taliban truck bomb explodes near a hospital in Qalat, Zabul Province. The attack kills at least 20 people and injures another 95.<sup>324</sup>
- **September 25, 2019:** The Taliban attacks outposts in Qaramqul District. The attack kills 13 police officers and pro-government militia members.<sup>325</sup>
- **September 26, 2019:** The Taliban attacks a security outpost in Pashton Kot District. The attack kills 13 public protection officers and wounds six others. That same day, the Taliban attacks a security outpost in Darzab District killing four officers and wounding five others. Also on the 26th, the Taliban attacks a security outpost in Dara-e-Suf Payan District. The ambush kills five officers and wounds five others.<sup>326</sup>
- **September 28, 2019:** In order to curb voter participation in the presidential election, the Taliban carries out over 68 attacks on polling stations across the country. At least 40 people are killed and over 190 are wounded in the attacks.<sup>327</sup>
- **October 4, 2019:** A Taliban Red Unit attacks a security outpost in Telawka. The attack kills 10 soldiers.<sup>328</sup>

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- **October 8, 2019:** The Taliban ambush pro-government militia members in the Kohna Kakil area of Dasht-e-Qala District, where after Afghan security forces had just carried out an operation. The attack kills five pro-government militia members and wounds another. The Taliban seize all of the militia's weapon.<sup>329</sup>
- **October 17, 2019:** The Taliban attack the center of Andkhoy District one day after a joint military operation in the area. The attack kills three and wounds six others. In Zawol District, the Taliban attack a vehicle on the Kandahar-Herat highway in the village of Kalesk. The attack kills two civilians and wounds three others. The car had been targeted due to errant intelligence information. Also on the 17th, the Taliban attack a local police outpost in the Pasha Gul area of Norgiram District. The attack kills six police officers and wounds two others.<sup>330</sup>
- **October 22, 2019:** The Taliban storm a checkpoint in Kunduz province. The attack kills at least 15 policemen and wounds another two. The Taliban has a strong presence in Kunduz and controls several of the province's districts. The city of Kunduz, the provincial capital, is a strategic crossroads with easy access to much of northern Afghanistan as well as the country's capital, Kabul. The Taliban now controls nearly half of Afghanistan and has been relentless in its near-daily attacks targeting Afghan security forces.<sup>331</sup>
- **October 23, 2019:** The Taliban ambush a group of commandos in Cham Qurghan, Khwaja Ghar District. At least six commandos are killed and four others are wounded.<sup>332</sup>
- **October 29, 2019:** A Taliban Red Unit attacks the Bala Hisar military base in Aqcha District. The attack kills 24, injures 5 and leads to the capture of soldier. The Taliban seized equipment, four Humvees and 29 weapons before reinforcements arrived and recaptured the base.<sup>333</sup>
- **November 1, 2019:** The Taliban attacks the Charsiha security outpost in Khawaja Bahauddin District. The attack kills nine and wounds three security forces.<sup>334</sup>
- **November 4, 2019:** The Taliban targets security forces with a roadside bomb in the Akakhil village of Dand-e-Shahabuddin area in Pul-i-Kumri City, the provincial capital. The bomb hit a vehicle, killing eight civilians and wounding six others.<sup>335</sup>
- **November 10, 2019:** The Taliban attacks a security outpost in the Terezai area of Alisher District with a roadside bomb. The attack kills six and wounds four others.<sup>336</sup>
- **November 13, 2019:** A car bomb detonates in Kabul, targeting a private security company's convoy in the Qasaba area in Kabul's police District 15. At least 12 people are killed and 20 others are wounded. No one immediately claims responsibility for the blast, which came a day after the Afghan government released three key Taliban prisoners in exchange for two Western hostages.<sup>337</sup>
- **November 20, 2019:** A Taliban Red Unit attacks a military base in the village of Arbab Khalili in Imam Sahib District. The attack kills 13 soldiers and wounding five others. Also on the 20th, a member of the Taliban infiltrates the border patrol in Atishan, Adraskan District, and shoots and kills five border soldiers.<sup>338</sup>
- **November 27, 2019:** A car strikes a roadside bomb, in Imam Sahib District. At least 13 people are killed. It is suspected that the Taliban planted the bomb.<sup>339</sup>
- **December 1, 2019:** The Taliban attacks security outposts on the highway connecting Kunduz to Takhar Province. The attack kills 11 soldiers and leads to the capture of five others.<sup>340</sup>
- **December 9, 2019:** A suicide car bomb detonates in southern Helmand province. The attack kills five soldiers and wounds at least four others. The attacker was shot and killed before reaching his intended target—a checkpoint for an Afghan national army compound—at which point the vehicle exploded. The Taliban immediately claimed responsibility for the attack.<sup>341</sup>
- **December 10, 2019:** The Taliban ambushes the funeral of an Afghan government employee in Jawzjan province. The militants abduct as many as 45 elderly family members of the deceased. The Taliban have consistently warned people not to attend the funerals of anyone working with the Kabul government.<sup>342</sup>
- **December 11, 2019:** Two suicide bombers and five gunmen target an under-construction medical facility near Bagram Air Base, an American base north of Kabul. The explosion kills two and wounds more than 70. The Taliban

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claim responsibility for the attack.<sup>343</sup>

- **December 23, 2019:** Taliban insurgents target U.S. and Afghan soldiers in northern Kunduz province with an improvised explosive device. The attack kills one U.S. service member, Sgt. First Class Michael J. Goble, and wounds two others. Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid announces that the Taliban was responsible for the attack via WhatsApp, while also attaching photos of an ID belonging to the U.S. Army sergeant and blood-soaked clothing.<sup>344</sup>
- **December 24, 2019:** Taliban insurgents enter a military base in Dawlat Abad District, Balk Province. In the suspected insider attack, the insurgents then burn an army container, killing 16 soldiers. They also hold six soldiers hostage.<sup>345</sup>
- **December 25, 2019:** Taliban militants intercept a convoy of vehicles on a highway in Farah Province. The insurgents kidnap 27 peace activists from the organization People's Peace Movement. The activists planned to travel throughout Farah to call for peace and ceasefire among Afghanistan's rival sides.<sup>346</sup>
- **December 28, 2019:** The Taliban detonate explosives under an army checkpoint before ambushing soldiers in Sangin, Helmand Province. The attack kills sixteen and injures at least six others.<sup>347</sup>
- **December 29, 2019:** A Taliban red unit attacks a security outpost in Khowaja Bahauddin District. The attack kills 17 militia members and wounds four others. Also on the 29th, the Taliban attacks a military base in the Balghali area of Sar-i-Pul Province. A roadside bomb hits a Humvee and kills two soldiers and wounds three others.<sup>348</sup>
- **December 30, 2019:** Three separate attacks occur in Jowzjan, Faryab and Helmand Provinces. In the first, Taliban militants violently clash with Afghan forces in the Abad outpost in Faizabad District. The attack kills 14 security forces. The second attack occurs when a bomb detonates in Khwaja Sabz Posh District. The explosion kills two, with no group claiming responsibility for the bomb. In the third attack, the Taliban attacks a government vehicle in the Qala-e-Rig village of Zendah Jan District. The attack kills one and wounds two others.<sup>349</sup>
- **January 1, 2020:** The Taliban attacks security outposts in Dash-e-Arch District, Kunduz Province. The attack kills 14 and injures two others. Also on the 1st, the Taliban attack Belcheragh District center in Faryab, Province. The attack kills five security forces and wounds two others. Also in Balk province on the same day, the Taliban attack a security outpost on the Balk-Jowzjan highway. The attack kills nine officers.<sup>350</sup>
- **January 11, 2020:** A vehicle carrying U.S. troops hits a roadside bomb in southern Kandahar. The attack kills two U.S. service members—Staff Sergeant Ian McLaughlin and Private First Class Miguel Villalon—and injures two others. The Taliban claims responsibility for the attack.<sup>351</sup>
- **January 16, 2020:** A Taliban red unit attacks a security outpost in Nawabad-e-Andarabiha village of Khan Abad District. The attack kills 11 and wounds two others. Police officers eventually repel the insurgents.<sup>352</sup>
- **January 23, 2020:** The Taliban attack a security outpost in Baghlan-e-Markazi District. The attack kills five security forces and wounds seven others.<sup>353</sup>
- **January 27, 2020:** A U.S. Air Force jet crashes in Ghazni province, eastern Afghanistan. Taliban spokesman, Zabihullah Mujahid, later releases a statement claiming "an aircraft of American occupiers has crashed in Ghazni province," and that "lots" of U.S. service members were killed. However, the next day, the U.S. military confirmed that the remains of two American service members were recovered from the wreckage. The circumstances around the crash are still unclear as some versions of Mujahid's statement claimed the plane crashed while another stated that the jihadist group brought down the aircraft. The crash site is in territory controlled by the Taliban. Colonel Sonny Leggett, a spokesman for U.S. forces in Afghanistan, later confirms that "while the cause of [the] crash is under investigation, there are no indications the crash was caused by enemy fire." Although the Taliban claims to have shot down the aircraft, the Taliban often takes credit for attacks that will legitimize their role as a viable threat to military forces. Adding to the confusion around the crash, Iranian news and social media reports have framed the crash as retaliation for the death of Major General Qasem Soleimani, the former leader of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guards Corps-Quds Force, who was killed in an American drone strike weeks earlier. Iranian reports also went so far as to falsely identifying a C.I.A. official who had been killed in the crash. The U.S. military was quick to negate these claims. The U.S. Air Force uses the jet that crashed as a flying command and communications hub, according to CBS News.<sup>354</sup>
- **January 29, 2020:** The Taliban ambush security checkpoints in Dasht-e Archi district, northern Kunduz province. At least 13 Afghan security forces are killed and at least 12 others are injured in the overnight assault. Government forces eventually repel the insurgents.<sup>355</sup>



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- **February 2, 2020:** The Taliban attacks a security outpost in Ali Abad District. The attack kills five and wounds three others. Security forces eventually repel the insurgents.<sup>356</sup>
- **February 3, 2020:** The Taliban ambushes a pro-government militia commander in Sar-i-Pul City. The attack kills six and wounds three others.<sup>357</sup>
- **February 8, 2020:** In an insider attack, an assailant dressed in an Afghan army uniform opens fire in Nangarhar province. The attack kills two U.S. soldiers, Sgt. Javier Jaguar Gutierrez and Sgt. Antonio Rey Rodriguez, and wounds six others. No group claims responsibility for the attack, but U.S. and Afghan forces have been fighting both Taliban and ISIS fighters in the area.<sup>358</sup>
- **February 16, 2020:** The Taliban ambush a security checkpoint in Kunduz. According to Taliban spokesman Zabiullah Mujahid, the attack kills 19 people. However, the Afghan defense ministry puts the death toll at five.<sup>359</sup>
- **February 17, 2020:** The Taliban ambush a security outpost in Kunduz. The attack kills 15 soldiers and wounds three others. Also in Kunduz, the Taliban launch a mortar attack. The attack kills one and wounds eight others. Also that day, the Taliban shoot and kill one pro-government militia member in Faryab province and two members of the security forces in Jowzjan province.<sup>360</sup>
- **February 18, 2020:** A bomb targeting a police vehicle detonates in Peshawar. The explosion kills a policeman who was assigned to the area for an anti-polio campaign and wounds three others. No group claims responsibility, but the Taliban regularly threatens anti-polio drives which they consider to be a Western conspiracy to sterilize children.<sup>361</sup>
- **February 20, 2020:** The Taliban attacks a local outpost in Khwaja Ghar District. The attack kills four police officers.<sup>362</sup>
- **February 24, 2020:** The Taliban attacks a pro-government checkpoint in Balkh's Chahar Kint district. The attack killed at least six and wounds another five.<sup>363</sup>
- **March 2, 2020:** The Taliban carry out eight different attacks in Faryab, Kandahar, Wardak, Helmand, Herat, Paktia, and Badghis Provinces. In each attack, the assailants ambush a security outpost. In total, the attacks kill nine.<sup>364</sup>
- **March 4, 2020:** The Taliban attack a military base in Kunduz city. The attack kills 15 soldiers. That same day, they attack a security outpost in the Niche area of Tarin Kot. The attack kills nine.<sup>365</sup>
- **March 5, 2020:** The Taliban attacks a security outpost in Sharesafa. The attack kills six and wounds others. Also that day, the Taliban ambush the Makhmal Kocha area of Imam Sahib District. The attack kills six.<sup>366</sup>
- **March 29-30, 2020:** Militants kill at least 28 members of the Afghan security forces in multiple attacks. On March 29, an attack on a military checkpoint in the Arghandab district in the southern Zabul province kills at least six. Separately, militants attack a checkpoint in the Baghlan province, killing at least five and wounding six others. Militants also storm a police compound in the Takhar province, killing at least 13. On March 30, a sticky bomb attached to a vehicle in Kabul kills at least four. Authorities blame the Taliban for the attacks, but the group does not immediately claim responsibility. As a result of the attacks, the Afghan government cancels the release of 100 Taliban prisoners that had been scheduled for March 31 as part of peace negotiations with the Taliban.<sup>367</sup>
- **April 2, 2020:** The Taliban attack security outposts in Karistan, Moqor district. Six security forces are killed.<sup>368</sup>
- **April 7, 2020:** Taliban rebels storm the headquarters of Baharak district. However, Afghan security forces are able to repel the attack, killing three militants, including Taliban commander Qari Ansarullah Gajar. Gajar's death will likely affect Taliban operations in Takhar and surrounding areas.<sup>369</sup>
- **April 7-8, 2020:** On April 7, the Taliban ambushes security forces in Sholgara, northern Balkh province. The attackers took seven civilians hostage during the ambush, killing them the next day.<sup>370</sup>
- **April 12, 2020:** The Taliban ambush a vehicle belonging to an officer of the National Directorate of Security in Gardez City. The attack kills three, including the officer.<sup>371</sup>
- **April 15, 2020:** In an insider job, a cook poisons five police officers at a security outpost in Imam Saheb. He seizes weapons, equipment, and a military vehicle before fleeing to join the Taliban.<sup>372</sup>

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- **April 16, 2020:** The Taliban ambushes security outposts in Charkh District, Logar Province. The attack kills 13 soldiers and injures one other. That same day, the Taliban shoot and kill two police officers, one in Pul-e-Malan and the other in Tagob-Esmail.<sup>373</sup>
- **April 19, 2020:** Suspected Taliban militants ambush Khwaja Ghor district, opening fire on security personnel. At least 19 security personnel are killed. In northern Balk province, the Taliban ambush security forces, killing seven and injuring one child. In western Badghis province, the Taliban attack an army checkpoint, killing three soldiers and wounding 10.<sup>374</sup>
- **April 20, 2020:** Taliban militants ambush a security outpost in North Waziristan, Pakistan, on the border of Afghanistan. The attack kills one soldier.<sup>375</sup>
- **April 21, 2020:** Suspected Taliban militants attack a security checkpoint at the Mes Aynak Copper Mine in eastern Logar province, killing at least eight members of the Afghan security forces. Militants also attack multiple checkpoints in Sar-e-Pul province, killing 11 and wounding 19. The Taliban capture one of the checkpoints. A roadside bomb kills at least four in Ghazni province. The Afghan government blames the Taliban for all the attacks, though the group does not immediately claim responsibility.<sup>376</sup>
- **May 3, 2020:** Suspected Taliban militants throw a hand grenade into a mosque in the Khayerkot district of the southeastern Paktika province, wounding at least 20. Separately, a truck bomb at a military center in Helmand province kills at least five and wounds seven. The following day, the Taliban claim responsibility for the Helmand attack and claim the bombing killed and wounded dozens.<sup>377</sup>
- **May 10-11, 2020:** On May 10, militants attack an Afghan army outpost in Laghman province, killing six soldiers and wounding five. In all, at least 27 soldiers are killed in attacks on military outposts in eastern Afghanistan. The Taliban claim responsibility. On May 11, four bombs in northern Kabul wound four. There are no immediate claims of responsibility, but the government blames the Taliban.<sup>378</sup>
- **May 14, 2020:** An explosives-filled truck detonates near a military court in the eastern city of Gardez, killing at least five and wounding at least 14. The Taliban claim responsibility, calling the attack retaliation for Afghan President Ashraf Ghani blaming the group for a May 12 attack on a maternity hospital in Kabul that killed at least 24. There were no immediate claims of responsibility for that attack.<sup>379</sup>
- **May 19, 2020:** Gunmen open fire outside of a mosque in Kalezay village, Charikar. The attack kills 12 people and wounds six others. Although the government claims the Taliban is responsible for the attack, the insurgents allege the attack was actually the government's doing.<sup>380</sup>
- **May 20, 2020:** Taliban militants attack a security outpost in the Lala Gozar village of Khowaja Bahawuddin District. The attack kills nine pro-government militia members and wounds six others.<sup>381</sup>
- **May 21, 2020:** The Taliban ambush a bus in Shajoe, Zabul province. The attack kills three passengers. In Shah-Tigh, Goh province, Taliban militants attack a security outpost. The ambush kills one officer and wounds another.<sup>382</sup>
- **May 22, 2020:** The Taliban attacks a security outpost in Faiz Abad. The attack kills five and wounds seven others.<sup>383</sup>
- **May 26, 2020:** The Taliban attacks a security convoy in Shanky District, Zabul Provinc. The attack kills three and wounds one other.<sup>384</sup>
- **May 28, 2020:** The Taliban attacks a security outpost in Siah Gird District, Parwan Province. The attack kills seven, wounds one, and results in the kidnapping of two others.<sup>385</sup>
- **June 1, 2020:** A roadside bomb detonates in northern Afghanistan. The attack kills seven. Afghan authorities suspect the Taliban was behind the attack.<sup>386</sup>
- **June 12, 2020:** The Taliban attack a village in Pasaban District. The attack kills seven security officials and wounds one other. In Khosan District, Taliban insurgents attack a security outpost, killing five and wounding six others. In Kabul, the Taliban detonate explosives hidden in a mosque, killing the imam and three others.<sup>387</sup>
- **June 15, 2020:** The Taliban ambush four villages—Akhundzada, Norkhil, Payendakhil and Jangali—in Tagab District. The attacks kill 14 and wound 22 others. In Deh Yak District, the Taliban capture a security outpost and detonate a

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roadside bomb. The ambush and explosion kills 15 security forces and wounds nine others.<sup>388</sup>

- **June 17, 2020:** The Taliban attacks two military bases in Aqcha District. The attack kills 16, wounds five others, and results in the kidnapping of one other. In Kunduz City, a Taliban Red Unit attacks a security outpost. The attack kills seven and wounds three others. In Zurmat District, a mother and her two children are killed when their vehicle collides with a roadside bomb planted by the Taliban.<sup>389</sup>
- **June 23, 2020:** The Taliban launch overnight raids in Ghazni province. The raids kill at least 14 security personnel and wound at least eight others.<sup>390</sup>
- **June 29, 2020:** The Taliban attack Afghan forces in Kalata Nazar village. The attack kills three and wounds one other. In Qazi, the Taliban attack a security outpost. The ambush kills four police officers and wounds two others. In Faryab province, the Taliban shoot and kill the police chief of Khwaja Sabz Posh and one other soldier.<sup>391</sup>
- **July 1, 2020:** The Taliban ambushes security outposts in Naziyan district. The attack kills three soldiers and wounds five others.<sup>392</sup>
- **July 2, 2020:** The Taliban attack security outposts in Khogyani District. The attack kills two soldiers and wounds 11 others.<sup>393</sup>
- **July 8, 2020:** A suicide bomber rams a truck filled with explosives into the Shah Walikot police station. The attack kills three police officers and wounds 20 others. The Taliban claims responsibility for the attack.<sup>394</sup>
- **July 13, 2020:** Taliban fighters ambush security forces following a car bomb blast at a government compound in Samangan, northern Afghanistan. The attack kills at least 11 people and wounds over 43 others. The attack was launched close to one of the offices of the National Directorate of Security (NDS), Afghanistan's main intelligence agency. According to local officials, the Taliban also ambushed three other security force checkpoints in Badakhshan, Kunduz, and Parwan. Between the three attacks, 25 people are killed.<sup>395</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Steve Coll, "Looking for Mullah Omar," *New Yorker*, January 23, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/01/23/looking-for-mullah-omar> [188];

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<sup>119</sup> "Who are the Taliban?" BBC News, November 1, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-11451718> [205];

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<sup>120</sup> "The Massacre in Mazar-I Sharif," Human Rights Watch, November 1998, <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports98/afghan/Afrep0r0.htm> [204];

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<sup>121</sup> Luke Harding, "Taliban blow apart 2,000 years of Buddhist history," *Guardian* (London), March 3,

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<sup>123</sup> "The Taliban," Council on Foreign Relations, accessed April 13,

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<sup>124</sup> "Revived Taliban Waging 'Full-Blown Insurgency,'" *USA Today*, last modified June 20,

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<sup>125</sup> "Cheney Unhurt in Blast outside Afghan Base," CNN, February 27,

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<sup>126</sup> Choe Sang-Hun, "Freed by Taliban, 19 South Korean Hostages Will Face Relief and Anger Back Home," *New York Times*, September 2,

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<sup>127</sup> Hassan Abbas, "A Profile of Tehrik-i-Taliban Pakistan," *CTC Sentinel* 1, no. 2 (January

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<sup>383</sup> Fahim Abed, "Afghan War Casualty Report: May 2020," *New York Times*, May 21, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/07/magazine/afghan-war-casualty-report-may-2020.html> [505].

<sup>384</sup> Fahim Abed, "Afghan War Casualty Report: May 2020," *New York Times*, May 21, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/07/magazine/afghan-war-casualty-report-may-2020.html> [505].

<sup>385</sup> Fahim Abed, "Afghan War Casualty Report: May 2020," *New York Times*, May 21, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/05/07/magazine/afghan-war-casualty-report-may-2020.html> [505].

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<sup>387</sup> Fahim Abed, "Afghan War Casualty Report: June 2020," June 18, 2020, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/04/magazine/afghan-war-casualty-report-june-2020.html> [507].

<sup>388</sup> Fahim Abed, "Afghan War Casualty Report: June 2020," June 18, 2020, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/04/magazine/afghan-war-casualty-report-june-2020.html> [507].

<sup>389</sup> Fahim Abed, "Afghan War Casualty Report: June 2020," June 18, 2020, *New York Times*, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/04/magazine/afghan-war-casualty-report-june-2020.html> [507].

<sup>390</sup> "Taliban Kills At Least 14 Afghan Forces In Raids On Checkpoints," *Gandhara*, June 23, 2020, <https://gandhara.rferl.org/a/taliban-kills-at-least-14-afghan-forces-in-raids-on-checkpoints/30686391.html> [101].

<sup>391</sup> Fahim Abed, "Afghan War Casualty Report: June 2020," *New York Times*, July 2, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/04/magazine/afghan-war-casualty-report-june-2020.html> [507].

<sup>392</sup> Fahim Abed, "Afghan War Casualty Report: June 2020," *New York Times*, July 2, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/04/magazine/afghan-war-casualty-report-june-2020.html> [507].

<sup>393</sup> Fahim Abed, "Afghan War Casualty Report: June 2020," *New York Times*, July 2, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/04/magazine/afghan-war-casualty-report-june-2020.html> [507].

<sup>394</sup> Farhad Naibkhel, "Afghanistan- 'Taliban truck bomb' kills three in Kandahar," *MENAFN*, July 8, 2020, <https://menafn.com/1100454572/Afghanistan-Taliban-truck-bomb-kills-three-in-Kandahar> [508].; Shadi Khan Saif, "7 Afghan policemen killed, 20 hurt in Taliban attacks," *Anadolu Agency*, July 8, 2020, <https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/7-afghan-policemen-killed-20-hurt-in-taliban-attacks/1903455> [509].

<sup>395</sup> "Taliban car bomb attack on Afghan intelligence compound kills 11," *Al Jazeera*, July 13, 2020, <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/07/dozens-injured-car-bomb-blast-afghan-spy-agency-office-200713074223424.html> [510].; Ehsanullah Amiri and Sune Engel Rasmussen, "New Taliban Attacks Complicate Afghan Peace Process," *Wall Street Journal*, July 13, 2020, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/new-taliban-attacks-complicate-afghan-peace-process-11594654731> [511].

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**Designations:**

**Designations by the U.S. Government:**

*Afghan Taliban*



July 4, 1999: The White House designated the Taliban as a sponsor of terrorism under Executive Order (E.O.) 13129 on July 4, 1999.<sup>396</sup>

July 2, 2002: The White House labeled the Taliban a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) on July 2, 2002.<sup>397</sup>

July 2, 2002: The White House labeled Mohammed Omar (a.k.a. Emir al-Mumineen) a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) on July 2, 2002.<sup>398</sup>

*Pakistani Taliban*



September 1, 2010: The U.S. Secretary of State designated Tahrir-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as a Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) on September 1, 2010.<sup>399</sup>

September 1, 2010: The U.S. Department of the Treasury designated Tahrir-e Taliban Pakistan (TTP) as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist (SDGT) pursuant to Executive Order 134224 on September 1, 2010.<sup>400</sup>

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.<sup>401</sup>

January 13, 2015: The U.S. State Department listed TTP leader Mualana Fazlullah as a Specially Designated Global Terrorist on January 13, 2015.<sup>402</sup>

**Designations by Foreign Governments and Organizations:**

*Afghan Taliban*

*Taliban*



July 5, 2011: Canada listed the Pakistani Taliban as a terrorist organization on July 5, 2011.<sup>403</sup>



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-Qaida network and the Taliban” and froze “funds and other financial resources in respect of the Taliban of Afghanistan.”<sup>404</sup> 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.<sup>405</sup>



October 12, 2006: Kazakhstan listed the Taliban as a terrorist organization on October 12, 2006.<sup>406</sup>



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.<sup>407</sup>



February 14, 2003: Russia listed the Taliban as a terrorist organization on February 14, 2003.<sup>408</sup>



October 15, 1999 The U.N. Security Council passed resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011), also known as the “Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee” on October 15, 1999. The resolutions oversee “the implementation of sanctions measures imposed on Taliban-controlled Afghanistan for its support of Usama bin Laden.” The resolution has been amended and strengthened by the following resolutions: 1333 (2000), 1390 (2002), 1455 (2003), 1526 (2004), 1617 (2005), 1735 (2006), 1822 (2008), 1904 (2009), 2083 (2012) and resolution 2161 (2014).<sup>409</sup> The United Nations listed the Pakistani Taliban under the category, “Entities and other groups and undertakings associated with Al Qaida” on July 29, 2011.<sup>410</sup>

*Taliban*

*Pakistani Taliban*



July 5, 2011: Canada listed the Pakistani Taliban as a terrorist organization on July 5, 2011.<sup>411</sup>



July 29, 2011: France designated the Pakistani Taliban as a terrorist organization on July 29, 2011.<sup>412</sup>



November 15, 2014: The United Arab Emirates listed the Pakistani Taliban as a terrorist organization on November 15, 2014.<sup>413</sup>



January 2011: The United Kingdom listed the Pakistani Taliban as a terrorist organization in January 2011.<sup>414</sup>



October 15, 1999: The U.N. Security Council passed resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011), also known as the “Al-Qaida Sanctions Committee” on October 15, 1999. The resolutions oversee “the implementation of sanctions measures imposed on Taliban-controlled Afghanistan for its support of Usama bin Laden.” The resolution has been amended and strengthened by the following resolutions: 1333 (2000), 1390 (2002), 1455 (2003), 1526 (2004), 1617 (2005), 1735 (2006), 1822 (2008), 1904 (2009), 2083 (2012) and resolution 2161 (2014). The United Nations listed the Pakistani Taliban under the category, “Entities and other groups and undertakings associated with Al Qaida” on July 29, 2011.<sup>415</sup>

<sup>396</sup> “Executive Order 13129 of July 4, 1999,” Federation of American Scientists, accessed April 9, 2015, <http://fas.org/irp/offdocs/eo/eo-13129.htm> [512].

<sup>397</sup> “Executive Order 13268 of July 2, 2002,” U.S. Government Publishing Office, July 3, 2002, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2002-07-03/pdf/02-16951.pdf> [10].

<sup>398</sup> “Executive Order 13268 of July 2, 2002,” U.S. Government Publishing Office, July 3, 2002, <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2002-07-03/pdf/02-16951.pdf> [10].

<sup>399</sup> “Designations of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan and Two Senior Leaders,” U.S. Department of State, September 1, 2010,

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<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/09/146545.htm> [513].

<sup>400</sup> “Recent OFAC Actions-September 1, 2010,” U.S. Department of the Treasury, September 1, 2010, <http://www.treasury.gov/resource-center/sanctions/OFAC-Enforcement/Pages/20100901.shtml.aspx> [514].

<sup>401</sup> “Designations of Tehrik-e Taliban Pakistan and Two Senior Leaders,” U.S. Department of State, September 1, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2010/09/146545.htm> [513].

<sup>402</sup> “Terrorist Designations of Mualana Fazlullah,” U.S. Department of State, January 13, 2015, <http://www.state.gov/r/pa/prs/ps/2015/01/235901.htm> [157].

<sup>403</sup> “Currently Listed Entities,” Public Safety Canada, accessed April 16, 2015, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrnt/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx#2044> [9].

<sup>404</sup> “EU Terrorist Listing,” Berghof Foundation for Peace Support, accessed April 17, 2015, [http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Other\\_Resources/RLM\\_EU\\_Terrorist\\_Listing.pdf](http://www.berghof-foundation.org/fileadmin/redaktion/Publications/Other_Resources/RLM_EU_Terrorist_Listing.pdf) [515].

<sup>405</sup> “European Union Restrictive measures (sanctions) in force,” European Commission, accessed April 17, 2015, [http://eeas.europa.eu/cfsp/sanctions/docs/measures\\_en.pdf](http://eeas.europa.eu/cfsp/sanctions/docs/measures_en.pdf) [516].

<sup>406</sup> “Kazakhstan Updates List Of Banned Terrorist Groups,” Radio Free Europe, October 12, 2006, <http://www.rferl.org/content/article/1071987.html> [517].

<sup>407</sup> “Designated individuals and organisations,” New Zealand Police, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.police.govt.nz/sites/default/files/publications/designated-entities-10-02-2015.pdf> [518].

<sup>408</sup> “Единый федеральный список организаций, в том числе иностранных и международных организаций, признанных в соответствии с законодательством Российской Федерации террористическими,” Федеральная служба безопасности Российской Федерации,” accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm> [519].

<sup>409</sup> “Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE,” United Nations Security Council, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/information.shtml> [202].

<sup>410</sup> “Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities,” United Nations Security Council, accessed April 17, 2015, [http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/entities\\_other\\_groups\\_undertakings\\_associated\\_with\\_Al-Qaida.shtml](http://www.un.org/sc/committees/1267/entities_other_groups_undertakings_associated_with_Al-Qaida.shtml) [520].

<sup>411</sup> “Currently Listed Entities,” Public Safety Canada, accessed April 16, 2015, <http://www.publicsafety.gc.ca/cnt/ntnl-scrnt/cntr-trrrsm/lstd-ntts/crrnt-lstd-ntts-eng.aspx#2045> [521].

<sup>412</sup> “Liste terroriste unique,” Ministère des Finances et des Comptes Public, accessed April 17, 2015, [http://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/5563\\_liste-terroriste-unique](http://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/5563_liste-terroriste-unique) [522].

<sup>413</sup> “UAE cabinet endorses new list of terrorist groups,” Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), November 15, 2014, <https://www.kuna.net.kw/ArticleDetails.aspx?id=2408700&Language=en> [523].

<sup>414</sup> “Proscribed Terrorist Organisations,” Home Office, accessed April 17, 2015, [https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/417888/Proscription-20150327.pdf](https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/417888/Proscription-20150327.pdf) [524].

<sup>415</sup> “Security Council Committee pursuant to resolutions 1267 (1999) and 1989 (2011) concerning Al-Qaida and associated individuals and entities, GENERAL INFORMATION ON THE WORK OF THE COMMITTEE,” United Nations Security Council, accessed April 17, 2015, accessed April 17, 2015, <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm> [525].



**Associations:**

**Ties to Extremist Entities:**



[Al-Qaeda](#) [5]

The Taliban provided a safe haven for al-Qaeda insurgents in Afghanistan prior to the September 11, 2001, terror attacks.<sup>416</sup> 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.<sup>417</sup>

During this time, bin Laden established al-Qaeda's 55th Arab Brigade to fight alongside the Taliban in Afghanistan.<sup>418</sup> 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."<sup>419</sup>

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.<sup>420</sup> 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.<sup>421</sup>

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."<sup>422</sup> The same report indicated that Mullah Omar and bin Laden "envisioned this new coalition" during a meeting in Pakistan in early spring 2003.<sup>423</sup>

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."<sup>424</sup>

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.<sup>425</sup> Following the death of bin Laden in 2011, [Ayman al-Zawahiri](#) [526], the new emir of al-Qaeda, has repeatedly renewed his oath of allegiance to the leader of the Taliban.<sup>426</sup> Al-Qaeda leaders have also been featured in Taliban propaganda videos, confirming the continued alliance between the two groups.<sup>427</sup>

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.<sup>428</sup> 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.<sup>429</sup>

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In February 2020, the Taliban reached an agreement with the United States for a U.S. troop drawdown in Afghanistan. Among other commitments, the Taliban agreed to renounce al-Qaeda and prevent al-Qaeda and other groups from using Afghanistan as a base for terrorism against the United States.<sup>430</sup>

### [The Haqqani Network](#) [527]

Shortly after the Taliban assumed governance of Afghanistan in 1996, Jalaluddin Haqqani accepted an appointment as Minister of Tribal Affairs.<sup>431</sup> 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.”<sup>432</sup> 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.”<sup>433</sup>

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.”<sup>434</sup> 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.<sup>435</sup>

## **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.<sup>436</sup>

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.<sup>437</sup> The ISI also facilitated the alliance between Mullah Omar and Osama bin Laden prior to 9/11.<sup>438</sup>

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.”<sup>439</sup>

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.”<sup>440</sup>

The NATO report also determined that the ISI is “thoroughly aware of Taliban activities and the whereabouts of all senior Taliban personnel.”<sup>441</sup> While he was alive, Mullah Omar was believed to be hiding in Quetta and Karachi under the protection of the ISI.<sup>442</sup>

### *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.<sup>443</sup> The U.S. government reportedly approved the move in 2011.<sup>444</sup> The Taliban opened its Doha office, the group’s first overseas, in June 2013.<sup>445</sup> 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.<sup>446</sup>

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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.<sup>447</sup> Otaiba responded the following month in a letter-to-the-editor alleging that the UAE had insisted the Taliban first 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.<sup>448</sup>

In December 2016, the Taliban demanded direct talks with the United States and official recognition of its Doha office as a political office.<sup>449</sup> 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.<sup>450</sup>

Qatar has since hosted negotiations between the United States and the Taliban to reach an end to the war in Afghanistan that started in 2001. On December 7, 2019, Doha hosted a new round of peace talks between the United States and the Taliban. These negotiations between the U.S. peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and Afghanistan's Taliban were the first talks between the two camps since U.S. President Donald Trump withdrew from the dialogue in September.<sup>451</sup> On February 29, 2020, following an agreed seven-day reduction in violence period, U.S. and Taliban representatives meeting in Doha signed an agreement for a U.S. troop withdrawal. The United States agreed to draw its forces down from 13,000 to 8,600 in the next three to four months, with the remaining U.S. forces withdrawing in 14 months. In exchange, the Taliban agreed to renounce al-Qaeda and prevent al-Qaeda and other groups from using Afghanistan as a base for terrorism against the United States. The U.S. troop drawdown is dependent on the Taliban maintaining its commitments. The agreement also called for permanent ceasefire and power-sharing talks that March between Afghan militant groups as well as between the Taliban and the Afghan government.<sup>452</sup>

### *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.<sup>453</sup> 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.<sup>454</sup> Nicholson has previously criticized Russia for providing "legitimacy" to the Taliban.<sup>455</sup>

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."<sup>456</sup> In December 2016, Afghan officials accused Russia of providing—mostly—political support to the Taliban. Russia's ambassador to Afghanistan, Alexander Mantyskiy, 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.<sup>457</sup>

### *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.<sup>458</sup> Nonetheless, Saudi Arabia maintained its relationship with the Taliban government until its overthrow in 2001.<sup>459</sup>

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

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Saudi Arabia the “most significant source of funding to Sunni terrorist groups worldwide.”<sup>460</sup> Former Saudi intelligence chief Prince Turki al-Faisal denied that his government provided any support for the Taliban.<sup>461</sup>

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.<sup>462</sup>

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<sup>416</sup> Richard Barrett, Sajjan Gohel, Ronald E. Neumann, and Nigel Inkster, “The al-Qaeda-Taliban Nexus,” Council on Foreign Relations, November 25, 2009, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/al-qaeda-taliban-nexus/p20838> [528].

<sup>417</sup> Steve Coll, “Looking for Mullah Omar,” *New Yorker*, January 23, 2012, <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/01/23/looking-for-mullah-omar> [188].

<sup>418</sup> Bill Roggio and Thomas Joscelyn, “The al-Qaeda-Taliban Connection,” *Weekly Standard*, July 4, 2011, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/the-al-qaeda-taliban-connection/article/575548> [529].

<sup>419</sup> Bill Roggio and Thomas Joscelyn, “The al-Qaeda-Taliban Connection,” *Weekly Standard*, July 4, 2011, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/the-al-qaeda-taliban-connection/article/575548> [529].

<sup>420</sup> Richard Barrett, Sajjan Gohel, Ronald E. Neumann, and Nigel Inkster, “The al-Qaeda-Taliban Nexus,” Council on Foreign Relations, November 25, 2009, <http://www.cfr.org/pakistan/al-qaeda-taliban-nexus/p20838> [528].

<sup>421</sup> Bill Roggio and Thomas Joscelyn, “The al-Qaeda-Taliban Connection,” *Weekly Standard*, July 4, 2011, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/the-al-qaeda-taliban-connection/article/575548> [529].

<sup>422</sup> Bill Roggio and Thomas Joscelyn, “The al-Qaeda-Taliban Connection,” *Weekly Standard*, July 4, 2011, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/the-al-qaeda-taliban-connection/article/575548> [529].

<sup>423</sup> Bill Roggio and Thomas Joscelyn, “The al-Qaeda-Taliban Connection,” *Weekly Standard*, July 4, 2011, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/the-al-qaeda-taliban-connection/article/575548> [529].

<sup>424</sup> Bill Roggio and Thomas Joscelyn, “The al-Qaeda-Taliban Connection,” *Weekly Standard*, July 4, 2011, <http://www.weeklystandard.com/the-al-qaeda-taliban-connection/article/575548> [529].

<sup>425</sup> Simon Franzen, “Unity in Terrorism,” Institute for Middle Eastern Democracy, 2012, <http://instmed.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Al-Qaeda-and-the-Taliban.pdf> [530].

<sup>426</sup> Thomas Joscelyn, “Al Qaeda Renews Its Oath of Allegiance to Taliban Leader Mullah Omar,” *Long War Journal*, July 21, 2014, [http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/07/al\\_qaeda\\_renews\\_its.php](http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2014/07/al_qaeda_renews_its.php) [531].

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### **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."<sup>463</sup>

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.<sup>464</sup> 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.<sup>465</sup>

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.<sup>466</sup>

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)<sup>467</sup> and instead frames the attacks as retaliation to military operations or in response to a "contested presidential election."<sup>468</sup>

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.'"<sup>469</sup>

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."<sup>470</sup> *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.<sup>471</sup>

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."<sup>472</sup> 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.<sup>473</sup>

#### *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."<sup>474</sup> 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.

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occupation as a failed policy.<sup>475</sup>

### *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."<sup>476</sup> 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 also noted that the group "emerged as a reformist force—honest, fierce, and devoutly Islamic."<sup>477</sup>

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.<sup>478</sup> Taliban rule of law was "intent on returning the capital to the Middle Ages," according to a 1996 article in Britain's *Independent*.<sup>479</sup>

In 2000, the BBC asserted that the Taliban's rule caused "some resentment among ordinary Afghans."<sup>480</sup> However, western media analysis highlighted the group's popularity due to its alleged efforts to fight corruption, restore order, and reinstate commerce.<sup>481</sup> In 2001, the *New York Times* described the Taliban as a "militia" that "craves recognition."<sup>482</sup>

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.<sup>483</sup> Another *New York Times* article in December 2001, after the Taliban's fall, painted a picture of an Afghanistan suffering under fundamentalist rules.<sup>484</sup>

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."<sup>485</sup> 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.<sup>486</sup>

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.<sup>487</sup>

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.<sup>488</sup>

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.<sup>489</sup> 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"<sup>490</sup> or reports of Taliban leader Mullah Omar hiding out in Quetta, Pakistan.<sup>491</sup> 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.

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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.<sup>492</sup> 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."<sup>493</sup> While Sanderson gave details of the Taliban's condemnation, the article clearly regarded the Taliban as a terrorist group, 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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<sup>475</sup> "Scores killed in attack on Peshawar school; Taliban claims responsibility," Al Jazeera, December 16, 2014, <http://america.aljazeera.com/articles/2014/12/16/scores-killed-inattackschoolinpeshawar.html> [559].

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<sup>488</sup> Yaroslav Trofimov, "Cell Carriers Bow to Taliban Threat," *Wall Street Journal*, March 22, 2010, <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052748704117304575137541465235972> [573].

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<sup>493</sup> Bill Sanderson, "Taliban condemns ISIS for deadly bombing in Afghanistan," *New York Post*, April 18, 2015, <http://nypost.com/2015/04/18/suicide-bomb-attack-kills-at-least-30-people-in-afghanistan/> [577].

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**Taliban**

**Rhetoric:**



[Taliban fighters, September 28, 2017](#) [578]

Addressing U.S. President Trump and American soldiers:  
“With the permission of Allah we will play with your skulls.”<sup>494</sup>

[578]



[Taliban fighters, September 28, 2017](#) [579]

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.”<sup>495</sup>

[579]



[Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman, August 22, 2017](#) [580]

“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.”<sup>496</sup>

[580]



[Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman, August 22, 2017](#) [581]

“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 soldier [sic] in our country [Taliban soldiers will] continue our jihad.”<sup>497</sup>

[581]



[Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman, May 27, 2017](#) [582]

“Our fight is Jihad & obligatory worship, reward for every obligatory act of worship is multiplied x70 in #Ramadan.” (Tweet)<sup>498</sup>

[582]



[Taliban member, December 2016](#) [583]

In propaganda video:  
“Allah will shake the White House [with] your [the Muhajideen’s] religious zeal by the permission of Allah.”<sup>499</sup>

[583]



[Taliban member, December 2016](#) [584]

In propaganda video:  
“Muhajideen want to completely eliminate democracy.”<sup>500</sup>

[584]



[Jihad Yar Wazir, Taliban commander, December 16, 2014](#) [585]

“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.”<sup>501</sup>

[585]



**Taliban**



[586]

[Hakimullah Mehsud, then-Emir of TTP, October 9, 2013 \[586\]](#)

“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.”<sup>502</sup>



[587]

[Hakimullah Mehsud, then-Emir of TTP, October 9, 2013 \[587\]](#)

“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.”<sup>503</sup>



[588]

[Zabihullah Mujahid, spokesman, July 2013 \[588\]](#)

“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.”<sup>504</sup>



[589]

[Mullah Dawran, Taliban commander, April 4, 2012 \[589\]](#)

“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.”<sup>505</sup>



[590]

[Mullah Dawran, Taliban commander, April 4, 2012 \[590\]](#)

“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.”<sup>506</sup>



[591]

[Mullah Dawran, Taliban commander, April 4, 2012 \[591\]](#)

“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.”<sup>507</sup>



[592]

[Siraj Haqqani, Reported deputy emir, 2010 \[592\]](#)

“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.”<sup>508</sup>



[593]

[Siraj Haqqani, Reported deputy emir, 2010 \[593\]](#)

“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.”<sup>509</sup>

***Taliban***



[594]

[\*Qari Bashir Haqqani, Taliban commander, May 21, 2008 \[594\]\*](#)

“It is not important what kind of soldiers they were. What's important is to kill and hammer out the Germans in Kunduz.”<sup>510</sup>



[595]

[\*Qari Bashir Haqqani, Taliban commander, May 21, 2008 \[595\]\*](#)

“If they leave their bases, we will be waiting for them with improvised explosive devices (IED) and fedayeen (suicide bombers) on every road.”<sup>511</sup>



[596]

[\*Qari Bashir Haqqani, Taliban commander, May 21, 2008 \[596\]\*](#)

“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.”<sup>512</sup>



[597]

[\*Qari Bashir Haqqani, Taliban commander, May 21, 2008 \[597\]\*](#)

“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.”<sup>513</sup>



[598]

[\*Qari Bashir Haqqani, Taliban commander, May 21, 2008 \[598\]\*](#)

“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.”<sup>514</sup>



[599]

[\*Taliban government, 1996 \[599\]\*](#)

“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.”<sup>515</sup>



[600]

[\*Mullah Wakil, then-spokesman for the Taliban, 1996 \[600\]\*](#)

“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.”<sup>516</sup>

[\*Taliban government, 1996 \[601\]\*](#)

“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



cursed by the Islamic Sharia and should never expect to go to heaven.”<sup>517</sup>

[601]



[Taliban government, 1996](#) [602]

“Throw reason to the dogs. It stinks of corruption.”<sup>518</sup>

[602]

<sup>494</sup> Bill Roggio, “Taliban fighters promise to ‘play with the skulls’ of dead American soldiers,” Long War Journal, September 28, 2017, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/09/taliban-fighters-promise-to-play-with-the-skulls-of-dead-american-soldiers.php> [98].

<sup>495</sup> Bill Roggio, “Taliban fighters promise to ‘play with the skulls’ of dead American soldiers,” Long War Journal, September 28, 2017, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/09/taliban-fighters-promise-to-play-with-the-skulls-of-dead-american-soldiers.php> [98].

<sup>496</sup> Bill Roggio, “Taliban vows to continue its ‘Jihad’ against US,” Long War Journal, August 22, 2017, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/08/taliban-vows-to-continue-its-jihad-against-us.php> [603].

<sup>497</sup> “Taliban condemn Trump’s decision on Afghanistan war, vow ‘jihad’ will go on,” Reuters, August 22, 2017, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-usa-trump-afghanistan-taliban-idUSKCN1B20ES?il=0> [604].

<sup>498</sup> Bill Roggio, “Jihad during Ramadan is ‘obligatory,’ Taliban spokesman says,” Long War Journal, May 30, 2017, <http://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/05/jihad-during-ramadan-is-obligatory-taliban-spokesman-says.php> [55].

<sup>499</sup> Thomas Joscelyn and Bill Roggio, “Taliban rejects peace talks, emphasizes alliance with al Qaeda in new video,” Long War Journal, December 9, 2016, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/12/taliban-rejects-peace-talks-emphasizes-alliance-with-al-qaeda-in-new-video.php> [532].

<sup>500</sup> Thomas Joscelyn and Bill Roggio, “Taliban rejects peace talks, emphasizes alliance with al Qaeda in new video,” Long War Journal, December 9, 2016, <https://www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2016/12/taliban-rejects-peace-talks-emphasizes-alliance-with-al-qaeda-in-new-video.php> [532].

<sup>501</sup> “Taliban: We Slaughtered 100+ Kids Because Their Parents Helped America,” Daily Beast, December 16, 2014, <http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/12/16/pakistani-taliban-massacre-more-than-80-schoolchildren.html> [605].

<sup>502</sup> “Full text: BBC interview with Taliban’s Mehsud,” BBC News, October 9, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-24466791> [606].

<sup>503</sup> “Full text: BBC interview with Taliban’s Mehsud,” BBC News, October 9, 2013, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-24466791> [606].

<sup>504</sup> “Afghan Taliban vow attacks over Ramadan after being hacked,” Reuters, July 5, 2013, <http://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-taliban/afghan-taliban-vow-attacks-over-ramadan-after-being-hacked-idUSBRE9640DT20130705> [607].

<sup>505</sup> Qais Azimy and Mujid Mashal, “Commander’s words shed light on Taliban views,” Al Jazeera, April 4, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/04/201243135956894735.html> [608].

<sup>506</sup> Qais Azimy and Mujid Mashal, “Commander’s words shed light on Taliban views,” Al Jazeera, April 4, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/04/201243135956894735.html> [608].

<sup>507</sup> Qais Azimy and Mujid Mashal, “Commander’s words shed light on Taliban views,” Al Jazeera, April 4, 2012, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2012/04/201243135956894735.html> [608].

<sup>508</sup> “Excerpts of Interviews with Sirajuddin Haqqani,” Anand Gopal, accessed April 20, 2015, <http://anandgopal.com/excerpts-of-interviews-with-sirajuddin-haqqani/> [609].

<sup>509</sup> “Excerpts of Interviews with Sirajuddin Haqqani,” Anand Gopal, accessed April 20, 2015, <http://anandgopal.com/excerpts-of-interviews-with-sirajuddin-haqqani/> [609].

<sup>510</sup> “Interview with a Taliban Commander: ‘What’s Important Is to Kill the Germans,’” Spiegel Online, May 21, 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-a-taliban-commander-what-s-important-is-to-kill-the-germans-a-554545.html> [610].

<sup>511</sup> “Interview with a Taliban Commander: ‘What’s Important Is to Kill the Germans,’” Spiegel Online, May 21, 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-a-taliban-commander-what-s-important-is-to-kill-the-germans-a-554545.html> [610].

<sup>512</sup> “Interview with a Taliban Commander: ‘What’s Important Is to Kill the Germans,’” Spiegel Online, May 21, 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-a-taliban-commander-what-s-important-is-to-kill-the-germans-a-554545.html> [610].

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<sup>514</sup> “Interview with a Taliban Commander: ‘What’s Important Is to Kill the Germans,’” Spiegel Online, May 21, 2008, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/interview-with-a-taliban-commander-what-s-important-is-to-kill-the-germans-a-554545.html> [610].

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<sup>516</sup> "The Taliban," Mapping Militant Organizations, accessed April 21, 2015, <http://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/367#note15> [611].

<sup>517</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 261.

<sup>518</sup> Lawrence Wright, *The Looming Tower* (New York: Vintage Books, 2006), 262.