



OFS IN BRIEF

The 18th quarterly report submitted by the Lead Inspector General for Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) summarizes the quarter's key events and oversight of the two complementary U.S. missions in Afghanistan: counterterrorism operations and building the capacity of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF).

Taliban Peace Talks Suspended

pp. 14-15, 34-35

- On September 7, President Trump announced that he had **canceled ongoing U.S. talks** with the Taliban
- Earlier that week, Amb. Khalilzad reported that the United States and the Taliban had reached an **agreement in principle**, under which the U.S. Government would **withdraw more than 5,000 troops**
- Following the suspension of the talks, the U.S. military **increased operations** against the Taliban

Afghanistan Holds Presidential Election

pp. 35-36

- Afghans went to the polls on September 28 to elect their **next president**
- The **results of the election have not yet been announced**, but the two leading candidates both declared victory
- The Taliban attacked election activities and facilities, which likely contributed to the **low voter turnout**
- Compared to previous years, observers reported that **technical administration** of the election improved, including implementation of biometric verification devices

ISIS-K: A Threat on the Ground and Online

pp. 18-20

- The Defense Intelligence Agency assessed that ISIS-K presents **"an enduring threat"** to U.S. and allied interests in South and Central Asia
- ISIS-K has **not directed an attack against the U.S. homeland**, but regularly issues propaganda to inspire attacks overseas
- ISIS-K has between 2,000 and 5,000 fighters and continues to **recruit disaffected fighters from other violent extremist groups**, including Taliban fighters who did not support a peace deal
- Due to **ongoing counterterrorism pressure**, ISIS-K has not been able to expand territorial control in Afghanistan

Violence and Civilian Casualties Increase

pp. 11-16

- The number of **enemy-initiated attacks** that resulted in at least one casualty **increased by 34 percent** compared to the previous quarter
- USFOR-A said that this increase **reflects a normal increase** in violence during the summer and the **spike in attacks related to the election**
- **Civilian casualties increased** by more than 130 percent compared to last quarter, and 60 percent compared to the same period one year ago, according to Resolute Support data

U.S. Government Scales Down Presence in Afghanistan

pp. 42-44

- USAID staff levels at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul **have decreased** due to attrition
- The DoD reported that there are **approximately 13,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan**, a decrease from previous quarters; the number of DoD contractors also decreased.
- Some personnel have been **relocated to other locations** but continue to support OFS

New Pay and Personnel System Validates Smaller ANDSF Force Size

pp. 22-23

- The Afghan Personnel and Pay System (APPS) reported a total ANDSF assigned force strength of **253,850 personnel** in July
- This number is **much lower** than numbers reported in previous quarters because APPS relies on biometric data to validate that personnel are actually serving in the ANDSF

Oversight and Investigations

pp. 47-67

- The Lead IG agencies completed **13 audit, evaluation, and inspection reports** related to OFS during the quarter
- Reports issued this quarter include an audit of **U.S. efforts to implement APPS** and an evaluation of training for **Afghan Tactical Air Coordinators**