OFS IN BRIEF

The 19th 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 Restart  pp. 10-11, 26-27
- The Secretary of Defense characterized the war against the Taliban as a “strategic stalemate” that the Afghan government cannot win militarily.
- On November 28, President Donald Trump visited Afghanistan and announced the United States would restart talks with the Taliban.
- During Ambassador Khalilzad’s meeting with Taliban representatives, the United States requested that the Taliban reduce the level of violence, but the Taliban did not agree.
- Less than 1 week after talks resumed, the Taliban attacked Bagram Airfield, a major coalition base, killing 2 civilians and injuring more than 70 civilians.

ISIS-K Abandons Historic Stronghold  pp. 10, 13
- More than 300 ISIS-K fighters and 400 family members surrendered to Afghan forces in Nangarhar province.
- Afghan President Ghani declared ISIS-K “obliterated” in Nangarhar.
- The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff stated that ISIS-K was “severely hurt,” but has not been destroyed.

Violence Continues at Heightened Pace During Peace Negotiations  pp. 11-15
- More than 8,400 enemy-initiated attacks occurred this quarter, the second-highest number since OFS began in 2015.
- Enemy-initiated attacks were smaller in scale and proportionally less effective.
- Civilian casualties decreased by more than 50 percent compared to last quarter, and 20 percent compared to the same period one year ago.
- In December, an insider attack in Ghazni resulted in 23 ANA Territorial Force members killed.

China, Russia, Iran Pursue Their Own Agendas  pp. 15-17
- China is likely open to cooperation with the United States in Afghanistan to enhance security for its border and economic investments.
- Russia likely sees Afghanistan as an opportunity to expand pressure on the United States, undermining U.S. credibility while bolstering its Central Asian military presence.
- Iran seeks to ensure its influence on any future Afghan government and is attempting to play a central role in reconciliation talks.

Preliminary Afghan Presidential Election Results Released  pp. 27-28
- Preliminary results indicate President Ghani received more than 50 percent of the vote in the September election.
- President Ghani would win reelection and avoid a second round of voting if the count is confirmed.

Afghan President Orders Security Forces to Reduce Number of Checkpoints  pp. 17-18
- Afghan President Ghani ordered the ANDSF to reduce the number of static checkpoints.
- The ANDSF relies upon an excessive number of lightly-defended checkpoints, which are frequently attacked by the Taliban.
- The coalition has long recommended that the ANDSF reduce checkpoints, but the problem has persist years.

Healthcare Gains in Afghanistan May Not Be Sustainable  pp. 29-32
- Child and maternal mortality rates have decreased, and access to healthcare facilities has increased.
- Donor nations provide the majority of the funding to sustain the healthcare system.