OPERATION FREEDOM'S SENTINEL

LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL REPORT TO THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS

OCTOBER 1, 2020–DECEMBER 31, 2020

ABOUT THIS REPORT

A 2013 amendment to the Inspector General Act established the Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) framework for oversight of overseas contingency operations and requires that the Lead IG submit quarterly reports to Congress on each active operation. The Chair of the Council of Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency designated the DoD Inspector General (IG) as the Lead IG for Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS). The DoS IG is the Associate IG for the operation. The USAID IG participates in oversight of the operation.

The Offices of Inspector General (OIG) of the DoD, the DoS, and USAID are referred to in this report as the Lead IG agencies. Other partner agencies also contribute to oversight of OFS.

The Lead IG agencies collectively carry out the Lead IG statutory responsibilities to:

- Develop a joint strategic plan to conduct comprehensive oversight of the operation.
- Ensure independent and effective oversight of programs and operations of the U.S. Government in support of the operation through either joint or individual audits, inspections, investigations, and evaluations.
- Report quarterly to Congress and the public on the operation and activities of the Lead IG agencies.

METHODOLOGY

To produce this quarterly report, the Lead IG agencies submit requests for information to the DoD, the DoS, USAID, and other Federal agencies about OFS and related programs. The Lead IG agencies also gather data and information from other sources, including official documents, congressional testimony, policy research organizations, press conferences, think tanks, and media reports.

The sources of information contained in this report are listed in endnotes or notes to tables and figures. Except in the case of audits, inspections, investigations, or evaluations referenced in this report, the Lead IG agencies have not audited the data and information cited in this report. The DoD, the DoS, and USAID vet the reports for accuracy prior to publication. For further details on the methodology for this report, see Appendix B.

CLASSIFIED APPENDIX

This report normally includes an appendix containing classified information about the U.S. counterterrorism mission in Afghanistan. However, due to constraints resulting from the coronavirus disease–2019 pandemic, the Lead IG agencies did not prepare a classified appendix this quarter.

FOREWORD

We are pleased to submit this Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) quarterly report to the U.S. Congress on Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS). This report discharges our individual and collective agency oversight responsibilities pursuant to the Inspector General Act of 1978.

OFS has two complementary missions: the U.S. counterterrorism mission against al Qaeda, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria–Khorasan (ISIS-K), and their affiliates in Afghanistan; and U.S. military participation in the NATO-led Resolute Support mission to develop the capacity of the Afghan security ministries and to train, advise, and assist the Afghan security forces.

This quarterly report describes the activities of the U.S. Government in support of OFS, as well as the work of the Department of Defense, the Department of State, and the U.S. Agency for International Development to promote the U.S. Government's policy goals in Afghanistan during the quarter.

This report also discusses the planned, ongoing, and completed oversight work conducted by the Lead IG agencies and our partner oversight agencies during the quarter. This quarter, the Lead IG agencies issued eight audit, inspection, and evaluation reports related to OFS.

Working in close collaboration, we remain committed to providing comprehensive oversight and timely reporting on OFS.

Sean W. O'Donnell
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense

Diana Shaw
Acting Inspector General
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On the Cover

(Top row): Members of the Lincoln Learning Center speak with Afghan men to raise awareness on how to prevent COVID-19 transmission (USAID photo); Taliban representative Abdul Ghani Baradar signs the U.S.-Taliban agreement in Doha, Qatar, February 2020 (DoS photo); Afghan children wash their hands at a newly rehabilitated facility (USAID photo). (Bottom row): Afghan Mi-17 helicopters fly over Uruzgan province, Afghanistan (U.S. Army photo).

MESSAGE FROM THE LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL

Sean W. O'Donnell

I am pleased to present this Lead Inspector General (Lead IG) report on Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS). This quarter, the DoD implemented a November 2020 directive from then-President Trump to reduce the number of OFS forces in Afghanistan to 2,500 by January 15, 2021. The troop drawdown is in line with the agreement between the United States and the Taliban, which states that all nondiplomatic U.S. personnel—military, civilian, and contractors—will leave Afghanistan by May 2021, provided that the Taliban meets its obligations under the agreement.

As of the time of publication, it was unclear to what extent the Taliban was meeting its commitments, primarily its obligation to ensure that Afghanistan is not used as a base for terrorist groups, such as al-Qaeda, to threaten the United States and its allies. While the Taliban opposes and actively fights ISIS members in Afghanistan, the Taliban continues to maintain relations with al-Qaeda. The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) reported this quarter that al-Qaeda members were integrated into Taliban forces and command structures. After the quarter ended, the Biden Administration stated that it is reviewing whether the Taliban is meeting its commitments.

In the meantime, the Taliban has continued its aggressive campaign of attacks against Afghan government and military targets. While the Taliban and Afghan Islamic Republic negotiators resolved many procedural disagreements over the peace talks this quarter, the Taliban has not compromised on substantive matters. The DIA stated that the Taliban views the negotiations with the Afghan Islamic Republic negotiating team as necessary to ensure U.S. forces leave Afghanistan. The DIA also assessed that the Taliban is employing violence across the country in a strategic effort to increase its leverage in those negotiations.

Then-acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller stated that the drawdown of forces did not represent a change in U.S. policy or strategy in Afghanistan. U.S. Forces–Afghanistan stated that the remaining 2,500 troops are continuing to execute the dual missions of OFS: counterterrorism and training, advising, and assisting the Afghan security forces. The DoD said that it was taking several measures to continue these missions with a smaller footprint, such as relocating some OFS support staff outside the country, closing several bases, and focusing advisory efforts at the national rather than regional level.

Lead IG oversight remains critical to the effectiveness of the United States' support to Afghanistan. I look forward to working with my Lead IG colleagues to continue to report and provide oversight on OFS and related U.S. Government activity in Afghanistan, as required by the IG Act.

Sean W O'Donnell

Sean W. O'Donnell
Acting Inspector General
U.S. Department of Defense

U.S. Marines and Georgian soldiers conduct military exercises in Patuhk, Georgia, as part of training for participation in the Resolute Support operation in Afghanistan. (U.S. Navy photo)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

On December 2, the Islamic Republic and Taliban negotiating teams reached an initial agreement regarding the rules and procedures for the Afghanistan peace negotiations.[1] The Taliban committed to participating in these intra-Afghan negotiations as part of its February 2020 agreement with the United States.[2] The parties agreed in December 2020 on the rules and procedures to govern the talks and began to discuss agenda setting before a mutually agreed break.[3] The Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) said that based on media reporting it was likely that the Taliban approved the procedural agreement as a means to appease the U.S. Government and ensure that U.S. military forces continue to draw down and ultimately withdraw from Afghanistan completely, in accordance with the terms of the February agreement.[4]

With peace talks ongoing, the Taliban maintained its "fight and talk" strategy, calibrating its violence to increase political leverage with the Afghan government without jeopardizing its agreement with the United States, according to the DIA.[5] The Taliban kept up an aggressive and violent campaign across the country. On October 13, Taliban forces launched a major offensive on Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province, pushing Afghan troops into a tactical retreat and destroying a major power plant, according to media reporting.[6] U.S. and Taliban officials publicly pledged to suspend attacks in southern Afghanistan on October 16, but fighting continued deeper into the city days later.[7]

Enemy-initiated attacks were slightly higher this quarter than during the same period last year, according to Resolute Support.[8] According to the United Nations, there were 10,439 security incidents—which includes violence caused by pro- and anti-government actors—between July 13 and November 12, representing an 18 percent increase compared with the same period in 2019. Ninety-two percent of these incidents were initiated by anti-government forces.[9] While there were no insider attacks against U.S. or coalition military personnel this quarter, 23 insider attacks killed 82 Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) personnel and wounded 22.[10]

ISIS-K continued its attacks in an effort to boost recruiting and rebuild following its losses in 2019, the DIA reported.[11] ISIS-K's violence was largely concentrated in Nangarhar, Kunar, and Kabul provinces, including two high-profile attacks against a Shia education center on October 24 and Kabul University on November 2, which killed and wounded more than 100 victims. The DIA stated that ISIS-K shifted its focus away from territorial expansion and

Then-Secretary of State Michael Pompeo and senior U.S. officials meet with members of the Afghan Islamic Republic negotiating team in Doha, Qatar. (DoS photo)

toward attacks against the Afghan government, population, and religious minorities, with the goal of attracting media attention and destabilizing Afghanistan.[12]

The DoD continued to reduce its presence, announcing that an estimated 2,500 troops were in Afghanistan shortly after the quarter ended.[13] Under the terms of the February 29, 2020, agreement between the United States and the Taliban, the United States committed to a gradual reduction in military presence in Afghanistan with a complete withdrawal by May 1, 2021, contingent on the Taliban abiding by its commitments under the agreement.[14] On January 15, 2021, then-Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller announced that the DoD had met its goal of reducing the U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan to 2,500.[15]

Afghanistan struggled with a second wave of coronavirus disease–2019 (COVID-19) as the government attempted to balance limited resources between the pandemic, increased violence, and economic crisis.[16] The Afghan government's response was hindered by a bias among the population against testing and high costs for care amid a faltering economy, according to USAID.[17]

Lead IG Oversight Activities

The global COVID-19 pandemic continued to constrain the Lead IG agencies' ability to conduct oversight of projects related to OFS during the quarter, due to the related travel restrictions. Despite these constraints, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies completed eight reports related to OFS during the quarter. These oversight reports examined various activities that support OFS, including the retrograde of equipment from Afghanistan; tactical signals intelligence processing; the DoS's post security program review process; USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance initiative, and USAID financial accountability in other assistance programs; and DoD programs to support women in the Afghan security forces and anti-corruption efforts. As of December 31, 2020, 37 projects were ongoing, and 18 projects were planned.

During the quarter, Lead IG investigations related to OFS resulted in one criminal charge and $180,000 recovered to the U.S. Government. The investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 6 investigations, initiated 1 new investigation, and coordinated on 67 open investigations. The investigations involve a variety of alleged crimes, including procurement fraud, corruption, grant fraud, theft, program irregularities, computer intrusions, and human trafficking.

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints and contacts specific to its agency. The hotlines provide a confidential, reliable means for individuals to report violations of law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; and abuse of authority. The DoD OIG has an investigator to coordinate the hotline contacts among the Lead IG agencies and others, as appropriate. During the quarter, the investigator referred 31 cases to Lead IG agencies or other investigative organizations.

Then-Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller and Mr. Fazel Fazly, Director General of the Administrative Office of the President of Afghanistan, arrive in Kabul, Afghanistan, for bilateral talks. (U.S. Air Force photo)

U.S. Marines and Georgian soldiers perform assessment training exercises for Resolute Support near Vaziani Training Area, Georgia. (U.S. Navy photo)

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Then-Secretary of State Michael Pompeo meets with Batur Dostum, a member of the Afghan Islamic Republic negotiating team, in Doha, Qatar. (DoS photo)

THE QUARTER IN REVIEW

MAJOR DEVELOPMENTS

Afghan Islamic Republic and Taliban Negotiating Teams Agree on Peace Talk Procedures

On February 29, 2020, the United States and the Taliban signed an agreement to advance the peace process in Afghanistan. The United States committed to withdraw all its troops from Afghanistan over the course of 14 months if the Taliban meets its full range of commitments, including taking specific steps to prevent terrorists, including al-Qaeda, from using Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies. The Taliban also committed to enter into negotiations to reach a political settlement and a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire.[1] The Afghanistan peace negotiations between the Taliban and the Afghan Islamic Republic negotiating team, a team comprising key Afghan leaders including but not limited to members of the Afghan government, formally began on September 12 in Doha, Qatar, after months of delays.[2] Taliban violence has continued during this period. The U.S.-Taliban agreement does not require the Taliban to end hostilities with the Afghan government. The Taliban have included a ceasefire as the final item in their proposed list of agenda items for negotiations, but the parties have not yet discussed the date or details regarding a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire.[3]

On December 2, 2020, the negotiating teams reached an agreement regarding the rules and procedures for the negotiations. According to the DoS, the negotiating teams have not publicized the final rules and procedures.[4] However, Voice of America, which viewed the agreement, reported that the rules and procedures established several principles for Afghanistan peace negotiations, including the U.S.-Taliban February 2020 agreement.

According to the media report, the procedural agreement also reportedly includes provisions regarding the manner in which negotiations should take place, confidentiality of the talks, a prohibition on any topics of discussion that would violate the Islamic religion, and a mechanism for adjudicating differing interpretations of Sharia law.[5] According to the United Nations, after the two sides finalized the procedural agreement, the negotiating parties formed a working committee to discuss an agenda for the talks and presented an initial list of topics for the agenda. Shortly thereafter, the two sides agreed to a 22-day recess, through January 5, 2021.[6]

According to media reporting, prior procedural disagreements included disputes over whether the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence should be the basis for dispute resolution during the talks, and over the inclusion of references to the February 2020 U.S.-Taliban agreement in the negotiation procedures. The Afghan government was not a party to the U.S.-Taliban agreement and its members participating in the negotiations objected to elements of that agreement being incorporated into the procedures for peace negotiations. Ultimately, press reporting indicates the Afghan Islamic Republic negotiating team and the Taliban included references to this agreement but also referred to at least one other, unnamed, framing document.[7]

About Operation Freedom's Sentinel

MISSION

U.S. forces carry out two complementary missions under Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS): 1) counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda, the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria–Khorasan (ISIS-K), and their affiliates in Afghanistan; and 2) participation in the NATO-led Resolute Support mission, under which the United States trains, advises, and assists Afghan forces and the Afghan Ministries of Defense and Interior Affairs to build their institutional capacity. In addition, under OFS authorities, U.S. forces provide combat enablers, such as aerial strikes and intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, to the Afghan security forces as they fight the Taliban and terrorist organizations. The Department of State supports OFS through diplomatic efforts to reach a negotiated political settlement in Afghanistan, among other activities.

HISTORY

On October 7, 2001, the United States launched combat operations in Afghanistan under Operation Enduring Freedom to topple the Taliban regime and eliminate al-Qaeda, the terrorist organization responsible for the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. The Taliban regime fell quickly, and on May 1, 2003, Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld announced an end to major combat operations in Afghanistan. Subsequently, the United States and international coalition partners transitioned to a mission designed to combat terrorism in Afghanistan while helping the nascent Afghan government to defend itself and build democratic institutions in the country.

While the new Afghan government developed, the Taliban launched increasingly deadly attacks to recapture lost territory, killing more than 800 U.S. Service members and wounding more than 4,200 between the 2003 announcement and a 2009 change in strategy. To combat a resurgent Taliban, the United States increased the number of U.S. troops deployed, surging to a force of 100,000 troops in 2010 and 2011. The U.S. troop increase was initially successful in reestablishing security within much of Afghanistan, but as the United States proceeded with the withdrawal of surge forces, concerns remained about the ability of the Afghan forces to maintain security.

OFS began on January 1, 2015, when the United States formally ended its combat mission, Operation Enduring Freedom. Under OFS, the United States conducts train, advise, and assist activities under the NATO Resolute Support mission, while continuing counterterrorism operations against al-Qaeda, associated forces of al-Qaeda, and ISIS-K. In 2018, the United States increased its diplomatic efforts to reach an accord with the Taliban, culminating in a February 29, 2020, agreement. Under the agreement, the United States committed to reducing its troop levels to 8,600 by July 2020, and to withdraw from Afghanistan all military forces of the United States, its allies, and coalition partners by May 1, 2021, and the Taliban committed to, among other things, prevent any group or individual (including al-Qaeda) from using the territory of Afghanistan to threaten the security of the United States and its allies.

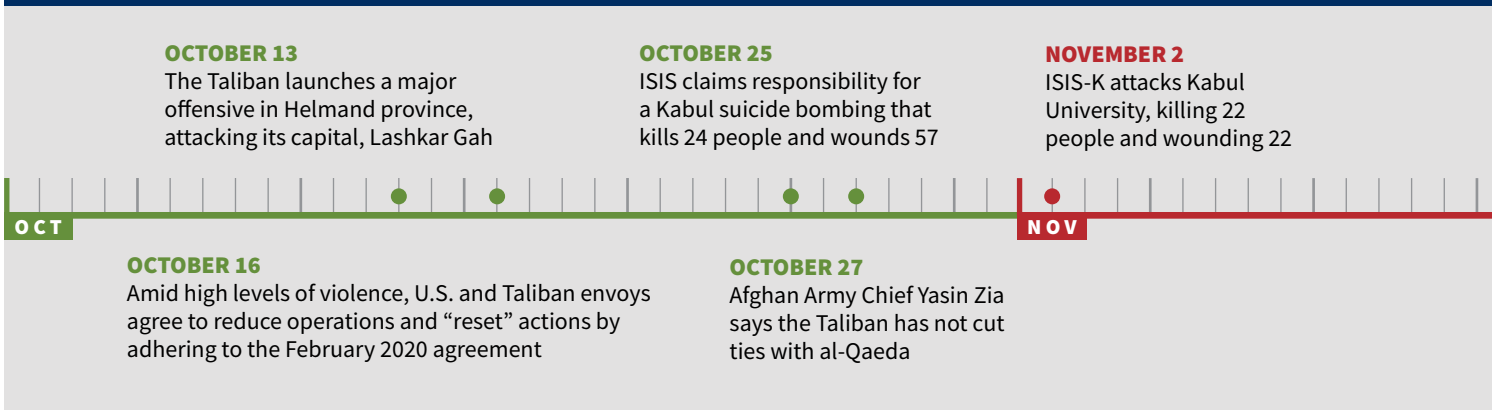
Regarding the Islamic school, the Hanafi school of Islamic jurisprudence is the most widespread school of thought in Sunni Islamic law and provides a set of conceptual elements to use when formulating laws. The Taliban are overwhelmingly Sunni and pushed for Hanafi jurisprudence. The disagreement had implications for the legal rights of Afghanistan's Shia population, which mostly follows the Jafari school of Islamic jurisprudence.[8] The two sides agreed that disputes would be referred to a religious committee, although details regarding the makeup of the committee have not been released, according to media reporting.[9]

The two negotiating parties also disagreed over the terms used to describe each side of the negotiations, according to media reporting.[10] The Taliban objected to the Afghan government's use of the term "Islamic Republic" in its full name, "The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan," and the Afghan government members objected to the term "Islamic Emirate," by which the Taliban refers to itself.[11] According to media reporting, the final procedural agreement did not include the official title of either negotiating side, effectively deferring the issue.[12]

DoS officials described December's procedural agreement as a major milestone and stated that the agreement allows the parties to begin discussions on an agenda and ultimately on a permanent and comprehensive ceasefire and a future political roadmap for Afghanistan.[13] U.S. Special Representative for Afghanistan Reconciliation, Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad, stated in a social media post that the agreement was evidence that the negotiating parties could come to an agreement on "tough" issues.[14]

The DIA, citing media sources, said it was likely that the Taliban approved the procedural agreement as a means to appease the U.S. Government and ensure that U.S. forces withdraw in May 2021 as stipulated under the U.S.-Taliban agreement.[15] According to U.S. Forces–Afghanistan (USFOR-A), the Taliban has sustained a public messaging campaign to highlight its diplomatic engagements and involvement in the Afghanistan peace negotiations.[16] The DIA also cited media sources that said the Taliban had appointed influential members to the negotiating team to legitimize the peace efforts among the group's broader membership.[17]

SELECTED KEY EVENTS, OCTOBER 1, 2020–DECEMBER 31, 2020



U.S. Marines training Georgian troops for Resolute Support escort simulated protesters in Patuhk, Georgia. (U.S. Marine Corps photo)

NOVEMBER 17
Then-Acting Secretary of Defense Miller announces plans to draw down to 2,500 troops in Afghanistan

NOVEMBER 24
70 countries pledge $3.3 billion in development assistance to Afghanistan in 2021

NOVEMBER 29
Car bomb kills at least 40 ANA soldiers and wounds 24 in attack on Afghan military base

DEC

DECEMBER 5
Belgium announces plans to fully withdraw its troops in 2021

DECEMBER 17
General Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, meets with Taliban in Doha, Qatar, to urge a reduction in violence

The DIA reported that the Taliban views the negotiations as a necessary step to ensure the removal of U.S. and other foreign troops under the U.S.-Taliban agreement, but the Taliban likely does not perceive that it has any obligation to make substantive concessions or compromises. The DIA stated that increased Taliban violence this quarter likely undermined public support for the Afghan government and the peace talks, and the Taliban is very likely prepared to resume its campaign of violence against U.S. and coalition targets if it perceives that coalition forces have stalled or reversed course on the agreed-upon withdrawal.[18]

The Taliban has publicly stated that it seeks changes to Afghanistan's political system to align with the Taliban's interpretation of Sharia law. However, the DIA stated that such statements were likely posturing to demonstrate participation in the negotiations and ensure a complete U.S. military withdrawal. The DIA cited media reports indicating that the Taliban intends to stall the negotiations until U.S. and coalition forces withdraw so that it can seek a decisive military victory over the Afghan government.[19] Additionally, the Taliban's military momentum and the continued drawdown of U.S. troops have reinforced the Taliban's narrative of its political and military ascendancy, the DIA reported.[20]

Taliban Increases Violence to Gain Leverage in Negotiations

The DIA stated that the Afghanistan peace negotiations were unlikely to result in any extended ceasefire or reduction in violence in 2021.[21] According to the DoS, the Taliban has included a ceasefire as the final item in their proposed list of agenda items and intend to implement a ceasefire once a political settlement with the Islamic Republic negotiating team is finalized.[22]

With the talks ongoing, the Taliban has maintained its "fight and talk" strategy. The DIA stated that the Taliban has calibrated its use of violence to increase political leverage against the Afghan government through military gains while generally avoiding activity that it believes would threaten the agreement with the United States.[23] The DIA based this assessment on the timing of Taliban violence with regard to developments in the peace process.[24]

Throughout the quarter, the Taliban kept up an aggressive campaign of violence across the country, largely outside the capital. On November 1, a Taliban attack on the governor's compound in Kunduz killed at least four security guards. According to media reports, the attack may have employed an unmanned aerial vehicle (UAV) to drop an explosive device on the target. Media sources were unable to confirm whether a UAV was involved in the attack, and the Taliban did not respond to media inquiries on the matter. The Taliban has previously employed small, commercial UAVs for reconnaissance and filming attacks for propaganda, but using them as a weapons delivery platform would represent a new capability, according to media sources.[25]

According to the DoS, Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) have maintained an active defense posture against Taliban operations. The United States has conducted strikes against Taliban forces only in defense of ANDSF facing Taliban fighters.[26]

On October 16, U.S. and Taliban officials publicly pledged to suspend attacks in southern Afghanistan amid a significant increase in violence in that region which displaced thousands of residents.

TALIBAN CONDUCTS HELMAND OFFENSIVE

The Taliban have largely refrained from assaulting provincial capitals and overrunning district centers for most of last year.[27] However, on October 13, Taliban forces launched a major offensive on Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province, pushing ANDSF troops on the outskirts of the city into a tactical retreat. According to media reports, Afghan special operations forces were deployed to defend the city, and U.S. forces increased air strikes in support of their Afghan partners. An eyewitness told reporters that he saw the Taliban's flag flying over the entrance to the city and locals looting the remains of an Afghan National Army (ANA) post.[28] The Taliban attacks also destroyed a major power plant, cutting off electricity both to Lashkar Gah and parts of neighboring Kandahar province.[29] USFOR-A and Resolute Support Commander General Austin Scott Miller condemned the offensive, which he said undermined the ongoing peace negotiations.[30]

On October 16, U.S. and Taliban officials publicly pledged to suspend attacks in southern Afghanistan amid a significant increase in violence in that region which displaced thousands of residents. According to media reports, the Taliban controls approximately 80 percent of Helmand province and has increased rocket attacks on district centers and the provincial capital Lashkar Gah. In response, U.S. forces increased their airstrikes in support of the ANDSF attempting to defend these cities.[31] The Taliban accused the United States of violating its agreement during the fighting in Lashkar Gah, but a USFOR-A spokesperson denied that the strikes violated the agreement. The spokesperson told reporters that U.S. military activity in the region was in direct response to the Taliban's offensive operations.[32]

Despite the public agreement by both sides to reduce violence in the region, the fighting continued deeper into the city days later. According to media reports, the Taliban offensive overran one police district and threatened another. The fighting also displaced more than 5,000 families and resulted in the closure of 40 schools.[33] Ambassador Khalilzad condemned the offensive as a misguided attempt by the Taliban to win concessions in the ongoing peace talks, but which risks undermining those negotiations.[34]

U.S. GENERALS CONDEMN ESCALATING TALIBAN VIOLENCE AMID PEACE TALKS

On October 2, General Miller visited Balkh province in northern Afghanistan, where he stated that the security situation was not conducive to a successful peace process, telling reporters, "We all acknowledge the violence is too high and the Taliban must lower their violence."[35]

On December 17, General Mark Milley, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, met with Taliban officials in Doha, Qatar. A DoD spokesperson told reporters that General Milley discussed the need for a reduction in violence and greater progress toward a political solution. Earlier in the trip, he met with President Ghani and other senior Afghan officials in Kabul. According to media reports, General Milley expressed frustration with the Taliban's increased use of violence for political leverage, telling reporters that the Taliban's "commanders on the ground are now starting to do things that are not conducive to peace talks and reconstruction and stability." Despite these challenges, he reaffirmed that the DoD would meet President Trump's target for a reduction to 2,500 troops in Afghanistan by January 15.[36]

Questions Remain About Taliban Compliance with U.S.-Taliban Agreement

In February 2020, the U.S. and Taliban signed an agreement that paved the way for a peace process.[37] The Afghan government was not a party to the U.S.-Taliban agreement.[38] However, at the time of the signing of the U.S.-Taliban agreement, the U.S. and Afghan governments issued a joint declaration affirming the Afghan government's support for joint antiterrorism efforts and acknowledging the tenets of the U.S.-Taliban agreement.[39]

Under the U.S.-Taliban agreement, each side committed to take specific actions that would ultimately result in the withdrawal of all U.S. and coalition forces, including private security contractors, and other non-diplomatic support personnel from Afghanistan by May 2021. Under the agreement, the Taliban must meet five conditions, each of which falls under the umbrella of ensuring that no group or individual uses the soil of Afghanistan to "threaten the security of the United States and its allies."[40] The five conditions are: not allowing Taliban members or other individuals or groups to use Afghan soil to threaten the security of the United States and its allies; sending a clear message that those who pose a threat to the United States and its allies have no place in Afghanistan; preventing groups or individuals in Afghanistan from threating the security of the United States and its allies and preventing them from recruiting, training, and fundraising in Afghanistan; ensuring that people seeking asylum or residence in Afghanistan do not pose a threat to the security of the United States and its allies; and not providing visas, passports, or other legal documents to those who pose a threat to the United States and its allies.[41]

According to the DoS, this quarter, the United States continued to implement its commitments under the agreement. The Acting Secretary of Defense announced the intention to reduce forces to 2,500 by January 15, 2021 (see page 16), and the DoD was planning to withdraw all remaining U.S. forces from Afghanistan by mid-2021 if conditions warranted and the Taliban met its commitments under the agreement.[42]

The United States committed, with the start of intra-Afghanistan peace negotiations, to begin diplomatic engagements with members of the UN Security Council and the Afghan government to remove members of the Taliban from the UN's terrorist sanctions list.[43] On March 12, 2020, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution reaffirming that it was ready, upon the start of negotiations, "to consider the start" of a review of relevant sanctions lists.[44] The DoS reported that with the start of the Afghanistan peace negotiations on September 12, the U.S. Government began this engagement.[45] On December 18, the UN Security Council adopted a resolution announcing that it would consider adjustments to sanctions lists "to support peace and stability in Afghanistan."[46] According to the DoS, the resolution stated that any adjustments to the sanctions regime must contribute effectively to reconciliation efforts.[47]

The U.S.-Taliban agreement stipulated that the Taliban and the Afghan government would start negotiations by March 10, 2020, and that achieving a comprehensive ceasefire would be an "item on the agenda."[48] The agreement did not provide for the Taliban to cease all violence against the ANDSF or the Afghan government.

The Afghanistan peace negotiations did not begin by March 10, 2020, but commenced in September 2020.[49] In their exchanges since that time, the parties have only been able to agree on procedural aspects of the negotiations and have yet to make progress on substantive elements of a peace deal.[50]

U.S. Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad (left) and Taliban representative Abdul Ghani Baradar (right) sign the U.S.-Taliban agreement in Doha, Qatar, February 2020. (DoS photo)

The Taliban has increased its attacks against the ANDSF and Afghan government targets since the signing of the U.S.-Taliban agreement.[51] The DoD says that the U.S. military has limited its offensive operations against the Taliban, in compliance with the agreement, and conducted strikes against the Taliban primarily in defense of the ANDSF.[52]

The increase in Taliban violence this quarter (see previous page) was directed against the Afghan government and the ANDSF.[53] According to the DoD's Defense Casualty Analysis System, there have been no U.S. combat-related deaths since the signing of the U.S.-Taliban agreement.[54] Additionally, USFOR-A reported that while there were 23 insider attacks against Afghan forces this quarter, none was carried out against U.S. or coalition personnel.[55] Violent activity directed against the Afghan government, the ANDSF, or civilians is not prohibited under the U.S.-Taliban agreement.[56]

However, according to the DIA, the Taliban maintains ties to al-Qaeda and its regional affiliate al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). This quarter, the DIA reported that some AQIS members in Afghanistan are integrated into the Taliban's forces and command structures and play a marginal role in the Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan.[57] In addition, after Afghan forces killed multiple high-level al-Qaeda and AQIS members in Afghanistan during the quarter, senior Afghan officials, including the first vice president and ANA chief of staff, asserted that the Taliban had not severed its relationship with al-Qaeda.[58]

As of the end of this quarter, the U.S. Government had not indicated that this relationship constituted a violation of its agreement with the Taliban, nor that such a violation could affect the timeline for the withdrawal of U.S. military personnel from Afghanistan. According to the DoS, the U.S. interagency group tasked with monitoring Taliban compliance continued its mission during the quarter. DoS officials declined to provide the Lead Inspector General with a releasable assessment of whether the Taliban is in compliance with the U.S.-Taliban agreement.[59] In late January, after the end of the quarter, the Biden Administration indicated it is reviewing whether the Taliban is meeting its obligations under the agreement.[60]

U.S. Forces Draw Down to 2,500

On October 7, President Trump announced his intention to withdraw all U.S. forces from Afghanistan before the end of the year. National Security Advisor Robert O'Brien later stated that the administration's plan was to reduce the U.S. troop presence to 2,500 by early 2021. As part of a phased withdrawal, this would include a reduction to between 4,000 and 5,000 troops by November.[61] Then-Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller announced on November 17 that the DoD's official policy was to reduce the U.S. troop presence in Afghanistan to 2,500 by January 15, adding that this force strength was consistent with established plans and did not represent a change in U.S. policy or strategic objectives in the region.[62]

A Taliban spokesperson told reporters that President Trump's announcement was "a positive step toward the implementation of the Doha agreement."[63] Chairman of the High Council for National Reconciliation Abdullah Abdullah told reporters that while he hoped the negotiations would produce a situation where international troops were no longer necessary in the country, he also warned of the impact and unspecified consequences that a premature withdrawal would have on the peace process.[64] In Kandahar, while the ANA fought off Taliban efforts to overrun the city, an ANA regimental commander told reporters, "If it were not for the air support of U.S. forces, the Taliban would be sitting inside Kandahar city now."[65]

On January 15, then-Acting Secretary of Defense Miller issued a statement announcing that the DoD had met President Trump's goal of reducing the number of troops in Afghanistan to 2,500.[66] (See Figure 1 for data on personnel supporting DoD efforts in Afghanistan.)

According to USFOR-A, measures taken to reduce troop levels included relocating certain staff assigned to OFS outside the country, refining training, advising, and assistance (TAA) operations, and closing several bases. USFOR-A stated that the remaining 2,500 military personnel will continue to conduct both the TAA and counterterrorism missions. To ensure that U.S. advisors maintain the capacity to advise the Afghan Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Ministry of Interior Affairs (MoI), the Afghan Air Force (AAF), and Afghan special operations forces, USFOR-A stated that it had reduced advisor presence at the ANA corps and Afghan National Police (ANP) provincial chiefs of police levels.[67]

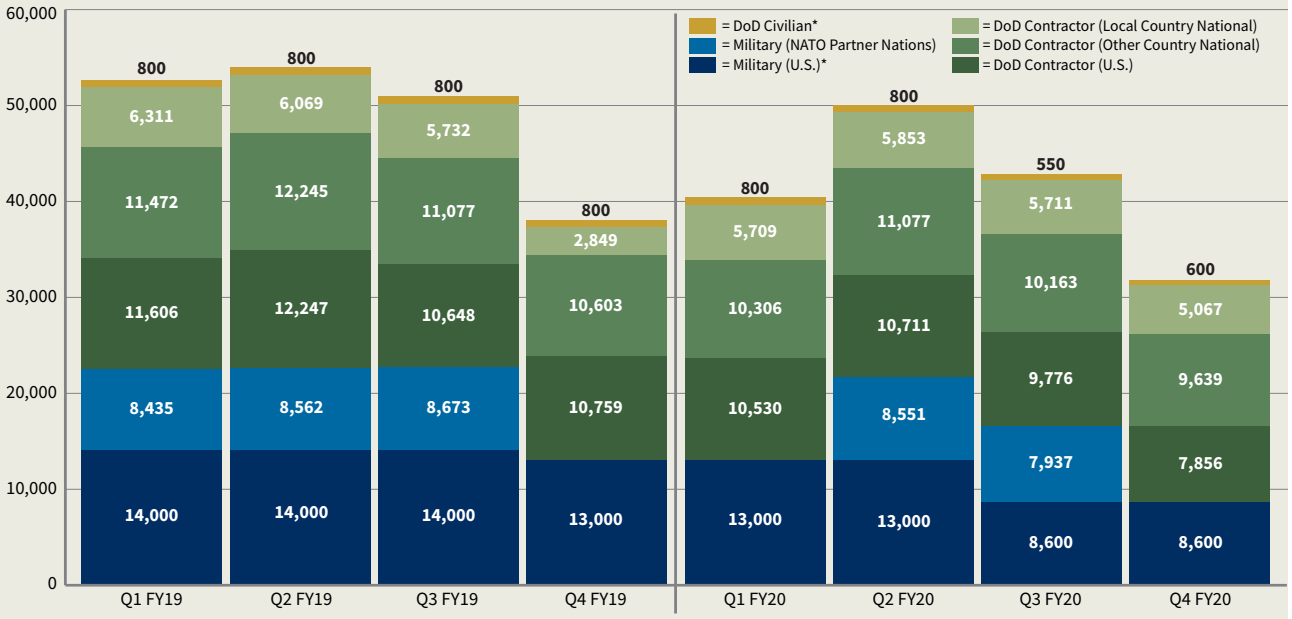
According to the Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC-A), as U.S. forces withdraw from Afghanistan, limited quantities of weapons and materiel are being transferred to the ANDSF.[68] According to the DoD, the MoD has requested the transfer of small quantities of certain U.S. weapons and equipment no longer required by USFOR-A that have been declared by the U.S. Army as excess, including a limited number of combat and non-combat vehicles, weapons, individual clothing and equipment, and other items. The DoD reported it is processing those requests. Additionally, CSTC-A is in the process of purchasing for transfer to the MoD less than $5 million worth of weapons, ammunition, air traffic control equipment, and vehicles no longer needed by USFOR-A from U.S. Army and U.S. Air Force stock using funds appropriated to the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund.[69]

USFOR-A has closed or transferred four primarily U.S.-led bases while maintaining 11 bases positioned throughout Afghanistan. A USFOR-A spokesperson stated that the

On January 15, then-Acting Secretary of Defense Christopher Miller issued a statement announcing that the DoD had met President Trump's goal of reducing the number of troops in Afghanistan to 2,500.

Figure 1.

Personnel Supporting DoD Efforts in Afghanistan, October 2019–December 2020



Note: Figures for U.S. military and DoD civilian personnel are approximate. NATO/partner nation military numbers are not reported regularly and are included only for months the NATO/Resolute Support Mission Key Facts and Figures document is updated.

Sources: Sources: DoD ODASD (Log), "Contractor Support of U.S. Operations in the USCENTCOM Area of Responsibility;" NATO Resolute Support Mission (RSM): Key Facts and Figures.

transition of these bases would include some military equipment, and that U.S. forces would continue to provide TAA and, when appropriate under the U.S.-Taliban agreement, defense support to the ANDSF.[70]

FOLLOWING DRAWDOWN ANNOUNCEMENT, NATO REAFFIRMS COMMITMENT TO AFGHANISTAN

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas, commenting on the planned U.S. withdrawal and the complicated nature of the peace talks, expressed concerns that a premature withdrawal from Afghanistan would create additional hurdles to peace in the country.[71]

Following the October drawdown announcement, General Miller briefed NATO on plans for the force withdrawal.[72] On December 9, the North Atlantic Council, NATO's principal political decision-making body, released a statement affirming its expectation that negotiation would lead to an enduring and comprehensive Afghan peace agreement that would put an end to violence, build upon the progress of the last 19 years, safeguard the human rights of all Afghans, particularly women, children, and minorities, uphold the rule of law, and ensure that Afghanistan never again serves as a safe haven for terrorists. The statement also noted that North Atlantic Council members would continue to consult on the

NATO allies and partners at the Afghan National Army Trust Fund Board meeting in October 2020. (NATO photo)

NATO military presence in Afghanistan and, if conditions allow, to adjust it to support the Afghan-owned and Afghan-led peace process.[73]

According to the DoS, as of the end of the quarter, no donor to the NATO Afghan National Army Trust Fund or the UN Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan had altered or conditioned planned donations in response to the drawdown announcement. The DoS stated that NATO officials expect nations making force and financial commitments to the Resolute Support mission will do so together in a coordinated way. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg stated that the alliance would continue the mission with its current configuration and then assess the progress of the peace process.[74]

On December 5, Belgian Defense Minister Ludivine Dedonder announced that her country would fully withdraw its contingent of approximately 70 troops from Afghanistan in 2021. However, the Belgian government's announcement did not specify a timetable more specific than the calendar year, which could be consistent with the terms of the U.S.-Taliban

agreement.[75] The Defense Minister told reporters that the Belgian government would conduct its withdrawal in coordination with its allies, particularly Germany. According to media reports, the Belgian troops have been predominantly employed in TAA efforts under German command at Mazar-i-Sharif.[76]

MEASURES OF SECURITY

Enemy-initiated Attacks Increase Relative to Same Quarter Last Year

USFOR-A stated that enemy-initiated attacks during the quarter were lower than last quarter but slightly higher than the same period last year.[77] However, for the fourth consecutive quarter, USFOR-A classified its estimate of the number of enemy-initiated attacks. In April 2020, USFOR-A stated that the information was "now a critical part of deliberative interagency discussions regarding ongoing political negotiations between the United States and the Taliban."[78] Lead IG reports before February 2020 included data provided by USFOR-A on the number of enemy-initiated attacks and "effective" enemy-initiated attacks (attacks that result in a casualty).[79] Incidents-of-violence data provide insight into the number, type, and location of enemy attacks, and past Lead IG reporting relied on these data as one measure of the status of the conflict.

The UN Secretary-General also collects and reports data on "security incidents" in Afghanistan. The UN definition of "security incidents" includes violence initiated by Afghan and coalition forces in addition to attacks by the Taliban, ISIS-K, and other extremist organizations. The UN Secretary-General's report on Afghanistan to the Security Council stated that there were 10,439 security incidents between July 13 and November 12, representing an 18 percent increase compared with the same period in 2019. Armed clashes accounted for 63 percent of all security incidents.[80]

Anti-government elements initiated 92 percent of all security incidents and 95 percent of armed clashes, according to the UN Secretary General report. The total number of ANDSF and coalition air strikes decreased from 689 to 416 during the time period of the report. The report also states that there were 389 assassinations, a 21 percent increase compared with the same period in 2019. The targets of these assassinations included members of the ANDSF, Afghan government officials, and religious leaders known for being critical of the Taliban.[81]

USFOR-A reported that there were no insider attacks against U.S. or coalition military personnel this quarter, but there were 23 insider attacks against Afghan forces, which killed 82 ANDSF personnel and wounded 22.[82] According to USFOR-A, there were 54 insider attacks against ANDSF personnel from May 1 to October 31, which killed 228 people and wounded 72.[83]

ISIS-K Conducts Two High-Profile Attacks in Kabul

On October 24, ISIS-K claimed responsibility for a suicide bombing in Kabul that killed at least 24 people and wounded 57, most of them high school students. According to media reports, the attack took place outside an education center in a predominantly Hazara Shia

neighborhood. ISIS-K views the Hazara Shia as apostates of Islam. The Taliban denied any connection with the attack.[84]

On November 2, three ISIS-K militants carried out an attack on Kabul University with firearms and explosives, killing at least 22 people and wounding 22 others, according to media sources. The assault lasted 6 hours, until Afghan special operations forces and their U.S. partners arrived and stopped the attack. Both the Afghan government and the Taliban condemned the violence, with the Taliban blaming the Afghan government for the lack of security that enabled ISIS-K to conduct the attack.[85]

On November 29, a car bombing of an ANA base in Ghazni province killed 40 Afghan soldiers and wounded 24, according to media reports. An MoD spokesperson told reporters that the attacker was attempting to enter the base and detonated his explosives after being confronted by security personnel. As of the end of the quarter, no group had claimed responsibility for the attack, and a media report indicated that a Taliban spokesperson declined to confirm or deny any involvement in the incident.[86]

Civilian Casualties Decrease this Quarter Despite Uptick in Taliban Violence

Resolute Support reported that the total number of civilian casualties, caused by any individual or organization, decreased from 3,017 (1,058 killed and 1,959 wounded) last quarter to 2,586 (810 killed and 1,776 wounded) this quarter. This was a 32 percent decrease in civilian casualties from the same quarter last year (1,878).[87] The provinces with the greatest number of civilian casualties were Kabul (410), Ghor (205), Kandahar (192), and Ghazni (134).[88]

The United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) separately records civilian casualty data. Resolute Support and UNAMA often report similar overall trends in civilian casualties, but their data differ in total numbers and attribution of responsible parties. This is due, in large part, to differences in methodology and interpretations of applicable law. Resolute Support says that it assesses reports of civilian casualties using ANDSF and coalition operational reports, aircraft video footage, records of U.S. and Afghan weapons releases, and other coalition and Afghan government-generated information.[89] UNAMA investigates reports of civilian casualties using victim and witness accounts, statements from medical personnel, and statements from Afghan officials, and requires at least three sources to consider a civilian casualty "verified."[90]

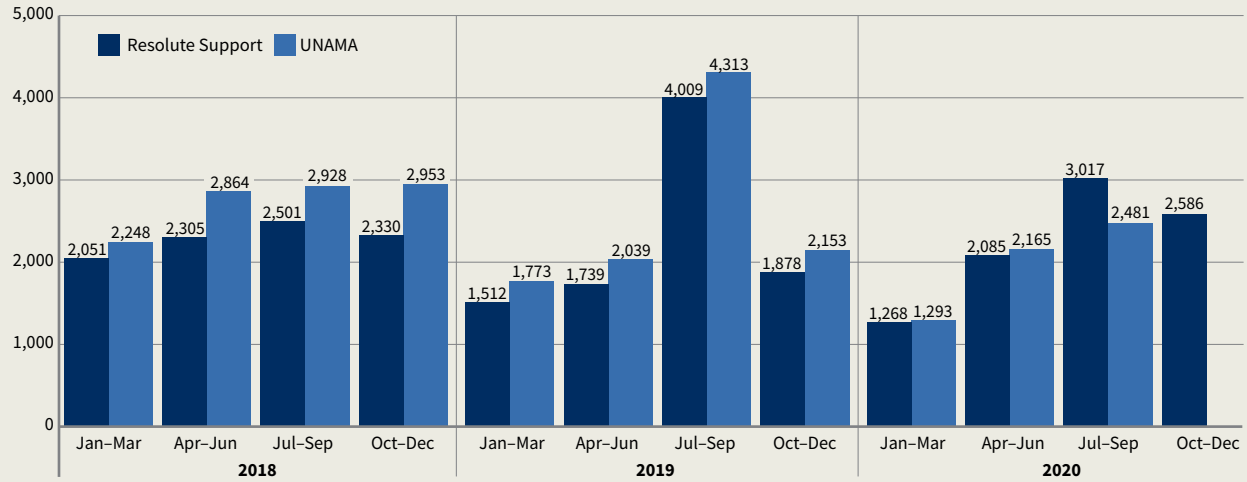
As of the time of writing of this report, UNAMA had not released its civilian casualty report for the first quarter of FY 2021. Its data for prior quarters along with Resolute Support data are shown in Figure 2.

U.S. Forces Have Suffered No Combat Casualties Since the Signing of the Taliban Agreement

This quarter, there were no U.S. combat-related casualties in Afghanistan and one non-combat death, according to data from the Defense Casualty Analysis System. There have not been any U.S. combat-related deaths since the U.S.-Taliban agreement was signed

Figure 2.

Civilian Casualties by Reporting Organization, January 2018–December 2020



Note: UNAMA publishes year-to-date totals for each quarter. DoD OIG calculates the quarterly totals by using the difference in the cumulative totals for each quarter, which may differ slightly from actual cases where UNAMA retroactively updates its data.

Sources: USFOR-A, response to DoD OIG request for information, 21.1 OFS 14, 1/5/2021; USFOR-A, response to SIGAR request for information, 10/3/2020; USFOR-A J5, response to DoD OIG request for information, 20.3 OFS 18, 7/2/2020; UNAMA, "Afghanistan–Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, Third Quarter Report: January 1-September 30, 2020," 10/2020; UNAMA, "Afghanistan–Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, Midyear Report: January 1-June 30, 2020," 7/2020; UNAMA, "Afghanistan–Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict: 2019," 2/2020; UNAMA, "Afghanistan–Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, Third Quarter Report: 2018," 2/2019; Lead IG, "Operation Freedom's Sentinel, Report to the United States Congress," April 1, 2020-June 30, 2020, 8/2020.

on February 29, 2020. The last two U.S. combat-related deaths in Afghanistan were on February 8, 2020.[91]

From January to September 2020, there were five U.S. deaths in Afghanistan unrelated to combat, according to USFOR-A. One death was a result of a ground vehicle accident, one from an illness, and three were suspected suicides.[92]

Al-Qaeda Maintains a Small Presence with Close Ties to the Taliban

This quarter, Afghan forces killed Abu Mohsen al-Misri, a senior al-Qaeda leader, during an operation in Ghazni, a province with a significant Taliban presence. According to media reports, al-Misri had been a member of al-Qaeda since the 1980s and was a trusted lieutenant to the group's leader Ayman al-Zawahiri.[93] Following the operation, Lieutenant General Yasin Zia, the ANA Chief of Staff, publicly accused the Taliban of failing to cut ties with al-Qaeda and other terrorist organizations after signing its agreement with the United States.[94] In December, First Vice President Amrullah Saleh also accused the Taliban of maintaining ties with al-Qaeda following another ANDSF operation that killed three al-Qaeda members in a Taliban compound in southern Afghanistan.[95]

This quarter, al-Qaeda and AQIS exhibited little discernible activity, according to the DIA. The groups likely total fewer than 200 members in Afghanistan, according to the DIA, and they are integrated into Taliban forces and command structures and play a marginal role in the Taliban-led insurgency in Afghanistan.[96] The DIA stated that al-Qaeda likely welcomes the Afghanistan peace negotiations as a means of securing its short-term objective of decreasing the U.S. and coalition presence in Afghanistan thus relieving counterterrorism pressure. Additionally, al-Qaeda and AQIS likely remain willing to abide by any Taliban directives to achieve its long-term objective of preserving safe havens and an operational base in Afghanistan, according to the DIA.[97]

ISIS-K has continued its regular attacks, likely in an attempt to undermine confidence in the Afghan government and the peace talks in order to compete with the Taliban for recruits and influence.

ISIS-K Condemns Peace Talks as It Attempts to Rebuild

The DIA stated that according to media reporting, unlike al-Qaeda, ISIS-K has condemned the Afghanistan peace negotiations and attempted to recruit disaffected members of the Taliban, albeit to minimal effect. ISIS-K has continued attacks, likely in an attempt to undermine confidence in the Afghan government and the peace talks in order to compete with the Taliban for recruits and influence.[98] USFOR-A stated that in regions with notable ISIS-K influence, loyalties between the Taliban and ISIS-K are likely fluid as individual fighters gauge commitment based on regional power dynamics and self-preservation, but these localized circumstances have not had a significant impact on overall Taliban strength or cohesion.[99] The Department of the Treasury stated that it had observed no financial relationship between the Taliban and ISIS-K.[100]

Following the loss of territory and leaders in 2019 and early 2020, ISIS-K reorganized into a clandestine network focused on conducting attacks against the Afghan government, the Afghan population, and religious minority sects, rather than seeking to claim and hold territory.[101] The group worked to increase recruitment and training this quarter to compensate for its recent personnel losses.[102] Its violence has largely been concentrated in Nangarhar, Kunar, and Kabul provinces. According to the DIA, ISIS-K retains the capacity to conduct both targeted and complex attacks and conducted two high-profile attacks this quarter.[103] These consisted of an October 24 attack against a Shia education center and a November 2 attack against Kabul University, which killed and wounded more than 100 victims in total (see pages 19-20).[104] According to the DIA, these attacks likely aimed to attract media attention and destabilize the Afghan government and peace process.[105] The DIA stated that ISIS-K's recruitment efforts probably focused on finding individuals capable of operating clandestinely in urban environments as part of its effort to recoup personnel losses from 2019 and 2020.[106]

According to Treasury, ISIS-K primarily raises funds through local donations, taxation, extortion, and possibly some financial support from ISIS-Core. The loss of ISIS-K's main stronghold in southern Nangarhar province in 2019 decreased the amount of money the group could earn exploiting natural resources in this territory. Treasury stated that as of early 2020, ISIS-Core was possibly providing some funds to ISIS-K, and ISIS-K retains at least some financial reserves and relies on financial facilitators in Kabul and Jalalabad to transfer funds.[107] According to Treasury, ISIS-K has cultivated relationships with certain facilitators who store tens of thousands of dollars for the group.[108]

CAPACITY BUILDING

Under the NATO-led Resolute Support mission, the United States works with 35 NATO member and partner states to train, advise, and assist the ANDSF.[109] This includes efforts to build the capacity of the ANA, ANA Territorial Force (ANA-TF), ANP, AAF, and Afghan Special Security Forces. It also includes efforts to build the capacity and long-term sustainability of the Afghan security ministries. Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC-A) implements capacity building programs at the ministerial level; as of January 1, 2021, CSTC-A became responsible for TAA of the AAF. The regional Train, Advise, and Assist Commands (TAAC) and regional task forces work with ANA corps headquarters and provincial chief of police headquarters and provide support to lower echelons in certain circumstances.[110]

Remaining U.S. Forces Refocus Mission with Smaller Footprint

In response to a DoD OIG inquiry about how the shift to 2,500 troops will change counterterrorism and TAA operations, CSTC-A stated that TAA efforts will remain focused at the ANA corps and ANP provincial chiefs of police levels as well as at specified points of need.[111] The decrease in U.S. military personnel made it more difficult to assess, monitor, and evaluate the ANDSF, according to CSTC-A.[112] Additionally, CSTC-A stated that due to coronavirus disease–2019 (COVID-19) mitigation policies and a smaller force size, it is difficult to verify or monitor data below the corps and provincial level due to the limited number of advisors at those levels. Advisors must depend largely on ANDSF self-reported data to assess, monitor, and evaluate their progress.[113]

This quarter, CSTC-A conducted TAA activities both virtually and in person with ANDSF partners. As the number of COVID-19 cases in Afghanistan increased throughout the quarter, CSTC-A increasingly restricted in-person TAA, though it could conduct face-to-face training for mission-critical situations. CSTC-A conducted the majority of its TAA activities this quarter via video conferencing, telephone, and commercial mobile apps.[114] CSTC-A stated that while in-person activities are always optimal, remote TAA is sufficient for day-to-day efforts and helps mitigate COVID-19 risks to personnel.[115]

While U.S. advisors and their Afghan partners have largely acclimated to remote TAA, one of the most significant challenges involved with this method is the difficulty of developing new personal relationships, according to CSTC-A. One area of focus for TAA efforts this quarter was the planning and execution of the Afghan Local Police (ALP) transition (see page 25). According to CSTC-A, face-to-face TAA sessions earlier in the planning phases helped establish working relationships that eased the transition to remote TAA options. Similarly, a new advisor was able to meet with MoD personnel to help them develop a new annual budget, which better enabled continuation of this work remotely later in the quarter.[116] However, efforts to support the MoI's transition to the Afghan Pay and Personnel System did not transfer as easily to virtual TAA, and this transition has been slowed by technical difficulties, according to CSTC-A.[117]

ANDSF Makes Little Progress in Checkpoint Reduction

This quarter, the ANDSF continued to struggle with implementing the Afghan government's Checkpoint Reduction and Base Development Plan. Under the plan, the ANDSF would prioritize checkpoint reduction efforts on the most vulnerable checkpoints, such as those that could not be supported by artillery fire or those that had few personnel assigned.[118] This plan aims to close 9 percent of the ANA's 2,000 vulnerable security checkpoints between June 21, 2020, and March 20, 2021, although the plan does not specify how many personnel should be assigned to the remaining checkpoints. The ANP has identified 1,054 of its 5,000 checkpoints for reduction or consolidation.[119] CSTC-A reported that the ANA eliminated 58 checkpoints but constructed 55 new ones this quarter.[120] According to media reports, the ANA established several checkpoints in and around Lashkar Gah in response to the increase in violence there in October (see page 13). The ANP closed 98 checkpoints this quarter, and over the past year, it eliminated 328 and reinforced 525 existing checkpoints.[121]

The ANP closed 98 checkpoints this quarter, and over the past year, it eliminated 328 and reinforced 525 existing checkpoints.

CSTC-A reported that several challenges prevent the ANDSF from reducing the number of vulnerable security checkpoints. More than 66,000 ANP personnel and an unspecified number of ANA soldiers are assigned to these checkpoints, which provide a façade of security but are generally easy to overrun by coordinated Taliban attacks. However, provincial and local leaders have exerted political pressure to preserve these checkpoints as they are perceived to protect the population. In addition to COVID-19 and a nationwide increase in violence, other challenges to reducing checkpoints include a lack of synchronized planning across ANDSF organizations, as well as up and down their chains of command. Decentralized implementation of the reduction strategy has produced inconsistent results. CSTC-A also stated that the reduction plan does not properly utilize threat assessments. According to CSTC-A, its current TAA efforts in this area are focused on improving coordination and use of threat assessments in the ANDSF's Checkpoint Reduction and Base Development Plan.[122]

According to CSTC-A, reduction of checkpoints would help enable the ANP to transition away from its national security role and take on the role of a traditional police force, focusing on law and order within the civilian populations.[123] However, CSTC-A stated that transitioning the ANP to a community policing model was untenable at this time due to the current level of violence across the country.[124]

TAA Efforts Focus on ANDSF Capability to Operate Independently and to Account for U.S.-Provided Equipment

CSTC-A reported that end use monitoring of more than 12,000 items provided to the ANDSF presents an ongoing challenge. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and deteriorating security situation have restricted travel to the sites necessary to conduct end use monitoring inspections, which has prevented CSTC-A from complying with its requirement to conduct annual enhanced inspections of materiel furnished by the U.S. Government to the ANDSF. CSTC-A reported that it has conducted more than 400 end use monitoring inventories since February 2020. For those items which it was unable to physically inspect, CSTC-A stated that it has implemented remote and other means of meeting site inspection and inventory

requirements.[125] As of this quarter, CSTC-A reported that it has not transferred any end use monitoring requirements from military to civilian authorities.[126]

This quarter, TAA efforts continued to focus on ANDSF implementation of the Core Inventory Management System, an online logistics automation system used to track weapons, vehicles, and equipment. Both the MoD and MoI use the Core Inventory Management System to track defense articles transferred from the U.S. Government and the end use monitoring agreements associated with these items.[127] CSTC-A stated that advisors conduct weekly sessions with their ANDSF partners on the importance of using the Core Inventory Management System and other inventory tools.[128]

CSTC-A reported that the ANDSF can operate and maintain the Core Inventory Management System at the national and corps levels, but this capability is inconsistent in organizations below the corps level. Although the corps conduct the training on how to operate the system, the recipients of this training are often reassigned or neglect their duties.[129] Last quarter, the DoD OIG completed an audit of the Core Inventory Management System that found that the ANDSF did not use this system at 78 of 191 local sites, attributing the problem to issues such as the absence of reliable electrical power, poor internet connectivity, lack of proper local training, and the ANDSF's preference to use paper records rather than automated information systems.[130]

According to CSTC-A, defense articles transferred to the MoD or MoI are entered into Core Inventory Management System at the time of title transfer. However, asset visibility below the national level is inconsistent by unit and not a confident tool to use in support of end use monitoring requirements, according to CSTC-A.[131]

MoI Officially Dissolves Afghan Local Police

As reported last quarter, President Ghani issued a decree to dissolve the 23,000-member ALP.[132] CSTC-A estimated that approximately one-third of these members would transfer to the ANA-TF, one-third would transfer to the ANP, and one-third would retire.[133] CSTC-A stated there was a potential risk that former ALP members would join the Taliban or other armed groups, but as of this quarter, it had not observed any such recruitment by militants.[134]

Since the Afghan government created the ALP with U.S. funding in 2011, it has experienced high desertion rates, corruption, and being coopted by local powerbrokers, according to the DIA.[135] The ANA-TF was designed to play a similar role as the ALP—employing local forces to provide security in remote areas—but with greater oversight and with the ANA appointing its own officers to lead ANA-TF units.[136]

The MoI formally dissolved the ALP on September 22, one week before the end of the last fiscal year in which DoD had sought funding for the ALP in its budget request.[137] Last quarter, CSTC-A stated that the MoD and MoI planned to transition 11,600 ALP members to the ANP and 10,900 to the ANA-TF, with the remaining 7,500 either not meeting the standards for one of those forces or choosing to pursue other options.[138]

This quarter, CSTC-A cited Afghan government figures that stated 2,492 former ALP personnel had transitioned to the ANA-TF, 8,024 had transitioned to the ANP, 4,335

received severance or transition pay, and 8,512 remained to be processed as of December 20. Additionally, President Ghani directed the MoI to coordinate with other government ministries to find employment for former ALP members, although CSTC-A could not say how many had found employment.[139] CSTC-A also stated that the MoI collected weapons and equipment from former ALP members to limit their ability to join the Taliban or other organizations as armed soldiers.[140]

ANA Specialty School Attendance Remains Below Target

This quarter, the ANA graduated five basic training classes with a total of 5,016 students. The graduation rate for the program this quarter was 94.4 percent. CSTC-A described this as a relatively high number of graduates.[141] However, only a small minority of graduates continued on to specialty schools, known as "branch schools." The most recent data provided by CSTC-A indicate that only two basic training classes had sent any graduates to branch schools this quarter, resulting in a branch school fill rate of just 17 percent.[142]

The ANA's Unified Training, Education, and Doctrine Command have set a goal of enrolling at least 50 percent of basic training graduates in these branch schools to professionalize and specialize the force. However, due to the increased violence in southern Afghanistan, the ANA Chief of General Staff has directed an increased percentage of recent basic training graduates into the field rather than to additional schooling.[143]

Since 2017, the ANA has experienced low attendance rates at specialty schools and a commensurate low rate of soldiers who are proficient in their unique military occupational specialties. This was due, in part, to guidance issued by the ANA Chief of General Staff in 2017 directing that all basic training graduates be assigned immediately to their units, which then decide whether the soldiers should attend advanced training.[144] According to CSTC-A, this prioritization of new soldiers directly into the fight has resulted in a shortage of certain specialty skills in the ANA, such as supply, logistics, and maintenance. Specifically, of the 2,077 authorized positions for route clearance teams, 1,551 were filled this quarter, and only 954 of those were filled with appropriately trained soldiers. CSTC-A reported that the ANA produced 103 qualified artillery soldiers in 2020, which helped mitigate an ongoing shortage of professionals in this field.[145]

Further complicating the issue, CSTC-A reported that many qualified ANA soldiers at the corps level were employed in combat roles outside their specialty. CSTC-A stated that it was focusing TAA efforts on resolving this misallocation of talent and had achieved limited success in getting route clearance trained personnel assigned to units where they could employ their special skills.[146] CSTC-A also employed contracted route clearance trainers from outside of the ANA branch school system, with the goal of developing this capability among ANA operators and instructors.[147]

CSTC-A reported that it had limited success in advisory efforts to identify misallocation of personnel to MoD leaders as a matter requiring their attention. In addition to conducting TAA at corps level to reduce misallocation of talent, such as vehicle maintainers, CSTC-A stated that it works through MoD senior leaders to address the issue of personnel with certain skills being placed in jobs that do not properly utilize them.[148]

Since 2017, the ANA has experienced low attendance rates at specialty schools and a commensurate low rate of soldiers who are proficient in their unique military occupational specialties.

Table 1.

ANA and ANP Ground Vehicle Maintenance Tasks Performed by Contractors and ANA and ANP Mechanics, October–December 2020

Afghan National Army							
		October		November		December	
Maintenance Facility	Afghan	129	17%	121	15%	582	27%
	Contractor	650	83%	678	85%	1,634	73%
Off-Site	Contractor Contact Team	877		876		0*	

Afghan National Police							
		October		November		December	
Maintenance Facility	Afghan	151	12%	160	9%	426	16%
	Contractor	1,128	88%	1,632	91%	2,159	84%
Off-Site	Contractor Contact Team	876		1,197		0*	

*Contact teams are now Logistics Support Teams that conduct training and mentoring.

Sources: CSTC-A, response to DoD OIG request for information, 20.3 OFS 20A, 6/29/2020; CSTC-A, response to DoD OIG request for information, 20.4 OFS 25A, 10/4/2020; CSTC-A, response to DoD OIG request for information, 21.1 OFS 25A, 1/5/2021.

ANDSF Maintenance Performance Increases Slightly After COVID-19 Restrictions Lifted

Under the 2017 National Maintenance Strategy–Ground Vehicle Support contract, DoD contractors provide maintenance services for ANDSF ground vehicles and train ANDSF ground vehicle maintenance technicians.[149] Over the 5 years of the contract, the contractors are expected to develop the capacity of ANA and ANP maintenance technicians so they can assume a continually increasing share of maintenance tasks.[150] CSTC-A uses the term "workshare" to describe the percentage of maintenance tasks that either ANDSF mechanics or contracted technicians perform. According to CSTC-A, the objective is for the ANA to achieve a 90 percent maintenance workshare and the ANP a 65 percent maintenance workshare by the end of the fifth contract year in 2022.[151]

CSTC-A measures the workshare by tracking maintenance work orders performed within National Maintenance Strategy–Ground Vehicle Support contract maintenance facilities. When vehicles arrive in a maintenance facility, Afghan and contractor personnel conduct a joint inspection and allocate the repair work to either ANDSF or local-national contractor mechanics. The DoD OIG reported last quarter that joint inspections stopped from March through August because of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions but resumed in September.[152]

According to data provided by CSTC-A, ANA mechanics performed an average of approximately 277 maintenance tasks per month this quarter, an increase from 262 tasks per month last quarter.[153] December saw a spike in total tasks, both among ANA mechanics

and work performed by local-national contractors in maintenance facilities. Local-national contractors still performed the majority of tasks, with 73 percent performed compared to 27 percent performed by ANA mechanics.[154] (See Table 1.)

The estimated number of maintenance tasks performed by ANP mechanics increased from an average of 169 per month last quarter to about 246 per month this quarter.[155] Similar to the ANA, there was also a substantial increase in tasks in December, when ANA and ANP mechanics performed nearly triple their November workshare. Local-national contractors performed 84 percent of tasks in December, which is in line with previous DoD OIG reporting.[156] (See Table 1.)

As the DoD OIG noted last quarter, it is difficult to make direct comparisons and track progress from quarter to quarter because maintenance tasks vary in complexity. Therefore, it is possible to have a surge in more basic tasks that the ANDSF can complete in a quarter and drive up their share, and the following quarter there could be a higher number of complex tasks that require contractor support.

In addition, the maintenance contract—and associated workshare ratios—does not include tasks performed outside of maintenance facilities by National Maintenance Strategy contractor "contact teams."[157] A contractor contact team is a group of local-national contractors who perform maintenance outside of designated maintenance facilities.[158] This quarter, CSTC-A reported that contact teams have been re-designated as logistics support teams that conduct training and mentoring, and as of December they did not complete any maintenance.[159]

Train Advise Assist Command–Air changed its primary mission focus from TAA to security cooperation management.

Afghan Aviation Training Programs Remain Static Due to Drawdown, COVID-19

As reported last quarter, Train Advise Assist Command–Air (TAAC-Air) changed its primary mission focus from TAA to security cooperation management.[160] The change meant that instead of direct training and advising, TAAC-Air focused on managing a portfolio of U.S.-funded contracts for AAF aircraft procurement, aircraft maintenance, pilot and mechanic training, and infrastructure support. TAAC-Air reported that it supplemented the security cooperation management role with limited TAA in key functional areas, including pilot and aircraft maintenance training.[161]

This quarter, TAAC-Air reported that despite the announcement and actions related to the drawdown to 2,500 U.S. military members, TAAC-Air continues to operate in accordance with the Resolute Support operations plan with respect to a remaining TAA mission, which includes its portfolio of contract support, with the AAF. TAAC-Air reported that it is working to determine how it will implement TAA given the drawdown of 94 percent of the command's manpower since the fall of 2019.[162] According to TAAC-Air, the reduced U.S. military footprint requires near total use of contract support to maintain the AAF fleet and train its personnel.[163] Additionally, TAAC-Air reported that as the U.S. presence draws down, coalition bases will also close or reduce their functions. Accordingly, the AAF will assume responsibility for airfield activities required to sustain military air operations, such as security, crash and fire rescue, and other functions.[164]

Afghan Air Force Usable Fleet

C-130

AC-208

A-29

C-208

UH-60A

Mi-17

MD-530

(U.S. Air Forces Central Command photos)

TAAC-Air reported that under the strains of reduced manpower in late FY 2019 and early FY 2020, its TAA capabilities remained "largely static" during the quarter.[165] TAAC-Air reported that, with support from CSTC-A, it is able to meet its current security cooperation management requirements.[166]

TAAC-Air reported that the COVID-19 pandemic remained an additional limiting factor by preventing face-to-face interactions with Afghan counterparts.[167] According to TAAC-Air, the reduced interaction with AAF personnel led to a decrease in influence and loss of insight into their operations and challenges.[168]

According to TAAC-Air, the drawdown necessitated the termination of the MD-530 and UH-60 advanced aircrew training contracts and threatens the A-29 aircrew training contract as well. By TAAC-Air's own assessment, "further drawdown and the associated closure of bases will effectively end all in-country aviation training contracts in Afghanistan."[169]

TAAC-Air reported that a continued drawdown also threatens to limit locations available to contract logistics support (CLS) maintenance personnel, creating the challenge of how to sustain existing operational capability and reach without on-site access.[170] However, according to TAAC-Air, contractor personnel have been more affected by COVID-19-related reductions and restrictions on AAF interactions than by the drawdown.[171] Additionally, the reduction in TAAC-Air manpower over the last nine months has reduced the command's ability to provide on-site contractor oversight.[172]

As a result of manpower shortages, COVID-19 pandemic-related restrictions, and lack of oversight, TAAC-Air reported that it has become difficult to hold contractors accountable to performance metrics.[173] Lost training time, lack of U.S. military evaluators to assess proficiency, and reduced advisor oversight have had negative impacts on the program, such as a decline in basic skills for aircrews and maintainers.[174]

Although aviation CLS contracts have been structured to have no penalties for early contract termination, there will be costs to the U.S. Government associated with the extra work to end the contracts and any extra costs incurred by the contractors due to change, TAAC-Air reported.[175] According to TAAC-Air, consequences to the AAF will be the loss of aircraft maintenance, as the entire fleet is completely dependent on contractor logistics and supply chain support.[176]

TAAC-Air reported that apart from supply and logistics, the capability of AAF crews to independently maintain aircraft ranges from zero capability for UH-60s and C-130s (contractors perform 100 percent of maintenance), moderate capability for A-29s and AC-208s (Afghans perform some maintenance), to being effectively independent for Mi-17s (which are not under TAAC-Air purview and planned to be phased out of the fleet).[177] TAAC-Air assessed that without CLS support, no airframe can be sustained as combat

effective for more than a few months, depending on in-country parts stocks, the maintenance capability on the particular airframe, and the timing of when CLS is withdrawn.[178]

AAF Overuses Nearly Half the Total Aircraft Fleet

TAAC-Air reported that the AAF had 167 aircraft in its inventory as of the end of the quarter. Of those, TAAC-Air reported that 136 aircraft were usable, a decrease of 24 from the previous quarter (see Figure 3).[179] TAAC-Air defines a "usable" aircraft as an aircraft that is in the country and available for missions or in short-term maintenance.[180] According to TAAC-Air's estimates, the AAF overuses—defined as exceeding the contracted maintenance hours or utilization rate for a particular airframe—AC-208s, MD-530s, and Mi-17s, which, collectively at 60 useable aircraft, constitutes 44 percent of the total useable fleet.[181] The monthly utilization rates (the average hours flown per aircraft per month) for the Mi-17, MD-530, and AC-208 aircraft from October through December (roughly 35, 21 and 52, respectively) exceeded the utilization goals of 25, 20, and 40 hours per month for each aircraft.[182]

AAF crews are often tasked to exceed their crew duty day, fly missions above their experience level, and fly excessively over the course of weeks or months because of high operational tempo.

Reasons for the overuse varied. TAAC-Air reported that AC-208s likely exceeded their contracted flying hours because Afghan forces use them as an intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance platform.[183] MD-530s exceeded their contracted flight hours because additional flight hours were needed to meet AAF combat requirements. Furthermore, MD-530s are in extremely high demand as the most effective platform for providing air support to ground forces.[184] Mi-17s consistently overfly the contracted utilization rate as the AAF seeks to satisfy helicopter lift requirements currently unmet by the UH-60 fleet which can only operate from airfields where CLS is available.[185] According to TAAC-Air, the AAF's UH-60s are used, per their design, to provide airlift and casualty evacuation, primarily in the eastern and southern regions of the country.[186] TAAC-Air reported that UH-60 employment has also been slowed by insufficient aircrew and maintenance capacity, largely because of COVID-19 pandemic conditions and the end of mission qualification training in Kandahar with the withdrawal of most US forces from that location.[187]

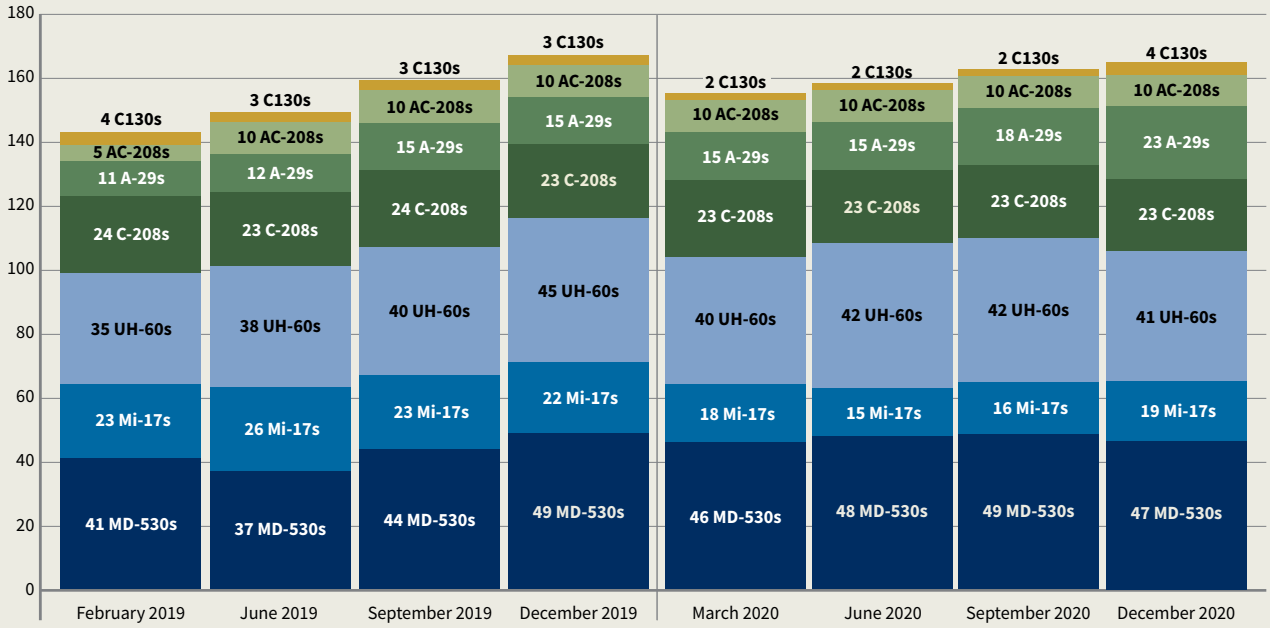
According to TAAC-Air, over-use of these aircraft has not created any negative mission impact to the AAF, though it has created extra work and extra cost for the coalition and its contractors due to increased maintenance requirements resulting from the overuse.[188] TAAC-Air reported that to address overuse, it made contract adjustments so that the AAF can continue to execute its missions.[189]

TAAC-Air also reported that the AAF aircrews that man these aircraft are over-extended, as most airframes have a limited number of aircrews. AAF crews are often tasked to exceed their crew duty day, fly missions above their experience level, and fly excessively over the course of weeks or months because of high operational tempo. According to TAAC-Air, consequences for over working aircrew could include costly and fatal mishaps as well as attrition due to over-worked crew members leaving the AAF.[190]

TAAC-Air reported that it engages with AAF leadership and Ministry of Defense advisors to attempt to prevent the overuse of aircraft and improve personnel management.[191] Misuse of air assets, on the other hand, was more difficult to detect due to a decreased advisor presence and restrictions on advisor flying and interaction with the AAF.[192] TAAC-Air cited anecdotal reports of crews or commanders transporting people or cargo for personal gain, but

Figure 3.

Afghan Air Force Usable Fleet, February 2019–December 2020



Sources: USFOR-A and TAAC-Air, responses to DoD OIG and SIGAR requests for information, Sec-25, 9/3/2018, 12/13/2018, 3/18/2019, 6/10/2019, 10/3/2019, 1/5/2020, 4/9/2020, 7/1/2020, 10/15/2020, 1/1/2021.

advisors do not have the ability to confirm or disprove these reports.[193] Maintenance crews also reported "abuse" of the aircraft, meaning damage caused by aircrew carelessness or ignorance.[194]

During the quarter, five Afghan aircraft were destroyed. One A-29 was destroyed on October 6 when another A-29 taxied into its tail at Kandahar Airfield. TAAC-Air attributed the mishap to pilot error but added that the second A-29 was repaired and returned to flight.[195] On October 13, two Special Mission Wing Mi-17s crashed in Helmand Province after a mid-air collision just after departure from a landing zone during a night mission. TAAC-Air reported at the end of the quarter that the investigation into the incident was ongoing. Two more Mi-17s were destroyed on November 10 in Nangarhar Province due to collision near a landing zone. One aircraft was destroyed upon crashing after the collision, and the other was destroyed by enemy fire while awaiting recovery by a maintenance team. TAAC-Air reported that the AAF is investigating the incident. Although TAAC-Air does not have oversight of Mi-17 flight operations, advisors stated that video evidence suggests the crash was preventable, citing a "lack of aviation discipline and crew coordination."[196]

TAAC-Air reported that six A-29s are scheduled to arrive to Afghanistan in March 2021 (counted in Figure 3) and six MD-530s are on order and scheduled for delivery in March 2021 (not counted in Figure 3).[197] According to TAAC-Air, three UH-60s are still in the

United States for non-recurring engineering work and the one UH-60 in heavy repair in the United States are slated for the Afghan Special Mission Wing but are not counted in the aforementioned totals.[198]

Coalition Focuses Anti-Corruption TAA for the ANDSF at the Ministerial Level

According to CSTC-A, coalition TAA activities during the quarter included countering corruption in the ANDSF through the CSTC-A Ministerial Advisory Groups for Defense, Ministerial Advisory Groups for Interior, and Corruption Advisory Group.[199] CSTC-A reported that groups advised Afghan government organizations to investigate and prepare for court cases.[200] Advisory groups also advised the MoI's Major Crimes Task Force to help ensure each task force member completes a Preliminary Credibility Assessment, a process similar to a polygraph to assess credibility and character.[201]

According to CSTC-A, Ministerial Advisory Groups for Interior advisors assessed that their anti-corruption efforts are producing results, noted in more arrests and active Major Crimes Task Force investigations.[202] For example, task force personnel participated in high profile cases including a large-scale theft of uniforms scheme, and the task force also acted on intelligence information to help intercept a vehicle with 8,200 pounds of sodium nitrate, a highly combustible and potentially explosive substance.[203] CSTC-A reported that the MoI, through its General Directorate for Internal Security, leads the fight against insider threats and corruption.[204] General Directorate for Internal Security also identifies corruption cases and coordinates with Major Crimes Task Force personnel to investigate them, which CSTC-A reported is effective for rooting out internal corruption cases.[205]

Independent MoD and MoI law enforcement units have been well equipped and trained, and have remained the focus of coalition investments, CSTC-A reported. However, ANDSF action is undermined by criminal patronage networks. Additionally, the Attorney General's Office and Anti-Corruption Judicial Center, which are outside the ANDSF but still affect the ANA and ANP, remain ineffective.[206]

CSTC-A reported that it measures effectiveness of its anti-corruption TAA efforts by supporting the Afghan government in the passage of new military criminal codes, criminal procedural rules, and policies for non-judicial punishment, law of armed conflict, and ethics, among other factors.[207] CSTC-A added that the MoD Criminal Investigation Division now has ministerial representation and authority. The unit's field agents report to the Chief of the Criminal Investigation Division to reduce unlawful command influence. As a result, field agents are better able to identify corrupt actors, uncover schemes, and identify potential insider threats.[208]

CSTC-A noted that litigation of military corruption cases has been elusive, which CSTC-A suggested was due to new laws directing the Attorney General's office to prosecute serious incidences of corrupt activity.[209] According to CSTC-A, major corruption crimes to be prosecuted by Attorney General's office attorneys include accusations against military generals or other high-ranking military officers, as well as

other high ranking Afghan government officials.[210] CSTC-A reported that TAA efforts continue to focus on improving ANDSF abilities to develop stronger cases that are ready for prosecution, and to improve cooperation with civilian lawyers and courts toward gaining convictions and accountability, to include incarceration. According to CSTC-A, these new capabilities have resulted in actions outside the courtroom, such as in helping to remove corrupt actors and disrupt criminal enterprises.[211] While COVID-19 pandemic risk mitigation measures limited face-to-face interaction with the ANDSF, CSTC-A reported that it conducted anti-corruption TAA efforts through other methods.[212]

DIPLOMACY AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Prime Minister of Pakistan Visits Kabul

In November, Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan led a delegation of senior officials to Kabul, where he met with Afghan President Ghani and participated in discussions focused on security and trade. Khan offered his public support for the Afghanistan peace negotiations, stating that Pakistan would do "whatever is possible" to help reduce violence in the run-up to a potential ceasefire.[213]

At the end of Prime Minister Khan's visit, Afghanistan and Pakistan released a joint statement pledging "to support peace and stability in both countries and the wider region." In the statement, both countries agreed to further their cooperation on security, regional connectivity, and refugees. The statement indicates that, as a next step, President Ghani will conduct a reciprocal visit to Islamabad in the first quarter of 2021.[214] Relations between Afghanistan and Pakistan have been tense in the past, and President Ghani has publicly accused Pakistan of supporting terrorism in Afghanistan.[215] Additionally, since January 2018, the United States has largely suspended security assistance to Pakistan until its government takes decisive action against externally-focused militant groups and UN-designated terrorist organizations operating from its territory.[216]

Taliban Leader Mullah Baradar Leads Delegation to Islamabad, Prompts Protest from Kabul

In December, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, head of the Taliban's political office, led a delegation of representatives from the Doha-based Taliban Political Commission to Islamabad for meetings with Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan and Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi.[217] According to an official statement released following their December 18 meeting, Prime Minister Khan expressed concern about the high levels of violence in Afghanistan and called on all sides for an immediate reduction in violence leading to an ultimate ceasefire.[218] According to the DoS, Foreign Minister Qureshi expressed his support for the Afghanistan peace negotiations but stated that "the Taliban alone [are] not responsible for upholding the ceasefire in Afghanistan." During the Taliban delegation's visit, President Ghani and Prime Minister Khan spoke by phone about the ongoing peace process. Prime Minister Khan underscored that Islamabad's outreach to all Afghan stakeholders was part of the Pakistan government's efforts to "ensure progress toward an inclusive and comprehensive political settlement."[219]

Then-Acting Defense Secretary Christopher Miller speaks to Afghanistan President Ashraf Ghani during a bilateral exchange in Kabul, Afghanistan. (U.S. Air Force photo)

During Mullah Baradar's trip to Pakistan, a video surfaced on social media that appeared to show him meeting with Taliban members in Karachi.[220] The Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated that the presence of Taliban members in Pakistan—in what the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs described as training camps—was "a serious challenge to achieving sustainable peace."[221]

DoS Promotes Justice Sector and Corrections System Reform in Afghanistan

The DoS Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs' (INL) Supporting Access to Justice in Afghanistan II project, implemented by the International Development Law Organization, concluded on December 14. According to INL, the 38-month, $20.3 million program focused on: improving the quality and awareness of legal aid services, increasing the effectiveness of prosecutors in taking on cases involving violence against women, and enhancing the capacity of Women's Protection Centers to support survivors of gender-based violence. INL reported to the DoS OIG that it is planning a follow-on program to focus on issues pertaining to gender-based violence, including raising public awareness, expanding institutional capacity for courts focused on these crimes, enhancing intragovernmental coordination on advocacy and training, and improving support services for survivors and those at risk of gender-based violence.[222]

INL reported that its Afghan Women's Shelter Fund III project concluded on December 31, 2020.[223] The letter of agreement for the fourth iteration of this program was signed by the implementing partner on December 21, 2020. INL reported that the $11.2 million project will have a 12-month period of performance and will focus on increasing access to justice for survivors and those at risk of experiencing gender-based violence or trafficking in persons through support to protective shelters and family guidance centers.[224]

According to INL, overcrowding in the Afghan prison system poses serious risks to security and human rights. INL signed a $2.7 million letter of agreement with the UN Office of Drugs and Crime in November 2020 to promote alternatives to incarceration in Afghanistan to counter prison overcrowding. The UN Office of Drugs and Crime subsequently hosted an intra-governmental meeting with deputy minister-level representatives from the Afghan justice and social services ministries to discuss implementation of adult alternative sanctions in Afghanistan. According to INL, despite some disagreement among the attendees, all parties agreed that a robust alternative sanctions regime is needed in Afghanistan. Additionally, all parties agreed that the UN Office of Drugs and Crime would serve as the coordinating body and subject matter expert for future alternative sentencing efforts in Afghanistan.[225]

Afghanistan Donor Conference Pledges $3.3 Billion per Year

In November, 70 donor nations and 30 international organizations attended a virtual conference to discuss the international community's commitment to Afghanistan for the coming 4 years. Parties to the conference pledged a total of $3.3 billion in development assistance for 2021, with an understanding that annual commitments would remain at the same level through 2024. The conference participants issued a statement calling for a ceasefire and meaningful peace process, emphasizing the need to address challenges such as poverty reduction, institution building, good governance, anti-corruption, and private sector development.[226]

While previous donor conferences have marshaled pledges covering a 4-year time horizon, the United States and several other donors only made pledges for 2021 because of the ongoing peace process.[227] The United States pledged $300 million in civilian assistance at the conference, with up to an additional approximate $300 million available in the near term depending on the DoS assessment of progress in the peace process, representing a 25 percent decrease from previous years.[228] Additionally, while the 2012 and 2016 conference donors pledged more than $16 billion and $15 billion in aid respectively, in 2020 donors pledged $3.3 billion for 2021, with annual commitments expected to stay at the same level year-on-year through 2024.[229] As part of the conference, the donors agreed that future aid was conditional, and that the Afghan government would need to demonstrate progress toward principles and metrics established in the donor-drafted Afghanistan Partnership Framework. The principles include good governance and rule of law, anti-corruption efforts, progress on the peace process, and human rights, including the rights of women and marginalized populations.[230]

According to USAID, while the DoS steered the United States' engagement in the donor conference, USAID collaborated with the broader donor community in developing and finalizing the Afghanistan Partnership Framework and the Afghanistan National Peace and Development Framework, which were released by the Afghan government on November 24, 2020, and outline Afghanistan's vision for progressing self-reliance, economic growth, and peace for the period of 2021 to 2025.[231]

Afghan Government Announces Creation of New Anti-Corruption Commission, but its Mission Is Unclear

Official corruption is endemic in the Afghan government. Transparency International, a nongovernmental organization, produces an annual "Corruption Perceptions Index" that evaluates perceived transparency, accountability, and integrity in 180 countries worldwide. For the past 5 years, Afghanistan has ranked among the 15 most corrupt countries evaluated.[232] At the same time, the Afghan government has established several high-level government entities with the goal of curbing corruption, such as the General Independent Administration for Anti-Corruption in 2004; the Office of the Attorney General in 2008; the High Office for Oversight and Anti-Corruption, also in 2008; the Major Crimes Task Force in 2009; the High Council for Rule of Law and Anti-Corruption in 2016; and the Anti-Corruption Justice Center, also in 2016.[233]

According to the DoS, in the lead-up to the November 2020 Afghanistan donor's conference in Geneva, the Afghan government drafted but did not ratify an interim anticorruption strategy to replace the previous strategy that expired in December 2019.[234] However, on November 12, President Ghani announced the formation of a new counter-corruption entity, an independent five-member Anti-Corruption Commission. President Ghani stated that this commission would receive all the resources and authorities legally available to hold high-ranking officials accountable for corruption.[235]

According to the DoS, the commission is referenced in both the anticorruption law and in the draft interim anticorruption strategy, but the commission's mandate remains undefined,

Members of the Lincoln Learning Center speak with Afghan men to raise awareness on how to prevent COVID-19 transmission. (USAID photo)

as do potential overlaps with that of the Office of the Ombudsperson, another high-ranking Afghan official responsible for investigation corruption.[236] As of the end of the quarter, it was unclear whether or how this new office would interact with the Anti-Corruption Justice Center or the Major Crimes Task Force. A press release issued shortly after the end of the quarter announced that a 5-year strategy for the commission would be developed and that President Ghani stated the commission should have full authority to inspect "institutions under the Office of the President and other government agencies."[237]

DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Afghanistan Enters a Second Wave of COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic has compounded the challenges facing an already vulnerable nation dealing with increased violence and uncertainty about the ongoing peace talks. As of December 20, Afghanistan had a test positivity rate of 28 percent.[238] The Afghan government's response to COVID-19 was weakened by several factors, including a general stigma around the disease preventing people from getting tested and a faltering economy making access to healthcare more expensive.[239] In the Asia Foundation's flash survey conducted in Afghanistan from September 6 to October 4, 74 percent of the 4,303 respondents said that the government has not at all provided support to themselves or their family during the pandemic, and 63 percent said the cost of health care services, doctors, hospital fees, and tests were worse than the year before.[240]

The Afghan government struggled to balance resources to respond to COVID-19 while simultaneously dealing with increased levels of violence and worsening economic prospects for many Afghans. The Afghan Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) confirmed that Afghanistan is in a second wave of the pandemic, and media reports highlighted anecdotal perspectives of some within the MoPH, with one spokesperson saying, "We know people are tired of the virus and the health messages they keep hearing. We live in a country with serious threats of war and poverty. COVID can't compete."[241] More than eight percent of the total confirmed COVID-19 cases were among healthcare workers, but this number is likely underreported according to media reports. For instance, at the Afghan-Japan Communicable Disease hospital, a top-treatment hospital in Kabul that was transformed into a COVID-19 hospital, more than 90 percent of staff have been infected since the start of the pandemic.[242] Furthermore, healthcare workers demonstrated a lack of knowledge about COVID-19 infection prevention, including multiple doctors and staff not wearing masks while in the hospital.[243] Additionally, healthcare facilities continued to report shortfalls in personal protective equipment, medical supplies, and equipment.[244]

POLIO RESURGES AS AFGHAN GOVERNMENT STRUGGLES TO CONTROL COVID-19

USAID reported that there was an increase in the number of polio cases compared to last year due to the delay in conducting immunization campaigns.[245] In 2020, there were 38 districts with a polio infection, compared to only 20 districts in 2019.[246] According to USAID, in the southern region provinces where an estimated 65 percent of wild polio cases occurred, there has been a significant rise in polio cases due to a nearly 3-year ban on vaccinations by the Taliban and poor quality of immunization campaigns in the government controlled areas.[247]

Afghan Government Develops Strategies to Counter the COVID-19 Pandemic

According to the DoS, the Afghan government's Emergency Committee for Prevention of COVID-19 met regularly this quarter to assess the situation and implement mitigation

measures designed to slow the spread of the virus. During the quarter, the MoPH developed a COVID-19 policy based on six principles: strengthening the national health system for the fight against COVID-19; participation of the private sector in the fight against COVID-19; introduction of clinical case definitions and standard treatment guidelines; strengthening risk communication and surveillance systems; home-based care, community involvement, and contact tracing; and increased accountability and prevention of corruption.[248]

To facilitate the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine throughout the country, the MoPH established a technical working group committee led by an MoPH official and including representatives from international health organizations. The working group's key tasks include identification of the target population, development of technical guidelines and training materials for vaccinators, development of communication materials for proper risk communication and demand generation for vaccines, identification of the implementation arrangements, assessment and support for distribution logistics, and strengthening the health system to ensure that it is capable of administering COVID-19 vaccinations.[249] However, an MoPH spokesperson told reporters that Afghanistan would likely not receive its first shipment of the vaccine until July 2021.[250]

The technical working group committee consists of members from the World Health Organization, United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the Global Vaccine Alliance, and the World Bank, and will support the development of the Government National Planning and Deployment of Vaccines. The technical working group committee identified capacity gaps in the immunization system that will be used as a platform for the COVID-19 vaccine rollout, and expected to roll out the vaccine in a phased approach.[251] USAID reported that it expected to receive an initial draft of this plan by the end of the quarter and that it was exploring how it will provide support to the planning efforts.[252]

USAID's COVID-19 Response Focuses on Ventilators, Increasing Oxygen Supply, and Vaccine Distribution Planning

During the quarter, USAID provided support to the MoPH to help combat COVID-19. According to USAID, support included immediate COVID-19 interventions, including restoring and maintaining essential services, strengthening the resilience of the health care system by providing remote COVID-19 case management training for private sector health workers, and building COVID-19 surveillance systems.[253] USAID's Global Health Bureau approved an additional $347,280 in supplemental funding to provide additional supplies needed to maintain ventilators because Afghanistan lacks the market presence to be able to source these items domestically.[254]

USAID reported that by October 1, it had delivered all 100 USAID donated ventilators to 18 hospitals throughout the country, and that implementing partners provided clinical training to all the facilities so that the ventilators would remain operational.[255] As of December 21, USAID informed the U.S. Embassy that out of the 100 distributed ventilators, 4 of them were having operational issues—2 were set to be replaced by the manufacturer while the other 2 were undergoing an assessment.[256] USAID reported that as of December 19, 2020, 10 of the 100 donated ventilators were being used by 5 of the hospitals, which were admitting critically ill patients who needed mechanical ventilation. However,

USAID noted that the Afghan health information systems were not set up to monitor usage of ventilators.[257]

The surge in demand for medical oxygen to treat COVID-19 patients exacerbated preexisting shortages in supplies.[258] USAID reported that as a result of the oxygen shortages, the USAID mission in Kabul worked closely with USAID's Global Health Bureau to plan the installation of oxygen plants in four hospitals in Kabul, Kandahar, Mazar-i-Sharif, and Jalalabad, with expected installation in the summer of 2021. These oxygen plants will be necessary to support both COVID-19 patients and those who need oxygen for other treatments, according to USAID.[259]

USAID Provides Food Assistance as Food Security Is Expected to Deteriorate During the Winter Season

Humanitarian conditions remained precarious in Afghanistan due in part to increased violence, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and the worsening economic environment. According to the Famine Early Warning System Network, an increasing number of poor households were expected to move into crisis levels of food insecurity, as winter stocks are exhausted and remittance flows weaken.[260] The Famine Early Warning System Network projected that in urban areas, worsened availability of employment during winter, and below average remittances, combined with above average food prices will likely restrict food and income for many poor households.[261]

According to USAID's Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (USAID BHA), the World Food Programme (WFP) received $12 million from USAID to provide food assistance to urban populations made vulnerable by the secondary effects of COVID-19. WFP reached 636,920 people with a total of more than $7 million in direct cash-based transfers by the end of October, targeting beneficiaries in Herat and Kabul.[262] USAID BHA reported that of the approximately $18 million in COVID-19 response funding, approximately 65 percent was for food assistance.[263] Additionally, in FY 2020, USAID BHA provided more than $114 million to implementers focused on improving household food security and reducing malnutrition in children through delivery of food from local and regional markers, ready to use therapeutic food, vouchers and cash transfers for food, and training and asset generating activities.[264]

Taliban Diverts and Co-Opts USAID Assistance

According to USAID, since January 2020, there have been at least two instances where the Taliban co-opted or diverted USAID assistance from a USAID BHA implementer, with the likely intent of garnering public support for the Taliban.[265] In September, the Taliban interfered with a distribution of USAID BHA-funded food assistance, distributing 11 percent of the assistance directly to people other than the implementer's selected beneficiaries.[266] USAID BHA reported that in December, the Taliban threatened a USAID BHA implementer to gain access to its warehouse and beneficiary list. The Taliban then distributed the assistance a day earlier than planned to intended beneficiaries and additional families in the absence of agreed-upon monitors but with implementer's contractors in attendance.[267]

Gender-Based Violence Has Increased Since the COVID-19 Outbreak

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Afghanistan consistently ranked as one of the most dangerous places for women, with 87 percent of women likely to experience gender-based violence in their lifetime.[268] According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the added stress of poverty, food insecurity, decreased access to water and hygiene materials, and the high burden of care for children and the sick have indirectly triggered an increase in gender-based violence and mental distress.[269] According to media reports citing anecdotal evidence from Afghan doctors, this stress and the resultant violence have led to an increase in suicide attempts among Afghan women.[270] As a result of challenges in food supply and loss of jobs due to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, some Afghan families have resorted to child begging, child labor, child marriage, and child sex-slavery as means of obtaining sustenance, according to USAID.[271]

According to USAID BHA, various assessments conducted by the UN Protection Cluster during the COVID-19 pandemic found a 35 percent increase in gender-based violence, including a 91 percent increase in verbal abuse and a 55 percent increase in physical abuse. Likewise, USAID BHA reported that an implementer-conducted assessment found that 97 percent of women surveyed reported increased domestic violence in their communities since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.[272] USAID BHA reported that in an effort to

Gender-based-violence prevention programs train and support local communities to provide support to Afghan women. (USAID photo)

prevent this violence, implementers provided water, sanitation, and hygiene items to more than 115,000 individuals and reached nearly 3,000 people in November, with a total of $186,659 in cash-based transfers to purchase hygiene supplies, such as disinfectant and soap for handwashing.[273]

USAID reported that an ongoing gender-based violence prevention program aimed to support Afghanistan's government and local communities by providing training and mentoring to gender-based violence support providers. USAID stated it was significant that more than 50 percent of these support providers were women. In many parts of the country, women are not allowed to be treated by male healthcare workers due to cultural norms.[274] Therefore women healthcare providers trained through this activity are able to provide healthcare services to women. USAID reported that during this quarter, 339 health workers were trained through this program.[275]

According to USAID, implementation of these programs was challenged by deteriorating security conditions, restricted movement because of COVID-19 pandemic conditions, a lack of capacity and political will of Afghanistan government officials, and limited health services overall.[276]

The International Organization for Migration reported that Afghanistan had its largest ever number of returning undocumented Afghan migrants in 2020, an amount 30 percent greater than the 5-year average.

USAID and the DoS Assist Continued Influx of Undocumented Afghan Returnees

The International Organization for Migration reported that Afghanistan had its largest ever number of returning undocumented Afghan migrants in 2020, an amount 30 percent greater than the 5-year average.[277] From October 1 to December 19, there were 240,728 undocumented returnees from Iran and 1,433 from Pakistan.[278] The International Organization for Migration attributed the influx in returnees to Iran's COVID-19 related quarantine measures and reduced income earning opportunities in Iran. According to USAID BHA, implementers provided assistance to returnees with assessed needs across Afghanistan as part of its regular food assistance and nutrition support programs. USAID BHA reported that one of its implementers supported returnees in Ghor and Herat provinces by providing hand washing kits and hygiene promotion, in addition to providing training for healthcare professionals in medical facilities in these regions because communities in Herat face higher than normal vulnerabilities to COVID-19 due to the high number of returnees from Iran.[279] In addition to USAID assistance, the DoS Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration also provides funding to the International Organization for Migration to assist undocumented Afghan returnees.[280]

COVID-19 Presents Increased Challenges to Education in Afghanistan

According to USAID, long-term school closures due to COVID-19 have affected access to education for all students, especially women and girls, who are less likely to be prioritized for limited education resources.[281] Public education in Afghanistan normally operates on two academic calendars, one for cold climate provinces (March-December), and the other for warm climate provinces (mid-September-June).[282] On March 22, the Ministry of Education kept all schools, colleges, and universities closed due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions and

developed an education plan, which included self-learning (i.e., children learning at home on their own or with family members), distance learning that included broadcasting radio and television lessons, and learning in small groups where the pandemic had not affected communities as strongly.[283] The Ministry of Education began opening schools in a phased approach, but it was not until October 3 that public school for grades 1-9 reopened.[284] However, due to cold weather, increased resurgence in COVID-19 cases, and increased levels of violence, the Ministry of Education closed primary grade schools (grades 1 through 6) and lower secondary grade schools (grades 7 through 9) on November 21 and December 5, respectively. Consequently, approximately 7.7 million students who normally have an 8- to 9-month academic year were only in school for 1.5 months.[285]

USAID reported that the education system was unprepared and experienced a profound disruption due to the pandemic.[286] When school closures began, the Ministry of Education promoted distance learning through radio and television programming. However, media reports indicate that as much as 70 percent of the population has no access to electricity, making it unclear how much distance learning has helped the millions of children unable to attend school.[287] USAID's Education office reported that, "the impact to the entire student population caused by the long-term education gaps and sporadic at-home education efforts is yet to be measured. It will be most visible in real learning levels of students, the higher risk for drop-outs, and the higher risks to exposure to violence in the home."[288] Nationwide school closures compounded existing vulnerabilities in Afghanistan, likely putting already marginalized populations at higher risk for violence.[289]

Access to education is a primary catalyst for socio-economic development and can help mitigate the risks associated with armed conflict, natural disasters, health epidemics, and pervasive violence.[290] Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, access to education was already limited for women and girls.[291] According to an alert issued by UN Women, UNICEF, and Human Rights Watch, the three main barriers cited for not attending schools were: distance to the school (28 percent for girls compared to 3 percent for boys); fear of threats and intimidation at school (29 percent for girls compared to 14 percent for boys); and security concerns when travelling to and from school (20 percent for boys and 15 percent for girls).[292]

Furthermore, violence and attacks on education facilities, teachers, and students disproportionately affects girls, because these attacks typically target girls' education, and parents are more likely to withdraw girls from school as a result of the safety concerns.[293] Literacy rates among both young women and men remain low. However, women and girls suffer from disproportionately lower reading levels. Only 37 percent of adolescent girls are literate compared to 66 percent of adolescent boys, and the gender disparity grows larger for access to secondary and university education, with only 4.9 percent of women accessing post-secondary education, compared to 14.2 percent of men.[294] These constraints will likely only worsen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.[295]

USAID EDUCATION RESPONSE FOCUSES ON DISTANCE LEARNING

When the Ministry of Education closed schools in March, USAID's Office of Education made funding and programmatic shifts focused on mobilizing resources along three key lines of effort: supporting distance education broadcasts, providing water, sanitation, and hygiene supplies to people, and developing communications and media products for

The Afghan Ministry of Education works to improve reading skills for primary level students. (USAID photo)

infection prevention.[296] USAID's Office of Education supported distance education by broadcasting public service announcements in Dari and Pashto through seven radio stations on socio-emotional learning, creative writing, reading comprehension, and encouragement of parents to support at-home learning.[297] However, USAID reported that a lack of electricity, hygiene and latrine infrastructure, and a general lack of distance learning infrastructure have constrained distance learning efforts.[298]

In addition to USAID's immediate shift in education programming to respond to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, USAID is also one of the contributing donors to the Global Partnership for Education, a multi-donor funded initiative that promotes recipient national governments' educational goals.[299] In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Global Partnership for Education announced an $11 million grant that will support several activities aimed at assisting distance learning, providing training to volunteer teachers, and providing guidance and support for schools when they are ready to re-open.[300] USAID's Office of Education reported that while final contracting arrangements are underway and eight implementers have been selected, there have been some delays in programming the funds due to changes in the Ministry of Education leadership's programmatic priorities.[301]

LIMITATIONS IN EDUCATION DATA

USAID's Office of Education is planning to conduct an assessment in the spring to evaluate the severity of learning loss as a result of school closures, identify barriers preventing students returning to school, and determine the need for increased socio-emotional support provided to students because of their increased exposure to violence in households.[302]

According to USAID, educators in Afghanistan must often assess and develop appropriate interventions to close academic gaps. However, school closures and the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in unprecedented school absences, learning interruptions, and expected learning loss. As a result, pre-COVID-19 pandemic school data is expected to be of limited predictive value in determining future trends. Consequently, USAID's planned assessment aims to help identify strategies and challenges to overcome the ongoing learning loss.[303]

Peace Support Initiative Aims to Build Peace Using Small Grants

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives' Peace Support Initiative is a short-term program that aims to contribute to the peace process by strengthening support among Afghans for a sustainable resolution to the country's ongoing conflict.[304] According to USAID, the $2.5 million program, which ends in February 2021, awards small grants of less than $100,000 to identify challenges and opportunities to build peace and unity and to consolidate and amplify Afghans' support for peace.[305]

The Office of Transition Initiatives reported that by December 19, 2020, it had awarded 15 small grants, and additional grants were in the design and planning phases.[306] One of these grants supported a mapping activity to compile socio-economic indicators to develop an open-source, interactive tool to identify reconciliation and peace-building opportunities. Other grants include work to improve the Afghan government's communication capabilities by providing ongoing technical assistance, such as training on media outreach and content development capabilities of institutions working on the peace process.[307]

The Office of Transition Initiatives reported that it plans to deliver a set of programming recommendations to address post-peace agreement reconciliation and conflict resolution issues in March. It also identified partners and developed relationships with organizations at a national and local level, including the State Minister for Peace.[308]

Citizens' Charter Pilot Peace Program

The Citizens' Charter pilot peace project was designed to be a sub-program within the broader, ongoing Citizens' Charter Afghanistan Project.[309] While the broader program aims to reduce poverty and deepen the relationship between citizens and the state across all 34 provinces, the more targeted peace pilot program is concentrated in three provinces: Nangarhar, Laghman, and Kunar. According to USAID, the peace pilot program will assist in preparing for a potential peace and reconciliation program.[310]

According to USAID, the launch of the Citizens' Charter pilot peace project was delayed due to COVID-19 for several months because the initial steps of the project required small and large gatherings. USAID reported that the Independent Directorate of Local Governance started implementing the project in one district of Jalalabad city and has made progress in directly piloting the program in 12 of 35 community development councils there.[311] However, according to USAID, the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development indicated that a lack of financial resources is preventing its implementation of the peace pilot program in the rural areas of Nangarhar. Implementation for the peace pilot program has not yet started in either Laghman or Kunar.[312]

SUPPORT TO MISSION

Congress Passes FY 2021 Appropriations Funding for OFS

On December 27, 2020, the President signed the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 into law. The legislation, which funds the entire federal government through FY 2021, provides

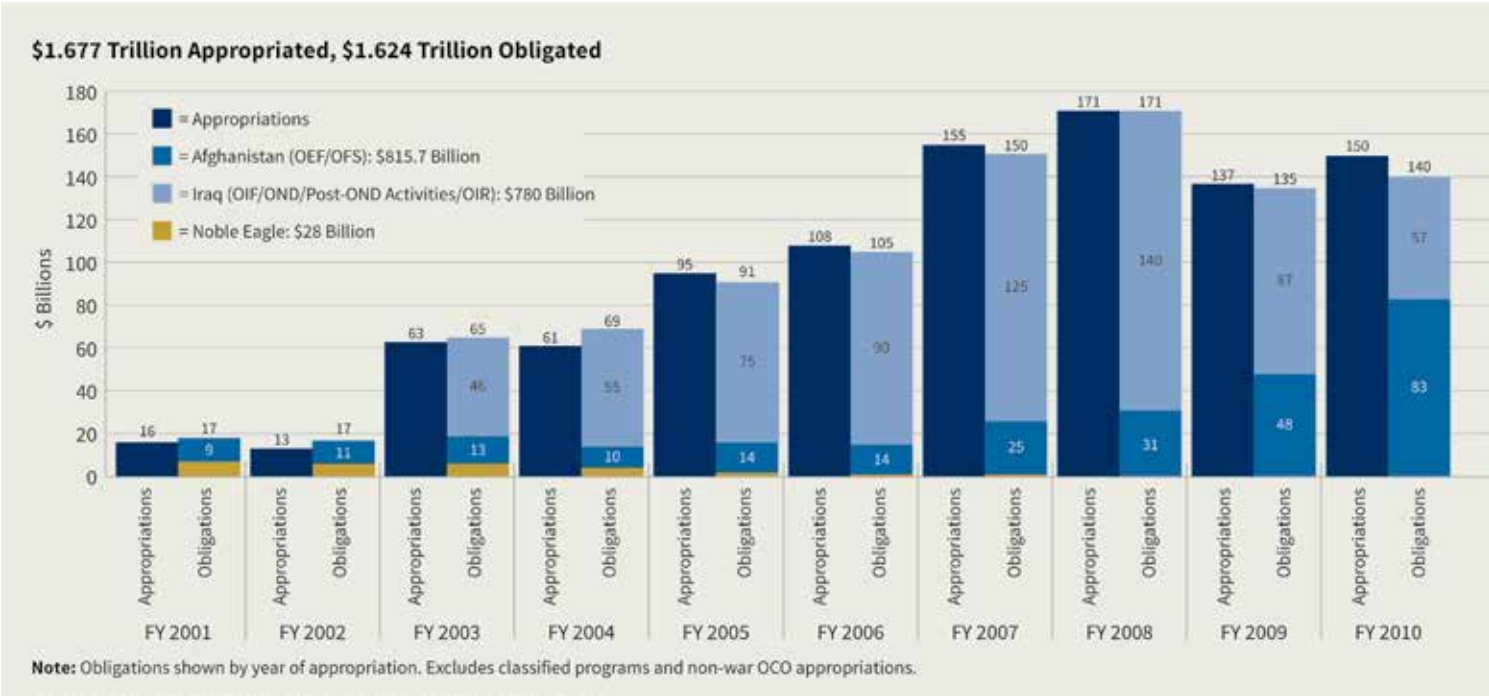
the DoD with a total of $740.5 billion, which includes $671.5 billion in base funding and $69 billion in OCO funding. Compared to the FY 2020 enacted appropriations, this is a $4.6 billion increase in base funding and a $2 billion decrease in OCO funding.[313]

The DoD's OCO appropriation for FY 2021 includes $3 billion for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund, a 28 percent decrease from the $4.2 billion appropriated for this fund in FY 2020. The Afghanistan Security Forces Fund is the principal funding stream for U.S. support to sustain the ANDSF.[314] This appropriation was less than the DoD's budget request of $4 billion, which itself was less than the $5 to $5.5 billion at which the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund had been appropriated in recent years. The DoD Comptroller attributed the decreased request to three factors: the transition from procuring equipment for the ANDSF to a sustainment and lifecycle replacement focus; CSTC-A's focus on minimizing waste; and the transition of responsibility for managing certain commodities, such as fuel, maintenance, and clothing, to the Afghan government.[315]

The FY 2021 appropriation for the DoS, USAID, and related agencies is $55.5 billion, which includes $8 billion in OCO funding. This represents an increase from the FY 2020 appropriation of $54.7 billion. OCO funds appropriated to the DoS are designated primarily for peacekeeping operations, the Foreign Military Financing program, migration and refugee assistance, international disaster assistance, and the Worldwide Security Protection, which funds efforts to protect DoS life and property in hazardous environments such as Afghanistan.[316]

Figure 4.

Total DoD War-Related Appropriations and Obligations, September 11, 2001–September 30, 2020



Note: Obligations shown by year of appropriation. Excludes classified programs and non-war OCO appropriations.

This quarter, the DoD Comptroller released the DoD's congressionally mandated Cost of War report, which details the DoD's spending on overseas contingency operations in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria through September 30, 2020. According to this report, the DoD has spent $1.62 trillion in support of contingency operations since September 11, 2001. (See Figure 4.) The total cost of operations in Afghanistan over that time was $815.7 billion, of which $237.3 billion has been obligated in support of OFS since that operation began in 2015.[317]

The DoD Comptroller reported that the DoD obligated $40 billion for OFS during FY 2020, a slight increase from the $39.4 billion spent on OFS in FY 2019. The DoD Comptroller reported that average monthly spending on all OCOs during this quarter was $5.4 billion, of which $4.4 billion was in support of OFS. According to the Cost of War report, these obligations cover all expenses related to the conflicts, including war-related operational costs, support for deployed troops, and transportation of personnel and equipment.[318]

USAID Staff Levels Continue to Increase at Embassy Kabul

USAID's direct hire personnel and U.S and third-country personal service contractors staffing levels at the embassy increased following the conclusion of the DoS Global Authorized Departure. According to USAID, the USAID mission in Kabul is pursuing the return of authorized staff, and as of December 31, 2020, 44 employees had returned to the embassy and 13 more were scheduled to return by the end of January 2021.[319] Additionally, USAID was authorized to have 28 Foreign Service Nationals return to work, roughly 20 percent of USAID's Foreign Service National staff, while approximately 70 percent continued teleworking.[320] According to USAID, the Mission in Kabul procured 25 solar panel systems as a pilot to see if this would increase capacity and improve efficiency of the Foreign Service Nationals that remained teleworking.[321]

Source: DoD Comptroller.

Afghan children wash their hands at a newly rehabilitated facility. (USAID photo)

OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

Strategic Planning 50

Audit, Inspection, and Evaluation Activity 52

Investigations and Hotline Activity 60

OVERSIGHT ACTIVITIES

This section of the report provides information on Lead IG and partner agencies' strategic planning efforts; completed, ongoing, and planned Lead IG and partner agencies' oversight work related to audits, inspections, and evaluations; Lead IG investigations; and hotline activities from October 1 through December 31, 2020.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

Pursuant to Section 8L of the Inspector General Act, the Lead IG develops and implements a joint strategic plan to guide comprehensive oversight of programs and operations for each overseas contingency operation. This effort includes reviewing and analyzing completed oversight, management, and other relevant reports to identify systemic problems, trends, lessons learned, and best practices to inform future oversight projects. The Lead IG agencies issue an annual joint strategic oversight plan for each operation.

FY 2021 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan Activities

In 2015, upon designation of the DoD IG as the Lead IG for Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS), the three Lead IG agencies developed and implemented a joint strategic oversight plan for comprehensive oversight of OFS. The three Lead IG agencies update the oversight plan annually.

The FY 2021 Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for OFS, effective October 1, 2020, organized OFS-related oversight projects into three strategic oversight areas: 1) Military Operations and Security Cooperation; 2) Governance, Humanitarian Assistance, Development, and Reconstruction; and 3) Support to Mission. The FY 2021 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations included the Joint Strategic Oversight Plan for OFS.

The Overseas Contingency Operations Joint Planning Group serves as a primary venue to coordinate audits, inspections, and evaluations of U.S. Government-funded activities supporting overseas contingency operations, including those relating to Afghanistan and the Middle East. The Overseas Contingency Operations Joint Planning Group meets quarterly to provide a forum for coordination of the broader Federal oversight community, including the military service IGs and audit agencies, the Government Accountability Office (GAO), the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), and the OIGs from the Departments of Justice, the Treasury, Energy, and Homeland Security.

FY 2021 Comprehensive Oversight Plan for Overseas Contingency Operations

In November 2020, the Joint Planning Group held its 52nd meeting, carried out virtually to accommodate participants because of coronavirus disease–2019 (COVID-19) precautions. Guest speaker U.S. Air Force Brig. Gen. Stephen F. Jost, Deputy Director for Joint Strategic Planning, Joint Chiefs of Staff, spoke on his previous experience as Chief of Staff for Combined Joint Task Force–Operation Inherent Resolve.

Lead IG Strategic Oversight Areas

MILITARY OPERATIONS AND SECURITY COOPERATION

Military Operations and Security Cooperation focuses on determining the degree to which the contingency operation is accomplishing its security mission. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Conducting unilateral and partnered counterterrorism operations
- Providing security assistance
- Training and equipping partner security forces
- Advising, assisting, and enabling partner security forces
- Advising and assisting ministry-level security officials

GOVERNANCE, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, DEVELOPMENT, AND RECONSTRUCTION

Governance, Humanitarian Assistance, Development, and Reconstruction focuses on some of the root causes of violent extremism. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Countering and reducing corruption, social inequality, and extremism
- Promoting inclusive and effective democracy, civil participation, and empowerment of women
- Promoting reconciliation, peaceful conflict resolution, demobilization and reintegration of armed forces, and other rule of law efforts
- Providing food, water, medical care, emergency relief, and shelter to people affected by crisis
- Assisting and protecting internally displaced persons and refugees
- Building or enhancing host-nation governance capacity
- Supporting sustainable and appropriate recovery and reconstruction activities, repairing infrastructure, removing explosive remnants of war, and reestablishing utilities and other public services
- Countering trafficking in persons and preventing sexual exploitation and abuse

SUPPORT TO MISSION

Support to Mission focuses on U.S. administrative, logistical, and management efforts that enable military operations and non-military programs. Activities that fall under this strategic oversight area include:

- Ensuring the security of U.S. Government personnel and property
- Providing for the occupational health and safety of personnel
- Administering U.S. Government programs
- Managing U.S. Government grants and contracts
- Inventorying and accounting for equipment

AUDIT, INSPECTION, AND EVALUATION ACTIVITY

The Lead IG agencies use dedicated, rotational, and temporary employees, as well as contractors, to conduct oversight projects, investigate fraud and corruption, and provide consolidated planning and reporting on the status of overseas contingency operations.

The COVID-19 global pandemic continued to affect the Lead IG agencies' ability to conduct oversight of projects related to overseas contingency operations due to related travel restrictions. In response to travel restrictions, the Lead IG agencies either delayed or deferred some oversight projects or revised or narrowed the scope of ongoing work. The Lead IG agencies continued to conduct oversight work while teleworking and practicing social distancing.

Based on DoD Force Health Protection Guidance, the DoD OIG determines when to re-initiate travel to overseas locations and augment overseas offices on a case-by-case basis. DoD OIG oversight and investigative staff increased their presence in Kuwait and Qatar, during the quarter, and maintained their presence in Germany. The DoS OIG and USAID OIG also monitor local conditions to determine when to resume overseas oversight operations. The DoS OIG reported this quarter that personnel have since returned to the U.S. Embassy in Kabul. Prior to the pandemic, some oversight staff from the Lead IG agencies were stationed in offices in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar, Egypt, and Germany. Oversight teams from these offices and from offices in the United States would travel to Afghanistan, Pakistan, and other locations in the region to conduct fieldwork for their projects.

The Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies completed eight reports related to OFS during the quarter. These reports examined various oversight activities that support OFS, including a DoD OIG special report on weaknesses identified in prior reports related to the retrograde of equipment from Afghanistan; tactical signals intelligence processing; the DoS's post security program review process; USAID's Journey to Self-Reliance initiative; and USAID financial accountability in other assistance programs.

As of December 31, 2020, 37 projects related to OFS were ongoing and 18 projects related to OFS were planned.

Final Reports by Lead IG Agencies

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Special Report: Weaknesses in the Retrograde Process for Equipment from Afghanistan

DODIG-2021-035; December 16, 2020

This special report compiles weaknesses identified in five DoD Office of Inspector General reports related to the retrograde of equipment from Afghanistan that were issued between 2013 and 2015.

As the retrograde from Afghanistan accelerates, in accordance with the February 2020 agreement with the Taliban, the Army will process billions of dollars of equipment through

retrograde hubs. The Army must properly handle equipment that is turned in by redeploying units to decrease the risk of equipment loss and compromise, and to facilitate equipment reuse. Five prior DoD OIG reports identified weaknesses related to property accountability, security, and contractor oversight during previous retrograde operations. The purpose of this special report is to assist U.S. military, civilian, and contractor personnel responsible for the retrograde of equipment by highlighting these weaknesses so that they may be avoided during the current drawdown in Afghanistan.

This report contained no recommendations. Accordingly, the DoD OIG did not issue a draft report, and no written responses from the Army were either required or provided.

Evaluation of the Army's Tactical Signal Intelligence Payload Program

DoDIG-2021-005; November 5, 2020

The DoD OIG evaluated whether the Theater Support Activity's tactical signals intelligence processing is sufficient to satisfy priority intelligence requirements. The report is classified.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Management Assistance Report: The Bureau of Diplomatic Security Did Not Always Conduct Post Security Program Reviews Within Required Timeframes

AUD-SI-21-03; December 3, 2020

The DoS Bureau of Diplomatic Security (DS), the law enforcement and security bureau of the DoS, created the Post Security Program Review (PSPR) process in 2008 as a mechanism to "ensure that posts competently manage life safety, emergency preparedness, and information security programs with full mission support and participation, sufficient resources, and appropriate management controls." The DS High Threat Programs Directorate conducts PSPRs for the DoS's 36 overseas posts designated as "high-threat, high-risk," including posts in Afghanistan and Iraq. The DS International Programs Directorate conducts PSPRs for the DoS's non-high threat, high risk posts.

During an audit of the PSPR process, the DoS OIG found that DS did not always conduct PSPRs within required timeframes as set forth in the DoS policy. Specifically, from 2016 to 2020, the High Threat Programs Directorate did not conduct PSPRs within the required timeframe for 22 of 27 high-threat, high-risk posts. With respect to non-threat, high-risk posts, the DoS OIG found that the DS International Programs Directorate did not conduct PSPRs within the required timeframes for 84 of 222 posts.

The DoS OIG made two recommendations and DS concurred with both. The DoS OIG considered both recommendations resolved pending further action at the time the report was issued.

Management Assistance Report: The Bureau of Diplomatic Security's Compliance Process Related to Post Security Program Reviews Needs Improvement

AUD-SI-21-04; December 1, 2020

During an audit of the PSPR process, the DoS OIG found that although DS had designed a compliance process to assess overseas posts' resolution of recommendations made to

address security deficiencies, the PSPR compliance process needed improvement. The DoS OIG found DS officials did not always maintain documentation describing corrective actions taken by regional security officers in response to PSPR recommendations, that security officials at overseas posts did not always provide compliance responses within the required 45 days, and that DS officials did not always track when compliance responses were due or have a formal process in place to follow up on overdue responses.

The DoS OIG made three recommendations in this report. DS concurred with all three. The DoS OIG considered all three recommendations resolved pending further action at the time the report was issued.

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

USAID Updated Guidance to Address Inconsistent Use of Journey to Self-Reliance Metrics and Misalignment of Missions' Budgets

9-000-21-002-P; December 23, 2020

USAID OIG conducted a performance audit to determine the extent that USAID incorporated self-reliance metrics into development programming strategies at selected missions, and whether USAID developed budgets that aligned with Journey to Self-Reliance strategies.

Under the Journey to Self-Reliance approach, USAID compiled a set of metrics that were intended to quantitatively provide an annual snapshot of each partner country's capacity and commitment to solving its own development challenges.

As part of the Journey to Self-Reliance approach, USAID implemented two new budgeting processes for missions that were designed to improve alignment between Journey to Self-Reliance Country Strategies and budgets. However, because of challenges in implementing these processes, the budgets in the three pilot missions did not fully align to the Journey to Self-Reliance approach. To address these issues, USAID updated policy to clarify roles and responsibilities for producing budget scenarios and updated Mission Resource Request guidance to help deconflict differing instructions.

USAID OIG made no recommendations, because USAID issued updated guidance to address the inconsistent use of metrics in Country Strategies as well as to address issues identified in the production of Country Strategy budget scenarios and Mission Resource Requests.

Audit on International Development Group Advisory Services, LLC Proposed Amounts on Unsettled Flexibly Priced USAID Agreements for Fiscal Years 2015, 2016, and 2017

3-000-21-001-D; October 16, 2020

USAID OIG conducted this audit to determine whether International Development Group's (IDG) proposed direct and indirect amounts for contract reimbursement materially complied with contract terms.

IDG is an international development consulting firm that assists donors, governments, and the private sector to create and take advantage of opportunities for sustainable, broad-based economic development and poverty reduction.

USAID's Office of Acquisition and Assistance, Cost, Audit, and Support Division contracted with the Defense Contract Audit Agency (DCAA) to conduct the audit. DCAA stated that they conducted their audit in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and USAID OIG reviewed the report for conformance with professional standards.

USAID's audited direct costs were $13,385,773 for Fiscal Years 2015, 2016, and 2017, which included activities conducted in Afghanistan. DCAA expressed a qualified opinion due to instances of material noncompliance, and a scope limitation on their ability to perform real time procedures on proposed direct labor costs for IDG's direct employees for FYs 2015, 2016 and 2017. DCAA stated that except for the instances of material noncompliance, and the scope limitation, IDG's proposed amounts on unsettled flexibly priced contracts comply, in all material respects, with the contract terms pertaining to accumulating and billing incurred amounts. DCAA identified total questioned direct costs of $120,838 applicable to USAID. DCAA also questioned $84,245 in negative indirect costs. The audit report disclosed six instances of material noncompliance with various Federal acquisition regulations requirements. USAID OIG made two recommendations to address the issues identified in the report. Management agreed with the recommendations.

Final Reports by Partner Agencies

SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION

Facilities to Support Women in the Afghan Security Forces: Better Planning and Program Oversight Could Have Helped DoD Ensure Funds Contributed to Recruitment, Retention, and Integration

SIGAR 21-04-AR; October 15, 2020

SIGAR conducted this audit to determine why the DoD selected these facility projects, the extent to which the DoD measured the success of its facility projects to support women in the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF), and the extent to which these facilities are being used for their intended purposes.

The DoD supports women in the ANDSF through the construction of facilities dedicated to female Afghan police and military troops. SIGAR made three recommendations as a result of the audit. First, the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A) Commander should coordinate with senior Ministry of Interior Affairs and Ministry of Defense officials to finalize remediation plans that will ensure proper use or repurposing of existing or unused facilities identified in the report. Second, the CSTC-A commander should develop a policy to incorporate the five lessons learned from CSTC-A's 2019 internal review into the selection process for future facilities intended to support women in the ANDSF. Third, the Secretary of Defense should determine whether the construction or renovation of facilities was successful in recruiting, retaining, and integrating women in the ANDSF, and report the results to Congress.

A month-long training initiative aims to teach business, marketing, and management skills to women in Afghanistan. (USAID photo)

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (OUSD(P)) concurred with the first recommendation and partially concurred with the second and third recommendations. The CSTC-A director of staff concurred with the two recommendations directed to it. In its comments, OUSD(P) also identified specific actions either it or CSTC-A will take to implement the recommendations.

Afghan Air Force and Special Mission Wing Vetting for Corruption

SIGAR 21-03-C-AR; October 2020

SIGAR conducted this audit to determine whether the Afghan Air Force (AAF) and the Special Mission Wing (SMW) have developed vetting policies and procedures that help identify corrupt and potentially corrupt personnel. According to the DoD's December 2019 Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan report, corruption undermines ANDSF readiness and combat power. The NATO Resolute Support mission has focused advising efforts on trusted partners who demonstrate desire, will, and a bias toward taking action against corruption, and CSTC-A has identified countering corruption as one of the "Top 10 Challenges and Opportunities" in Afghanistan.

The United States and Coalition forces have identified the AAF and SMW as critical capabilities. The AAF serves as the primary air enabler for the Afghan National Army and the Afghan Special Security Forces (ASSF) by providing aerial fire and lift support to ground and special operations forces across Afghanistan. The SMW is a special operations aviation wing that provides operational reach for the ASSF during counterterrorism and counternarcotics missions designed to disrupt insurgent and narcotics networks in Afghanistan.

Preventing and rooting out corruption in critical ANDSF units, such as its air forces, is important to protect the multi-billion-dollar U.S. investment in those units, and to ensure the forces are operationally effective and sustainable. This classified report examined the extent to which the Afghan Ministry of Defense vets Afghan Air Force and Special Mission Wing recruits for corruption and identified areas for improvement. It contained two recommendations.

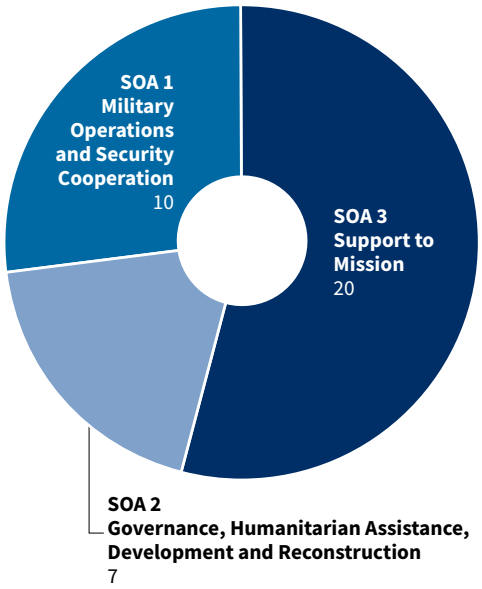
SIGAR received comments from the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Afghanistan, Pakistan, and Central Asia, CSTC-A, and Train Advise Assist Command-Air (TAAC-Air). The Deputy Assistant Secretary concurred with one recommendation; CSTC-A concurred with one recommendation, and partially concurred with the second; and TAAC-Air concurred with both recommendations and identified actions it would take to implement them.

Ongoing Oversight Activities

As of December 31, 2020, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had 37 ongoing projects related to OFS. Figure 5 identifies the number of ongoing projects by strategic oversight area.

Figure 5.

Ongoing Projects by Strategic Oversight Area



Tables 2 and 3, contained in Appendix C, list the titles and objectives for each of these projects. Appendix C also identifies ongoing projects that the DoD OIG suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The DoD OIG will resume these projects when force health protection conditions permit. The following sections highlight some of these ongoing projects by strategic oversight area.

MILITARY OPERATIONS AND SECURITY COOPERATION

- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an evaluation to determine U.S. Central Command's (USCENTCOM) target development and prosecution processes, as well as post-strike collateral damage and civilian casualty assessment activities.
- The **DoS OIG** is reviewing the DoS's plans and procedures for employees to return to offices, including the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, during the COVID-19 pandemic while ensuring suitable safety and welfare considerations and precautions.
- **SIGAR** is conducting an audit to determine whether DoD-funded efforts to recruit, train, and retain women in the ANDSF have been successful.

GOVERNANCE, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, DEVELOPMENT, AND RECONSTRUCTION

- The **DoS OIG** is conducting an audit to assess risks related to voluntary contributions to public international organizations.
- **USAID OIG** is conducting an audit to determine whether USAID has taken action to prevent, detect and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.

SUPPORT TO MISSION

- The **DoD OIG** is conducting an evaluation to determine how USCENTCOM executed its COVID-19 pandemic response, and to identify any impact to operations resulting from the pandemic.
- The **DoS OIG** is reviewing DoS management of the DoS Public Diplomacy Locally Employed Staff Initiative, including surveying public diplomacy officers to assess the clarity, progress, and results of the program in the field.
- **USAID OIG** is conducting an audit to assess USAID's procedures for guiding acquisition award terminations.

Planned Oversight Projects

As of December 31, 2020, the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies had 18 planned projects related to OFS. Figure 6 identifies the number of planned projects by strategic oversight area.

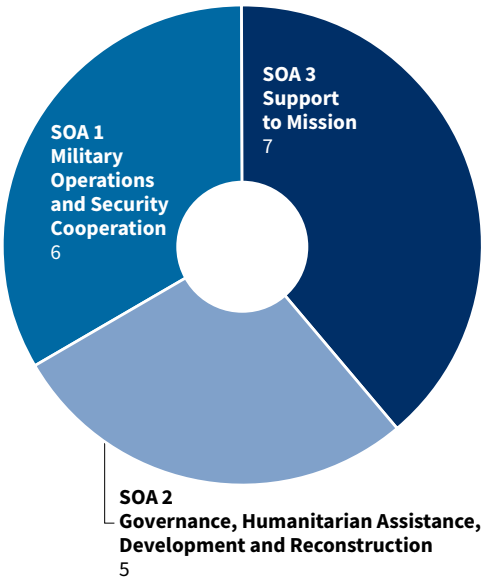
Tables 4 and 5, contained in Appendix D, list the titles and objectives for each of these projects. Appendix D also identifies planned projects that the DoD OIG suspended due to COVID-19. The DoD OIG will resume these projects will when force health protection conditions permit. The following sections highlight some of these planned projects by strategic oversight area.

MILITARY OPERATIONS AND SECURITY COOPERATION

- The **DoD OIG** intends to evaluate whether the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency is collecting, analyzing, and distributing geospatial intelligence in support of combatant commands overseas contingency operations' intelligence requirements in accordance with law and DoD policy and guidance.
- **SIGAR** intends to assess the extent to which the DoD and the ANDSF ensured the proper storage, maintenance, and usage of Class VIII supplies and equipment.

Figure 6.

Planned Projects by Strategic Oversight Area



USAID implementing partners distribute disaster relief supplies to affected families. (USAID photo)

GOVERNANCE, HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE, DEVELOPMENT, AND RECONSTRUCTION

- **USAID OIG** intends to conduct an audit to determine the extent to which USAID's anti-corruption efforts in Afghanistan are integrated into USAID activities, and how the agency responds to information about fraud that could affect its programs.
- **SIGAR** intends to inspect electrical infrastructure construction at the Afghan National Army's Marshal Fahim National Defense University at Camp Commando to determine whether construction was completed according to contract requirements, and whether the facility is being used and maintained.

SUPPORT TO MISSION

- The **DoD OIG** intends to conduct an audit to determine whether the DoD effectively monitored contractor performance for the National Maintenance Strategy-Ground Vehicle Systems contract.
- The **DoD OIG** intends to conduct an audit to determine whether the DoD, military services, and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service accurately calculated hostile fire pay/imminent danger pay, family separation allowance, and combat zone tax exclusion for combat zone deployment.
- **SIGAR** intends to conduct an audit of the Afghan Special Security Forces Training Program to determine whether the contractor is meeting training and advising requirements.

INVESTIGATIONS AND HOTLINE ACTIVITY

Investigations

The investigative components of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies continued to conduct investigative activity related to OFS during the quarter. However, the COVID-19 pandemic continued to constrain the Lead IG agencies' ability to conduct OFS-related investigations. The Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS, the DoD OIG's criminal investigative component) has temporarily removed investigative personnel from its offices in Afghanistan, but the investigators are working on OFS-related cases from the Kuwait, Qatar or Bahrain offices, or teleworking. DoS OIG and USAID OIG investigators have returned to the United States, and many are teleworking.

INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITY RELATED TO OFS

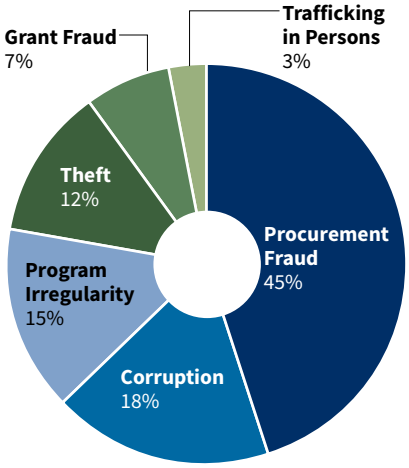
During this quarter, Lead IG investigations resulted in one criminal charge, and $180,000 recovered to the U.S. Government. Those actions are discussed below.

The investigative branches of the Lead IG agencies and their partner agencies closed 6 investigations, initiated 1 new investigation, and coordinated on 67 open investigations. The open investigations involve grant and procurement fraud, corruption, theft, computer intrusions, and human trafficking allegations.

The Lead IG agencies and partners continue to coordinate their investigative efforts through the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group, which consists of representatives from DCIS, the DoS OIG, USAID OIG, the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command, the Naval Criminal Investigative Service, and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations. This quarter, the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group conducted 8 fraud awareness briefings for 110 attendees. The dashboard on page 61 depicts activities of the Fraud and Corruption Investigative Working Group.

ACTIVITY BY FRAUD AND CORRUPTION INVESTIGATIVE WORKING GROUP

OPERATION FREEDOM'S SENTINEL
As of December 31, 2020



OPEN INVESTIGATIONS*

67

Q1 FY 2021 ACTIVITY

Cases Opened	1
Cases Closed	6

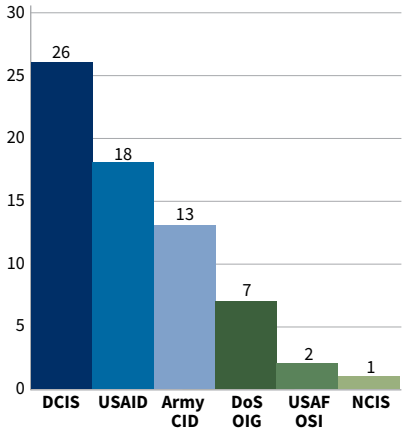
Q1 FY 2021 BRIEFINGS

Briefings Held	8
Briefing Attendees	110

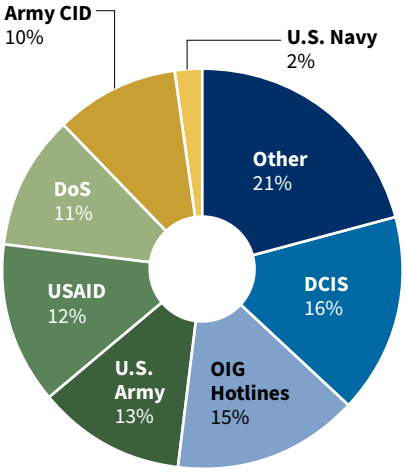
Q1 FY 2021 RESULTS

Arrests	—
Criminal Charges	—
Criminal Convictions	1
Fines/Recoveries	$180K
Debarments	—
Personnel Actions	—
Contract Terminations	—

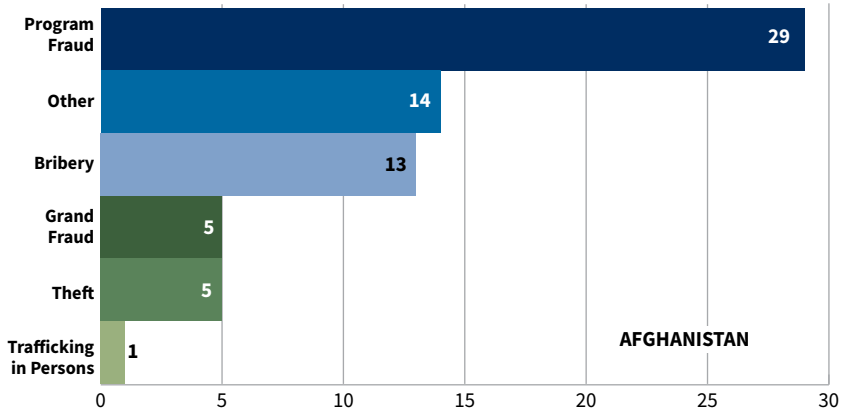
OPEN INVESTIGATIONS BY WORKING GROUP MEMBER*



SOURCES OF ALLEGATIONS



PRIMARY OFFENSE LOCATIONS (PROVINCES)



* Some investigations are conducted with more than one agency, and some are not conducted with any other agency. Therefore, the total number of joint open cases may not equal the total number of Open Cases. Open Cases as of 12/31/2020.

AMERICAN CONTRACTOR PLEADS GUILTY TO CONSPIRACY TO STEAL GOVERNMENT EQUIPMENT FROM U.S. MILITARY BASE IN AFGHANISTAN

On October 13, Varita V. Quincy, of Snellville, Georgia pleaded guilty to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States and one count of making false official statements. Quincy admitted that, between April 2015 and July 2015, she, Larry J. Green of Chesapeake, Virginia, and others conspired to steal U.S. Government equipment and property worth over $300,000, while working for a contractor operating on Kandahar Airfield, in Kandahar, Afghanistan.

The investigation, led by SIGAR with the U.S. Army Criminal Investigation Command and the Indiana Army National Guard, revealed that Quincy was a supervisor in the office that issued security badges required for the movement of personnel and property on and off Kandahar Airfield. Quincy admitted that as part of the conspiracy, Green identified items of value to steal, such as vehicles, generators, refrigerators, and other equipment. Green negotiated the sale of those items with persons outside of the installation. Quincy then facilitated the thefts by creating false official documents, or instructing those she supervised to prepare such documents, to facilitate the entry of unknown and unvetted Afghan nationals and their vehicles on to the military installation to remove the stolen property. Quincy shared in the profits from this scheme. The false documents she created, or directed others to create, were used to deceive security officers and gate guards and thereby compromised the security and safety of the military installation.

Quincy's co-conspirator, Green, pleaded guilty on July 8, 2020, to one count of conspiracy to defraud the United States and commit theft of property of value to the United States, one count of theft of property of value to the United States, and one count of aiding and abetting the submission of false statements. On November 20, 2020, Green was sentenced to prison for 41 months, ordered to pay $300 in assessment fees and $179,708 in restitution to the U.S. Government. Upon release from imprisonment, Green will be on supervised release for 2 years.

INVESTIGATIVE ACTIVITY RELATED TO LEGACY CASES

In addition, these investigative components continue to investigate 26 "legacy" cases pertaining to actions committed during Operation Enduring Freedom, which concluded in December 2014.

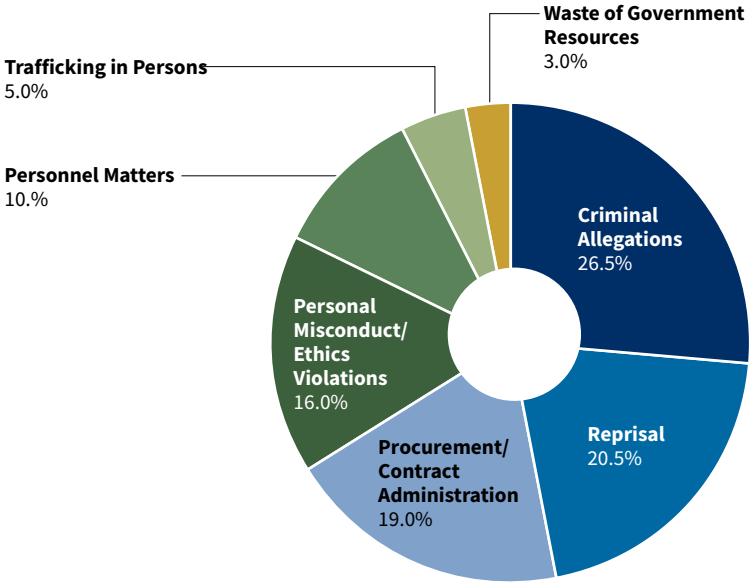
Hotline

Each Lead IG agency maintains its own hotline to receive complaints and contacts specific to its agency. The hotlines provide a confidential, reliable means for individuals to report violations of law, rule, or regulation; mismanagement; gross waste of funds; or abuse of authority. The DoD OIG has an investigator to coordinate the hotline contacts among the Lead IG agencies and others, as appropriate. During the quarter, the DoD OIG investigator referred 31 cases to Lead IG agencies and other investigative organizations.

As noted in Figure 7, the majority of the cases opened during the reporting period were related to procurement fraud, corruption, grant fraud, theft, program irregularity, and trafficking in persons.

Figure 7.

Hotline Activities



Afghan families walk around areas devastated by flash floods in Charikar, Afghanistan. (WFP/Massoud Hossaini photo)

APPENDICES

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APPENDIX A
Classified Appendix to this Report

This report normally includes an appendix containing classified information on Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS). Due to constraints resulting from the coronavirus disease–2019 pandemic, the Lead IG agencies did not prepare a classified appendix this quarter.

APPENDIX B
Methodology for Preparing this Lead IG Quarterly Report

This report complies with section 8L of the Inspector General Act of 1978, which requires that the designated Lead IG provide a quarterly report, available to the public, on each overseas contingency operation, and is consistent with the requirement that a biannual report be published by the Lead IG on the activities of the Inspectors General with respect to that overseas contingency operation. The Chair of the Council of Inspectors General for Integrity and Efficiency designated the DoD IG as the Lead IG for Operation Freedom's Sentinel. The DoS IG is the Associate IG for the operation.

This report covers the period from October 1, 2020, through December 31, 2020. The three Lead IG agencies—DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG—and partner oversight agencies contributed the content of this report.

To fulfill the congressional mandate to report on OFS, the Lead IG agencies gather data and information from Federal agencies and open sources. The sources of information contained in this report are listed in endnotes or notes to tables and figures. Except in the case of audits, inspections, investigations, and evaluations referenced in this report, the Lead IG agencies have not verified or audited the information collected through open-source research or from Federal agencies, and the information provided represents the view of the source cited in each instance.

INFORMATION COLLECTION FROM AGENCIES AND OPEN SOURCES

Each quarter, the Lead IG agencies gather information from the DoD, DoS, USAID, and other Federal agencies about their programs and operations related to OFS. The Lead IG agencies use the information provided by their respective agencies for quarterly reporting and oversight planning.

This report also draws on current, publicly available information from reputable sources. Sources used in this report may include the following:

- U.S. Government statements, press conferences, and reports
- Reports issued by international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, and think tanks
- Media reports

The Lead IG agencies use open-source information to assess information obtained through their agency information collection process and provide additional detail about the operation.

REPORT PRODUCTION

The DoD IG, as the Lead IG for this operation, is responsible for assembling and producing this report. The DoD OIG, the DoS OIG, and USAID OIG draft the sections of the report related to the activities of their agencies and then participate in the editing of the entire report. Once the report is assembled, each OIG coordinates a two-phase review process within its own agency. During the first review, the Lead IG agencies ask relevant offices within their agencies to comment, correct inaccuracies, and provide additional documentation. The Lead IG agencies incorporate agency comments, where appropriate, and send the report back to the agencies for a second review prior to publication. The final report reflects the editorial view of the DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG as independent oversight agencies.

APPENDIX C
Ongoing OFS Oversight Projects

Tables 2 and 3 list the titles and objectives for Lead IG and partner agencies' ongoing oversight projects related to OFS.

Table 2.

Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OFS by Lead IG Agency, as of December 31, 2020

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
Evaluation of U.S. Central Command Kinetic Targeting Processes and Reporting Procedures To evaluate U.S. Central Command's target development and prosecution processes, as well as post-strike collateral damage and civilian casualty assessment activities. *** Suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project will restart when force health protection conditions permit. ***
Evaluation of DoD Processes to Counter Radio Controlled Improvised Explosive Devices To evaluate the DoD's processes to counter improvised explosive devices by using tactical jammers.
Audit of Entitlements and Allowances for Processing for Military Service Reserve Deployments To determine whether the deployment process resulted in accurate and timely entitlements and allowances for deployed members of the Military Service Reserves.
Evaluation of Combatant Command Counter Threat Finance Activities in Support of U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Central Command, and U.S. European Command Priorities To determine whether U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, and U.S. Indo-Pacific Command are planning and executing counter threat finance activities to impact adversaries' ability to use financial networks to negatively affect U.S. interests.
Evaluation of Traumatic Brain Injury Screening in the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility To determine whether U.S. Central Command properly screened, documented, and tracked DoD Service members suspected of sustaining a traumatic brain injury to determine whether a return to duty status for current operations was acceptable, or evacuation and additional care was required.
Audit of Coalition Partner Reimbursements for Air Transportation Services in Afghanistan To determine whether the DoD sought full reimbursement for air transportation services provided to Coalition partners in Afghanistan in accordance with DoD policy and international agreements.
Evaluation of the U.S. Combatant Commands' Responses to the Coronavirus Disease–2019 To determine how U.S. Africa Command, U.S. Central Command, U.S. European Command, U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, U.S. Southern Command, and their component commands executed pandemic response plans; and to identify the challenges encountered in implementing the response plans and the impact to operations resulting from COVID-19.

Followup Audit of Army Oversight of Logistics Civil Augmentation Program IV Government-Furnished Property in Afghanistan
To determine whether the Army implemented the recommendations identified in DODIG-2018-040, "Army Oversight of Logistics Civil Augmentation Program Government-Furnished Property in Afghanistan," December 11, 2017, to improve the accountability of government-furnished property.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL

Audit of the Department of State's Risk Assessments and Monitoring of Voluntary Contributions to International Organizations
To determine whether DoS policies, processes, and guidance for voluntary contributions ensure that 1) risks are identified, assessed, and responded to before providing funds to public international organizations; and 2) funds are monitored to achieve award objectives.

Audit of the Use of Non-Competitive Contracts in Support of Overseas Contingency Operations in Afghanistan and Iraq
To determine 1) whether acquisition policy was followed in awarding non-competitive contracts in support of overseas contingency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq; and 2) whether, in awarding the non-competitive contracts, the justifications for doing so met the criteria specified in the Federal Acquisition Regulation and the Competition in Contracting Act.

Review of Department of State Preparations to Return Employees and Contractors to Federal Offices during the Global Coronavirus Pandemic
To describe 1) the DoS's plans and procedures for returning employees to offices during the COVID-19 pandemic; and 2) the methods outlined in those plans and procedures to ensure suitable safety and welfare considerations and precautions have been undertaken on behalf of employees and contractors.

Audit of Selected Grants and Cooperative Agreements Administered by the Public Affairs Section at U.S. Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan
To determine whether selected grants and cooperative agreements administered by the Public Affairs Section at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul have been executed in accordance with Federal and DoS requirements.

Audit of the Department of State's Use of Undefinitized Contract Actions
To determine whether the DoS Office of Acquisitions Management met Federal Acquisition Regulation requirements and DoS guidelines for issuing contract actions for which performance begins before the contract terms and conditions are finalized, and whether fees or profits were paid to contractors during the period after performance began but before the contract terms and conditions were finalized.

Inspection of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, Directorate of Operations, Office of Safety, Health, and Environmental Management
To determine if the Office of Safety, Health, and Environmental Management had taken steps to address its staffing shortages, mitigated potential safety issues, used its corrective action planning process effectively, updated its database of deficiencies that needed correcting, and improved safety program participation and compliance with DOS safety standards at overseas posts.

Inspection of the Bureau of Overseas Buildings Operations, Directorate of Operations, Office of Fire Protection
To 1) evaluate whether the Office of Fire Protection effectively directs and monitors overseas posts' compliance with the DoS fire protection program; and 2) review the Office of Fire Protection's inspection, safety, and prevention programs.

Inspection of the Bureau of Administration, Office of the Procurement Executive, Office of Acquisitions Management, Diplomatic Security Contracts Division
To 1) evaluate how the Office of Acquisition Management, Diplomatic Security Contracts Division uses funds received through a security contract surcharge to provide overall support to the Diplomatic Security program office for the administration of overseas local guard force contracts; and 2) assess the Office of Acquisition Management, Diplomatic Security Contracts Division's timeliness in executing contract awards and modifications.

Review of the Public Diplomacy Locally Employed Staff Initiative
To assess program leadership effectiveness; survey public diplomacy officers to assess the clarity, progress, and results of the program in the field; and review coordination and communication effectiveness among stakeholders.

U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
Audit of USAID's Initiative Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse To determine whether USAID took action to prevent and detect sexual exploitation and abuse; and the effectiveness of USAID's process for responding to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.
Audit of USAID's Risk Management and Project Prioritization in Afghanistan To determine whether USAID applied risk management in selecting staff positions and programs for reduction in Afghanistan.
Audit of USAID's Contract Termination Practices To assess to what extent USAID has taken action to prevent and detect sexual exploitation and abuse; and to assess USAID's process for responding to allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.
Audit of the USAID Compliance with the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2014 To determine the extent to which USAID has designated high priority countries and allocated water access, sanitation, and hygiene funding based on the Senator Paul Simon Water for the World Act of 2014.

Table 3.

Ongoing Oversight Projects Related to OFS by Lead IG Partner Agency, as of December 31, 2020

SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION
Audit of Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan's Use of Conditionality To examine Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan's use and enforcement of conditionality to improve accountability and transparency in the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces.
Department of Defense's End-Use Monitoring Efforts for Defense Articles Provided to the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces To determine whether the DoD has, since FY 2017, implemented an end-use monitoring program in Afghanistan in accordance with applicable laws and regulations; conducted required routine and enhanced end-use monitoring of items provided to the Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces; and investigated and reported potential end-use violations in Afghanistan.
DoD Use of Funds Appropriated to Recruit and Retain Women in the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces To identify the DoD's efforts to recruit, train, and retain women in the Afghanistan National Defense Security Forces; to examine how the DoD selected specific incentives and initiatives to support those efforts and measured the results; and to determine the extent to which the efforts succeeded.
Inspection of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police Northern Electrical Interconnect Expansion Project in Kunduz To determine whether the design and construction of the Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police Northern Electrical Interconnect Expansion Project in Kunduz was completed in accordance with contract requirements and applicable construction standards; and the resulting product is being used and properly maintained.
Inspection of the Afghan National Army's Northeastern Electrical Interconnect Power System in Dashti Shadian To inspect the Naiabad substation expansion and the construction of the new substation at Camp Shaheen, to assess whether the work was completed in accordance with contract requirements and applicable construction standards; and the power system is being used and properly maintained.
Inspection of Afghan National Army Ministry of Defense Headquarters Infrastructure & Security Improvements To assess whether the design and construction of Afghan National Army Ministry of Defense Headquarters Infrastructure & Security Improvements was completed in accordance with contract requirements and applicable construction standards, and the project is being used and properly maintained.

U.S. Government Counter Threat Finance Efforts Against the Afghan Terrorist and Insurgent Narcotics Trade
To review the DoD's, the DoS's, the Department of Justice's, and the Department of the Treasury's counter threat financing efforts and funding in Afghanistan since 2017.

U.S. Accountability for Fuel Provisions to the Government of Afghanistan's Ministries of Defense and Interior Affairs
To determine the extent to which DoD has, since April 2018, acted upon SIGAR recommendations to review and assess fuel accountability, including coordinating with the Afghan Ministries of Defense and Interior Affairs; and planned to ensure accountability and oversight for Afghanistan National Defense and Security Forces fuel provisions in the future.

Inspection of the Afghan National Army's Kabul National Military Hospital Elevator System Replacement
To assess whether the construction of the Afghan National Army's Kabul National Military Hospital Elevator System Replacement was completed in accordance with contract requirements and applicable construction standards, and the elevator system is being used and properly maintained.

Vanquish Worldwide's National Afghan Trucking Contracts
To assess the U.S. Army's oversight and management of contractor payments for the U.S. Army's National Afghan Trucking Services contract and determine whether a specific contractor was appropriately paid for its services.

Financial Audit of Costs Incurred under DoD Awards for Afghanistan Reconstruction, PAE Government Services Inc.
To audit the maintenance and repair of Afghanistan National Defense Security Forces' vehicles and ground equipment.

Financial Audit of Costs Incurred under DoD Awards for Afghanistan Reconstruction, Engility Corporation
To audit costs incurred under U.S.-funded awards for Afghanistan reconstruction activities, specifically the Law Enforcement Professionals Program; Award Number: W91CRB-13-C-0021, for the period of 7/1/2018 to 6/30/2020; Obligation Amount: $22,035,442.

Audit of the Department of Defense's Efforts to Ensure the Accuracy of Afghan Personnel and Pay System Records and Accountability of Funds Provided to the Ministry of Defense
To determine the extent to which the DoD, since the beginning of FY 2019, has ensured: 1) the accuracy and completeness of data used in the Afghan Personnel and Pay System; and 2) that the funds it provides to the Afghan government to pay the Ministry of Defense's salaries are disbursed to intended recipients.

Review of Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment Towers
To 1) evaluate what actions are being taken to develop organic (i.e. Afghan) equipment support capabilities for the Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment Tower systems currently used by the Afghan military; 2) assess what effects a drawdown of U.S. troops would have on the mission capability of the Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment system currently deployed by the Afghan National Army, both immediately and in the long term; and 3) evaluate the effectiveness of current end use monitoring mechanisms for the Rapid Aerostat Initial Deployment systems, and how they could be effected by a drawdown.

DoD and Afghan Air Force Vetting for Corruption
To examine whether the DoD and the Afghan Ministry of Defense have developed plans, policies, and procedures that will help ensure that the Afghan Air Force and Special Mission Wing recruit, train, and retain qualified personnel that will result in a professional, credible, and sustainable Afghan Air Force and Special Mission Wing.

U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE

Budget Justification Review: DoD's Afghanistan Security Forces Fund Execution Trends
To review 1) how much has been appropriated for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) since the fund's inception in 2005; 2) the extent to which funds remain unobligated, and how does that compare with obligations since the fund's inception in 2005; and 3) the extent to which funds were cancelled since the fund's inception in 2005.

APPENDIX D
Planned OFS Oversight Projects

Tables 4 and 5 list the titles and objectives for Lead IG and partner agencies' planned oversight projects related to OFS.

Table 4.

Planned Oversight Projects Related to OFS by Lead IG Agency, as of December 31, 2020

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
Audit of the Department of Defense Military Payroll for Combat Zone Entitlements To determine whether DoD military components and the Defense Finance and Accounting Service accurately calculated hostile fire pay, imminent danger pay, family separation allowance, and combat zone tax exclusion for combat zone deployments.
Audit of Depot-Level Maintenance for U.S. Military Heavy Lift Helicopters To determine whether the depot-level maintenance for U.S. Military Heavy Lift Helicopters enabled the fleet to maintain required aircraft availability and readiness rates.
Audit of National Maintenance Strategy-Ground Vehicle Systems Contract Oversight To determine whether Army Contracting Command monitored contractor performance for the National Maintenance Strategy-Ground Vehicle Systems contract to ensure the contractor provided training, maintenance, and supply chain management support services to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces.
Audit of the U.S. Army Central Command's Modernized Enduring Equipment Set in the U.S. Central Command Area of Responsibility To determine whether the Army's implementation of the modernized enduring equipment sets in the U.S. Central Command area of responsibility is meeting mission goals.
Evaluation of U.S. Special Operations Command Joint Military Information Support Operations Web Operations Center To determine whether U.S. Special Operations Command's Joint Military Information Support Operations Web Operations Center provides U.S. combatant commanders the increased capability to conduct Internet-based information operations globally. *** Suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project will restart when force health protection conditions permit.***
Evaluation of the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency in Support of Combatant Commands Overseas Contingency Operations' Intelligence Requirements To determine whether the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency is collecting, analyzing, and distributing geospatial intelligence in support of combatant commands overseas contingency operations' intelligence requirements in accordance with law and DoD policy and guidance. *** Suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The project will restart when force health protection conditions permit. ***
Audit of Oversight of the Department of Defense Language Interpretation and Translation Enterprise II Contract in Afghanistan To determine whether the Army provided oversight of DoD Language Interpretation and Translation Enterprise II contractors in Afghanistan to ensure the contractors fulfilled requirements.
Evaluation of U.S. Central Command and U.S. Special Operations Command Implementation of DoD's Law of War Program To determine the extent to which U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) and U.S. Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) developed and implemented programs in accordance with DoD Law of War requirements in order to reduce potential law of war violations when conducting operations. The evaluation will also determine whether potential USCENTCOM and USSOCOM law of war violations were reported and reviewed in accordance with DoD policy.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
Audit of the PAE Operations and Maintenance Contract at Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan To determine whether the DoS is administering the PAE operations and maintenance contract in accordance with Federal and DoS requirements, and whether PAE is operating in accordance with the contract terms and conditions.
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GENERAL
Audit of USAID's Efforts to Fight Corruption, Fraud, Waste, and Abuse in Afghanistan To determine the extent to which anti-corruption considerations are integrated into USAID activities and how the agency monitors and responds to information about fraud that could affect its programs.

Table 5.

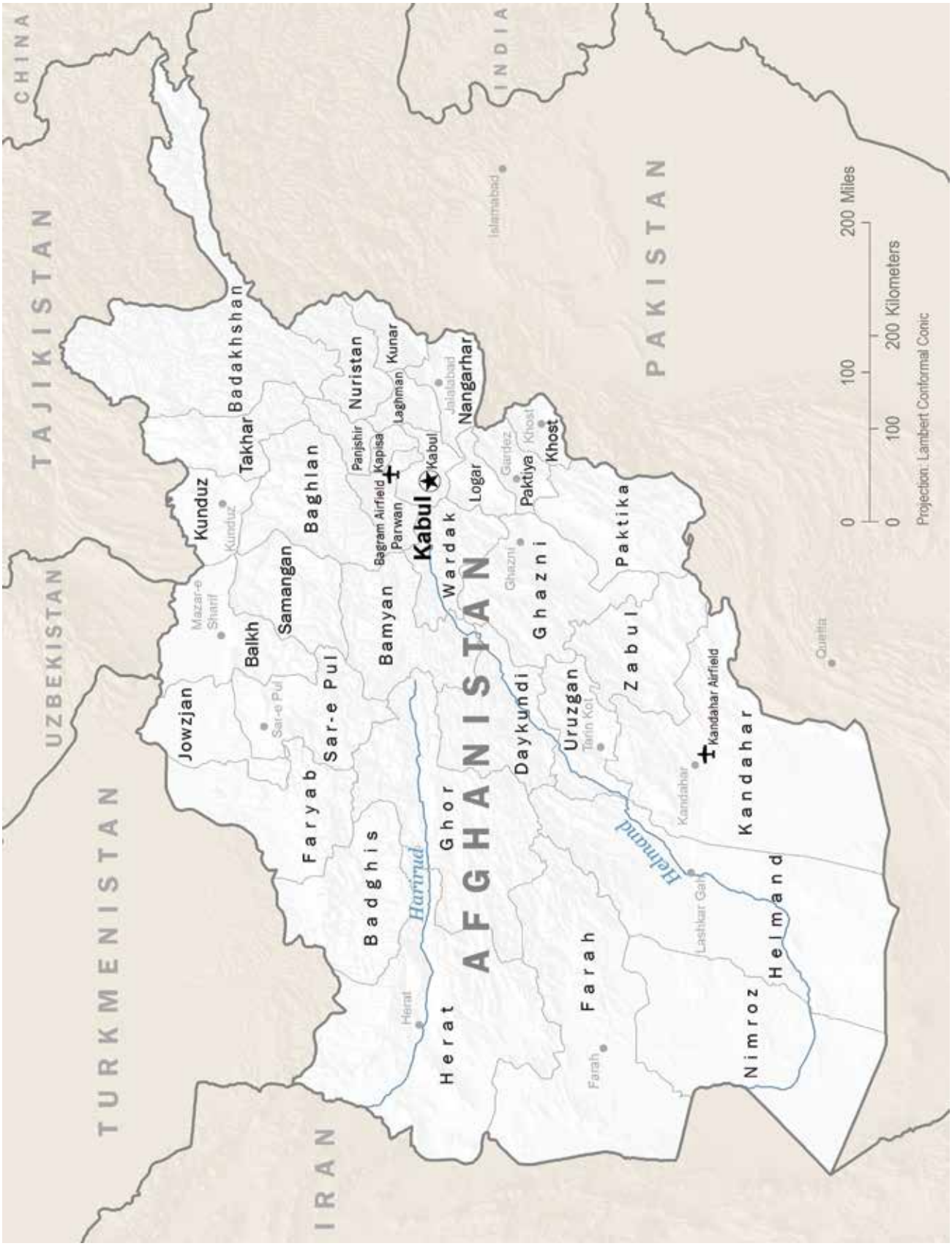
Planned Oversight Projects Related to OFS by Lead IG Partner Agency, as of December 31, 2020

SPECIAL INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR AFGHANISTAN RECONSTRUCTION
Audit of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces Pharmaceutical, Medical, and Surgical Materials (Class VIII) To assess the extent to which the DoD and the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces developed and validated the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces pharmaceutical, medical, and surgical materials needs; provided needed pharmaceutical, medical, and surgical materials supplies in accordance with DoD and the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces requirements; and oversaw the proper storage, maintenance, and usage of supplies and equipment.
Inspection of Women's Participation Program–Afghan National Police Kabul Police Academy 2 To determine whether the construction of Women's Participation Program–Afghan National Police Kabul Police Academy 2 was completed in accordance with contract requirements and technical specifications; and the facility is being used and properly maintained.
Inspection of Afghan National Army Afghan Electrical Interconnect Electrical Infrastructure Marshal Fahim National Defense University/Darulaman/Commando To determine whether construction of Afghan National Army Afghan Electrical Interconnect Electrical Infrastructure Marshal Fahim National Defense University/Darulaman/Commando was completed in accordance with contract requirements and technical specifications, and the facility is being used and properly maintained.
Inspection of Afghan National Army Afghan Electrical Interconnect Electrical Infrastructure Pol-i-Charkhi To determine whether construction of Afghan National Army Afghan Electrical Interconnect Electrical Infrastructure Pol-i-Charkhi was completed in accordance with contract requirements and technical specifications, and the facility is being used and properly maintained
Audit of the Afghan National Army-Territorial Forces To determine whether U.S. Forces-Afghanistan evaluated and implemented the Afghan National Army-Territorial Forces (ANA-TF) program in accordance with guidance; ANA-TF members were being recruited, were mobilized, and were performing; and the ANA-TF program met cost expectations.
Audit of Afghan Special Security Forces–Training Program To determine whether the Afghan Special Security Forces–Training Program (ASSF-TP) contractor is providing training and advising in accordance with contract requirements; and evaluate the progress of ASSF-TP in developing the ASSF elements in accordance with NATO, U.S., and Afghan plans.
Unmanned Vehicle Compromise To examine DoD assistance or training to the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces to help ensure that compromised intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance assets are properly accounted for and/or disposed of.
Follow up on E-Payment System Usage To determine the extent to which the e-payment system is being used in the customs revenue collection process; and what anti-corruption controls have been put in place to increase customs revenue collection and the effectiveness of those controls.

ACRONYMS

Acronym	
AAF	Afghan Air Force
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANA-TF	Afghan National Army Territorial Force
ANDSF	Afghan National Defense and Security Forces
ANP	Afghan National Police
AQIS	al-Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent
ASFF	Afghan Security Forces Fund
ASSF	Afghan Special Security Forces
USAID BHA	USAID Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance
CLS	contract logistics support
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan
COVID-19	coronavirus disease–2019
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DoD	Department of Defense
DoS	Department of State
DoS INL	DoS Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs
FY	fiscal year
IG	Inspector General
ISIS-K	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria-Khorasan
Lead IG	Lead Inspector General
Lead IG agencies	DoD OIG, DoS OIG, and USAID OIG
MoD	Ministry of Defense

Acronym	
MoI	Ministry of the Interior Affairs
MoPH	Ministry of Public Health
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
OCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OCO	overseas contingency operation
OFS	Operation Freedom's Sentinel
OIG	Office of Inspector General
OUSD(P)	Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SMW	Special Mission Wing
TAA	train, advise, and assist
TAAC	Train, Advise, and Assist Command
TAAC-Air	Train, Advise, and Assist Command–Air
UAV	unmanned aerial vehicle
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USCENTCOM	United States Central Command
USFOR-A	United States Forces-Afghanistan
WFP	World Food Programme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Endnotes

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