



OFS IN BRIEF

The 23rd quarterly report submitted by the Lead Inspector General for Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) summarizes the quarter's key events and oversight of the two complementary U.S. missions in Afghanistan: counterterrorism operations and building the capacity of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF).

Afghan Islamic Republic and Taliban Agree to Negotiation Terms

pp. 8-12

- This **procedural agreement** specifies the rules governing intra-Afghan peace talks.
- The two sides began discussing **agenda items** before a mutually agreed upon recess.
- The DIA said the Taliban views the negotiations as a necessary step to ensure the **removal of U.S. troops**.

Taliban Increased Violence with Negotiations Ongoing

pp. 12-13

- On October 13, Taliban forces launched a **major offensive** on Lashkar Gah, the capital of Helmand province.
- The Taliban offensive overran several ANDSF posts, **displaced 5,000 families**, closed 40 schools, and destroyed a major power plant.
- The DIA said the increase in violence was likely aimed at enhancing the Taliban's **bargaining position** in the peace talks.
- The DIA also said that a lasting **ceasefire was unlikely** to result from the peace negotiations in 2021.

Questions Remain About Taliban Compliance with U.S. Agreement

pp. 14-15

- The United States committed to withdraw all troops over 14 months **if the Taliban abides** by its commitments under the February 2020 agreement.
- The agreement required the Taliban to begin peace talks with the Afghan government in March, but this was **delayed** until September.
- The **Taliban has not agreed** to any substantive compromises in the talks.
- The Taliban has maintained **close ties with al-Qaeda**, despite the agreement's requirement that it not allow terrorists who threaten the U.S. and its allies to operate on Afghan soil.

"We all acknowledge the violence is too high and the Taliban must lower their violence."

–General Scott Miller, USFOR-A Commander

U.S. Reduces Forces from 5,000 to 2,500

pp. 16-17

- This quarter the DoD continued to withdraw forces and announced on January 15, 2021 that there were approximately **2,500 forces in Afghanistan**.
- The Acting Secretary of Defense said this reduction **did not represent a change** in U.S. strategy.
- The reduction involved **relocating** certain OFS staff outside the country, **refining TAA**, and **closing** several bases.
- As U.S. forces withdraw, some of their **weapons and equipment** will be **transferred** to the ANDSF.

Afghanistan Enters a Second Wave of COVID-19

pp. 38-45

- USAID efforts focused on providing **ventilators, oxygen** supplies, and planning for **vaccine distribution**.
- As of December 31, the Afghan government developed a vaccine **distribution plan** but likely won't receive any vaccines until **July 2021**.
- The pandemic worsened **food security, schools remained closed**, and infrastructure made virtual learning difficult to implement.

Oversight and Investigations

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- The DoD OIG issued a special report on weaknesses in the process for **removing military equipment** from Afghanistan as U.S. forces **withdraw**.
- The DoS OIG issued two reports that made recommendations for how the Bureau of Diplomatic Security can improve its **security program reviews** in **high-risk posts**, such as Afghanistan.
- Lead IG investigations resulted in **one criminal charge** and **\$180,000** recovered to the U.S. Government.