



## Terrorism

July 8, 2008

STANDARD VERSION

### Afghanistan Update: June 2008



*Image Source: NATO International Security Assistance Force*

### General Security Situation

This month saw the Taliban, in a display of force and coordination, launch a daring prison break at a large facility in Kandahar freeing nearly 1,000 prisoners and around 400 Taliban fighters. While the coalition has been shifting troops to meet the security demands of the present situation, the American government has had difficulty convincing allied nations to send more troops and resources to the country. Coalition deaths in Afghanistan have overtaken those in Iraq for the second consecutive month, and the populaces of many coalition allies do not want their troops there. Caveats are becoming an increasing problem, as some troops within ISAF are constrained by orders to patrol only certain provinces, not to engage in offensive operations, or not to patrol at night.

Cell phone towers have also become a popular target for the Taliban, as Afghans often call in positions of the insurgents. The Taliban has repeatedly threatened cell phone networks unless their towers are shut down during the night, when they often launch their operations. Approximately 50 cell towers have been attacked in Helmand province alone since the

beginning of the year. This is just one tactic among many new ploys the Taliban have been employing. The main Taliban approach has been to exert their influence in as wide an extent as possible. Infiltration of villages has become widespread as coalition forces struggle to hold the ground after clearing out the insurgents. The Taliban also take reprisals against villagers who cooperate with ISAF, and in regions that have heavy Taliban influence, particularly the south and eastern provinces, obtaining trust from the Afghan people is difficult for the coalition forces.

Close air support for coalition and Afghan troops has resulted in limited casualties during engagements, but has caused a row in Pakistan after 21 Pakistanis were killed in an air strike. The incident highlights one of the fundamental issues NATO has in dealing with Afghanistan: Pakistan acting as a launching board for attacks and safe haven for the Taliban. Pakistan's policy toward its essentially autonomous tribal area has long been a target for U.S. criticism, particularly after Pakistanis agreed to a ceasefire with the Taliban last month.

Cross border incidents have become such a problem that they have caused an exasperated Afghan President Hamid Karzai, facing numerous political, ethical and legitimacy problems at home, to state that Afghanistan may consider sending troops into the region. Concurrently, a report was released that alluded to the U.S. congressional leadership giving President George W. Bush authority to authorize large-scale, covert missions into Pakistan to hunt down Osama bin Laden.

### ***Regional Command Capital***

#### **June 8, 2008: Eleven Police Officers Killed**

Just south outside of Kabul 11 Afghan police officers were killed in an ambush by insurgents.

#### **June 16, 2008: Show of Support for Karzai**

After President Karzai suggested that Afghan troops might attack Taliban sanctuaries across the border in Pakistan, demonstrators marched the streets of Kabul in a show of support for Karzai. Pakistan took the comments as a potential threat and officials in the Pakistani government pledged to protect their sovereignty.

### ***Regional Command North***

#### **June 30, 2008: Germany Takes Over Combat Command**

Germany took over command of a rapid reaction force in the northern RC, marking the first time the country has provided troops for offensive operations. Germany took over the force from Norway, which wished to refocus its efforts on reconstruction.

### ***Regional Command South***

#### **June 2, 2008: Nineteen Foreign Fighters Killed in U.S. Crackdown**

In Helmand Province, United States Marines routed insurgents and caused them to seek sanctuary across the border in Pakistan. Nineteen bodies of foreign fighters were found as the Marines swept through the district.

**June 5, 2008: Two Killed in Helicopter Crash**

Two American soldiers died in a helicopter crash in Kandahar province. There were no reports of hostile actions against the chopper which was on a routine maintenance mission.

**June 6, 2008: Tribal Leader Gunned Down**

Muhammad Akbar Khakrezwal, a supporter of the Afghan government and powerful tribal leader, was gunned down at his home in Kandahar. He belonged to the Alokozai tribe, which is vehemently anti-Taliban. His brother, a police chief in Kabul, was killed three days earlier.

**June 8, 2008: Journalist Found Dead**

A local journalist for the BBC, Abdul Samad Rohani, was found dead in Helmand province after being abducted by gunmen on June 7. He was executed with a shot to the head.

**June 8, 2008: Three British Soldiers Killed, One Wounded**

Three British soldiers were killed and another wounded in Helmand province. They were struck by a suicide bomber outside their base in the Upper Sangin Valley.

**June 11, 2008: Drug Bust Hurts Taliban Operations**

A drug bust netted 260 tons of hashish in Kandahar province. The drugs were estimated to be worth \$400 million and ISAF Commander Gen. David McKiernan stated that the bust had "seriously crippled the Taliban's ability to purchase weapons."

**June 12, 2008: Two British Soldiers Killed**

While on a routine patrol in Helmand province, two British soldiers were shot and killed. They are from the 2nd Battalion, the Parachute Regiment, the same regiment that lost three soldiers on June 8.

**June 13, 2008: Prison Raid Frees 1,200**

In Kandahar province, the Taliban raided an Afghan prison and freed approximately 1,200 prisoners. About 400 Taliban fighters were freed including some mid-level commanders. The political section of the prison was targeted during the raid. Two suicide bombers broke down the gates and 30 insurgents on motorcycles rushed in. Canadian troops which are in charge of the area were rapidly deployed, but were not able to stop the raid in time. The escapees were witnessed heading east into the tribal areas.

**June 14, 2008: Four Marines Killed in Roadside Bomb Attack**

In Helmand province four Marines were killed and one wounded in a roadside bombing. The Marines were from the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion, 7<sup>th</sup> Marine Regiment and were tasked with helping to train Afghan national police.

**June 15, 2008: After Month-long Battle, Coalition Routs Taliban**

In Helmand province after nearly a month-long battle with Taliban insurgents, American and British forces had swept the area clear. British forces had been involved in skirmishes the Taliban near the city of Gamsar in Helmand for close to two years, never able to completely clear the area. With the help of 2,300 U.S. Marines, the coalition devastated the Taliban in the region, killing over 200 insurgents at the cost of one U.S. Marine. Coalition forces had previously held the area, but a strained ISAF contingent was unable to prevent a Taliban resurgence.

**June 16, 2008: Taliban Forces Surround Kandahar**

Taliban forces swelled around Kandahar after a prison break freed 400. As many as 500 fighters descended around the crucial city. They took control of 10 villages as Afghans fled into Kandahar. Both ISAF and Afghan National Army troops had been deployed to Kandahar in response.

**June 18, 2008: Four British Soldiers Killed by Roadside Bomb**

Four British soldiers were killed in a roadside bomb attack in Helmand province. The attack marked the first British female death in Afghanistan. Cpl. Sarah Bryant was among three SAS reservists who died in the attack. It was largest number of British troops killed in a single attack all year. On June 14 in Farah province, a similar attack claimed the lives of four U.S. Marines.

**June 18, 2008: Twelve Taliban Killed in Zabul**

In Zabul province, 12 Taliban fighters were killed in an encounter with coalition troops.

**June 19, 2008: Afghan and ISAF Troops Push Taliban Out**

Afghan troops supported by ISAF soldiers cleared out the villages surrounding Kandahar that the Taliban had infiltrated. Eighteen villages were cleared and 1,100 Afghan troops remained in the area. Fifty-six Taliban fighters were reported killed, with a number of foreign nationals among them. The Afghan force lost two of its soldiers with no civilian casualties reported. Afghan officials hailed the operation as a success while NATO remained concerned that a number of the militants escaped.

**June 20, 2008: Six Dead in Attack on Convoy**

Five civilians and one soldier with ISAF died in a suicide attack on a military convoy. The attack occurred in Helmand province. Two of the dead civilians were children. The bomber struck on foot, and four additional civilians were injured. A NATO official declined to comment on the nationality of the soldier.

**June 20, 2008: Ten Civilians Dead in Suicide Attack**

A suicide bomber attempting to attack a NATO convoy in Helmand province killed 10 civilians. No NATO troops were reported harmed in the incident.

**June 21, 2008: Roadside Attack in Kandahar**

A roadside bomb killed four ISAF soldiers in Kandahar province. Two soldiers were wounded in the blast. After the bomb struck, insurgents opened fire on the vehicles wounding three Afghans. The nationalities of the troops were not been released.

**June 21, 2008: IED Claims Two Afghan Soldiers**

An IED exploded in Zabul province killing two Afghan soldiers and wounding three more.

**June 22, 2008: U.S. Marines Secure Key Poppy Area**

Coalition forces secured the Gamser region in Helmand province. Initially ordered through the town to secure a road leading to Pakistan, the Marines set up camp in Gamser and removed the Taliban elements who receive a substantial portion of their revenue through taxing farmers and soliciting bribes for protection.

**June 28, 2008: Thirty-Two Militants Killed**

Around 32 militants were killed during firefight in Uruzgan province. An ISAF patrol passing through a “heavily vegetated area” came under fire from insurgents. Air strikes were called in, breaking-up the battle, and three insurgents were killed initially. Hostilities resumed shortly after the strike and coalition troops killed 29 more insurgents. A 10-year-old boy and two Afghan police were wounded in the attack.

**June 30, 2008: Twenty-Eight Insurgents Killed in Battle**

American forces, aided by air support, killed 28 insurgents in a battle in Kandahar province. Several of the dead were Taliban commanders.

***Regional Command East*****June 7, 2008: Air-strike Kills Dozens**

An air-strike by coalition forces against a group of militants in the Paktika province killed 20 according to a coalition spokesperson. A spokesman for the provincial governor of Paktika claimed 32 fighters were killed including a number of foreign elements.

**June 11, 2008: Seventeen Taliban, Four Civilians Killed**

Coalition forces targeting Taliban commanders killed 17 Taliban insurgents in Paktika province. During the battle, airstrikes were called in killing one civilian. Three more were injured and later died from their wounds while being treated by the ISAF.

**June 11, 2008: Insurgents Routed in Kunar Province**

In an engagement with coalition forces, 60 Taliban were casualties in Kunar province. At least 17 dead were confirmed, with scores more wounded. No coalition casualties were reported.

**June 18, 2008: Two Killed, Ten Wounded in Ambush**

In Paktika province, an ambush by insurgents on an ISAF patrol resulted in the deaths of two ISAF soldiers. Ten ISAF soldiers were wounded in the incident. None of the nationalities of the soldiers were released.

**June 21, 2008: Polish Soldier Killed**

A Polish soldier was killed in Paktika province. The death was caused when a bomb hit the soldier’s patrol. Four others were wounded in the incident.

**June 21, 2008: Violent Attacks in Kunar Province**

In Kunar province, insurgents launched a rocket attack on a hospital killing a worker. In response Afghan soldiers were deployed and three were killed in heavy fighting. Over a dozen of the insurgents were killed.

**June 22, 2008: NATO Troops Return Fire into Pakistan from Paktika**

A rocket barrage was fired at an ISAF base in Paktika was fired on from across the border in Pakistan and returned fire with artillery. No ISAF casualties were reported, but one Afghan civilian was killed. The United States stated Pakistan was notified immediately after the incident. A second insurgent rocket barrage on Paktika followed, during which one woman and her two children were killed.

**June 22, 2008: NATO Troops Attacked in Khost**

Insurgents fired artillery rounds at an Afghan National Army base in Khost province. Afghan and ISAF troops returned fire after locating the base. No casualties were reported for either side.

**June 23, 2008: NATO Airstrikes Kill 55 Insurgents**

ISAF and Afghan Army increased the fervor of the campaign against the Taliban near the Pakistani border. Two days of air and artillery strikes killed 55 Taliban in Paktika province. There were no coalition deaths, and a figure on the wounded was not confirmed.

**June 28, 2008: Convoy Attacked in Khost**

In Khost province, a convoy came under fire, killing five and wounding two. The convoy belonged to a construction company. All the casualties were civilian.

***Regional Command West*****June 23, 2008: Five Civilians Killed, 19 Injured**

An attack on an ISAF convoy in Herat province killed five civilians and injured 19. There were no reports of ISAF casualties. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack.

**June 26, 2008: Three Coalition Troops and Interpreter Killed**

Three coalition troops were killed in Wardak province. A military convoy was traveling through Kabul when it came under attack from insurgents. The nationalities of the soldiers were not released. One civilian interpreter was also killed during the incident.

***Pakistan*****June 2, 2008: Bomb Detonates Outside Danish Embassy**

The Embassy of Denmark was attacked by a car bomb killing six and wounding many more. Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attack. The group's number two leader, Ayman al Zawahiri, had called for attacks on Danish targets after Denmark reprinted cartoons caricaturing the Muslim prophet Mohammed.

**June 9, 2008: Think Tank Accuses Pakistan of Aiding Taliban**

The Rand Corporation., a non-profit think tank, accused Pakistani forces, Inter Services Intelligence (ISI) in particular, of providing the Taliban with training, information on U.S. troop movements and general support. The think tank warned that the United States will face "crippling, long-term consequences" if the sanctuaries in Pakistan are not removed. Pakistan supported the Taliban regime prior to the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001, but denied any current support.

**June 10, 2008: Uproar in Pakistan as Coalition Kills 21**

Afghan forces supported by U.S. troops came under fire from Taliban militants and Pakistani Army soldiers near the Pakistani border. They responded with a barrage of artillery shells. Support was called in based on intelligence from a UAV (unmanned aerial vehicle). The United States remains adamant that at no time did the Afghan troops cross into Pakistan. The Taliban forces reportedly fired first at Afghan troops setting up a check-point. The Afghan forces requested air support and U.S. military jets dropped bombs along the border. Nine Taliban fighters were killed in the fight, as well as 10 Pakistani

soldiers. A child was also killed in the incident.

### **June 28, 2008: Pakistani Forces Counter Taliban**

Pakistani police and troops were deployed to the Pakistani city of Peshawar after the Taliban attempted to gain control there. Peshawar dominates the approaches to the Kyber Pass, which is a strategically critical route to Afghanistan, Central Asia and India. Much of the supplies for NATO come through the pass. Pakistani forces destroyed a number of safe-houses and attacked centers of insurgent activity around the area.

## ***Other News***

### **June 3, 2008: No Asian Troop Commitments for Gates**

U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates received no commitments from Asian allies while traveling around the continent in an effort to bolster support for operations in Afghanistan. Gates was seeking additional troops, logistical support, medical aid, police trainers, equipment and whatever else the countries could offer. While many of the defense ministers could not unilaterally commit troops, Gates remained optimistic. "Some of them are going to go back to their governments and see if there are possibilities for doing more," he claimed.

### **June 4, 2008: New ISAF Commander**

U.S. Army Gen. David McKiernan replaced the Gen. Dan McNeill as commander of the ISAF. Gen. McNeill retired from the Army. Gen. McKiernan was responsible for leading U.S. ground troops in the removal of Saddam Hussein and has served in a variety of capacities including previous tours in Afghanistan.

### **June 5, 2008: Extended Tours for Australians**

Australian troops in Afghanistan will have their tours extended from six months to eight months. Prior to the change, after a six-month tour they were stationed in Australia for a year. The new plan, while extending troops deployments an additional two months, gives the troops 16 months respite in Australia. Joel Fitzgibbon, the Australian Defense Minister, stated the plan was to accommodate force levels with Australia's military in what he expected to be at least a 10-year commitment. Fitzgibbon also called for an increase of 10,000 troops to be sent to Afghanistan but ruled out Australia committing any additional forces.

### **June 6, 2008: Japan Team to Study Possible SDF Role**

Japan will dispatch a team to study whether Japan's Self Defense Force (SDF) can play a role in the reconstruction of Afghanistan. The zone would have to be declared a non-combat zone by the team to stay within Japan's constitutional requirement that it cannot wage war. The possible roles for the SDF include mostly logistical support and humanitarian activities.

### **June 8, 2008: U.S. First Lady Visits Afghanistan**

U.S. First Lady Laura Bush visited Afghanistan to rally support for international donors. Bush reaffirmed the United States' support for Karzai's administration and emphasized the progress made in women's rights and education while downplaying the increased violence.

### **June 12, 2008: International Donors Pledge \$21 Billion for Afghanistan**

At a Paris conference to raise funds for the reconstruction of Afghanistan, \$21 billion was raised (despite Afghan President Karzai's request for \$60 billion for the next five years). Of the \$21 billion, \$10.2 billion was from U.S. contributions. Other donors include: the Asian Development Bank with \$1.3 billion, the World Bank at \$1.1 billion, \$1.2 billion from the United Kingdom, and the European Union with \$770 million. Donors were critical of Karzai for alleged corruption and mismanagement of funds.

### **June 12, 2008: Habeas Corpus Ruling**

The U.S. Supreme Court decided in *Boumediene v. Bush* that prisoners had a constitutional right to habeas corpus, and that the Military Commissions Act of 2006 was unconstitutional. The court ruled the right of habeas corpus applies to those held in Guantanamo Bay, as well as those designated "enemy combatants" by President Bush.

### **June 13, 2008: U.S. Gets Modest Support at NATO Meeting**

Defense Secretary Robert Gates met with NATO defense ministers in Brussels and achieved some support for the mission in Afghanistan. The Italian government lifted a caveat that limited their mobile troops to certain pacified provinces. Meanwhile, 15 NATO member nations pooled together and pledged three C-17 transports. Gates stated the need for more troops in Afghanistan. He announced the need for three combat battalions, which the ministers remained mostly mute. He also requested more trainers for Afghan troops and police.

### **June 14, 2008: Britain to Send 200 Additional Troops**

Around 200 more British service personnel are to be sent to Afghanistan augmenting the U.K. forces there to 8,000. The U.K. took over the southern regional command in May and stated that extra troops were needed to combat the rising violence and increasing drug trade. The troops are all specialized in engineering, logistics or training, and will help mentor the Afghan National Army and National Police.

### **June 18, 2008: U.S. GAO Finds Flaws in Defense and State's Afghanistan Missions**

The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) criticized both the Defense and State Department's handling of developing the Afghan National Army (ANA) and police forces. The GAO said these operations lack a "sustainable strategy" even after six years and \$16.5 billion has been spent on them. The ANA is authorized 80,000 posts, and currently only has 58,000 filled. It was also said to lack leadership ability. Only two of the ANA's 105 units are fully operational and fit for combat, while the police had no fully functional units.

### **June 18, 2008: Four Helicopter Engines Reported Missing**

Four U.S. helicopter engines went missing as the helicopters were shipped overland from Bagram Air Base to a seaport for transport to the Fort Bragg, N.C. The engines were transported by a Pakistani company and are worth approximately \$13 million in total.

### **June 23, 2008: Germany to Boost its Mission to Afghanistan**

NATO forces will be bolstered by up to 1,000 additional German troops. Germany agreed to raise the cap on the number of troops it has deployed to Afghanistan from 3,500 to 4,500. It is a mixed blessing for the alliance. While the Germans agreed to send more troops, they had not lifted any of the caveats which limit their deployment to the stable northern provinces, disallow offensive operations, and ban night patrols. U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates had been critical of Germany and a number of other NATO nations



for not sending enough troops and placing too many restrictions on their operations.

### **June 26, 2008: Opium Trade on the Rise**

The United Nations' World Drug Report showed a 17 percent rise in poppy cultivation in Afghanistan. The findings showed that the country supplies 92 percent of the world's opium. The UN estimated that the Taliban received \$200 to \$400 million a year from a 10 percent protection tax on growers and traffickers. Antonio Maria Costa, head of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime, noted that no countries had taken advantage of new extradition policies designed in part to help stop Afghan drug traffickers.

### **June 28, 2008: Mass Graves from Soviet Invasion Found**

Afghans uncovered the mass graves of former Afghan President Mohammad Daud Khan, his family and supporters. They were killed after the Soviets engineered a coup against the government. Mohammad Daud Khan was Afghanistan's first president and was killed in 1978.

### **June 30, 2008: Civilian Killings Up**

A report released by the UN Humanitarian Affairs chief, John Holmes, showed that civilian killings in Afghanistan had risen by approximately 66 percent from 2007 levels. Holmes stated, "Most of those casualties are caused by the insurgents, who seem to have no regard for civilian life, but there are also still significant numbers caused by the international military forces." A NATO spokesman countered, "The U.N. Human Rights rapporteur made an accusation [in May] that we had killed 200, and I said then that those numbers were far, far higher than we would recognize, and that is still the case." NATO did not offer any revised number.

### **June 30, 2008: Deadliest Month in Afghanistan**

For the second consecutive month, coalition deaths in Afghanistan surpassed those in Iraq. Forty-five coalition troops, including 27 Americans, 13 British, two Canadians, a Hungarian, a Romanian and a Pole, died in Afghanistan during June, which was the deadliest month since the overthrow of the Taliban in 2001. By comparison, in Iraq, 31 coalition troops died, including 29 Americans. Gen. Robert Magnus, assistant commandant of the Marine Corps, called for a shift in forces from Iraq.