

Report

**Afghanistan: Security Report
November 2010 - June 2011 (PART II)**



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SUMMARY

The security situation in most parts of Afghanistan is deteriorating, with the exception of some of the big cities and parts of the central region. The situation is particularly tense in the southern and south-eastern provinces.

The insurgency has expanded far beyond its traditional strongholds. Parts of the central, western and northern regions experience a significant level of conflict-related activity and violence on a more or less regular basis. The number of civilian casualties is rising and a growing number of people experience severe problems caused by deteriorating security and an environment marked by corruption, war economy, drug traffic and crime.

Attempts to combat the fragmented insurgency seem so far not to have contributed to a more stable security situation.

SAMMENDRAG

Sikkerhetssituasjonen i Afghanistan utvikler seg i negativ retning, med unntak av situasjonen i de store byene, samt deler av de sentrale områdene av landet. Situasjonen er særlig vanskelig i de sørlige og sørøstlige områdene av landet.

Opprøret har spredd seg til områder hvor det tradisjonelt ikke har sterkt fotfeste. Områder i de sentrale, vestlige og nordlige delene av landet har vært gjenstand for regelmessige og betydelige konfliktrelaterte hendelser og voldsbruk. Antall sivile som blir drept i forbindelse med konflikten er økende og stadig flere står overfor alvorlige problemer på grunn av den forverrede sikkerheten og et miljø preget av korrupsjon, krigsøkonomi, narkotikahandel og kriminalitet.

Forsøk på å bekjempe det fragmenterte opprøret har så langt ikke ført til at sikkerhetssituasjonen har forbedret seg.

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1. INTRODUCTION

This report is an update and extension of Landinfo's most recent security report dated 24 January 2011; *Afghanistan: Sikkerhetsrapport januar – november 2010* (Landinfo 2011) (not translated). The report addresses questions posed by UDI and UNE respectively (see enclosures 5 and 6). The comments provided by Landinfo in the introduction to the abovementioned report continue to be valid.

The report is divided into two parts. Part I describes the general security situation in Afghanistan and includes an overview of observations made by key actors on the topic. Part II of the report gives an account of the security situation in selected provinces. The selection is based on enquiries Landinfo has received from UDI and UNE respectively (see enclosures 5 and 6 in Part I of the report).

2. THE PROVINCES

2.1 BALKH

Balkh Province is important economically, politically and strategically. The province is multiethnic, consisting, among others, of Tajiks, Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Hazaras and Turkmen. The Tajik Ustad Atta Mohammed Noor, affiliated with Jamiat-e Islami, has been the governor of the province since 2004. The headquarters of the Regional Command North (ISAF) is located in Balkh and the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in the province is led by Sweden. On 1 July 2011, the Afghan security forces assumed responsibility for security in Mazar-e Sharif city (BBC News 2011c). An international airport is located a few kilometres outside the city and has regular flights to destinations that include Kabul and Herat.

In 2009 the security situation deteriorated in the districts of Chimtal, Chahar Bolak and Balkh. In the course of 2010 insurgency activities moved to the districts of Sholgara, Kishindih and parts of Dawlatabad. Despite a certain presence, the insurgents nonetheless struggled to gain a foothold in the province. Researchers Antonio Giustozzi and Christoph Reuter (Giustozzi & Reuter (2011) are of the opinion that this was caused by Governor Atta's relatively well-functioning administration and that Atta has supported important power figures so that they would not change sides and join the insurgents.

In November 2010, Governor Atta expressed concern that the insurgency was in the process of spreading throughout the entire province. He was concerned that there was no apparent coordinated plan to counter the insurgency. He believed that the police were still understaffed, had poor equipment and that they were not receiving the necessary assistance from the ANA (Giustozzi & Reuter 2011).

There has been a marked increase in insurgent activity in 2011. According to ANSO (2011g), the number of attacks during the first three months rose by more than

100 per cent, from 14 to 31 attacks, compared with the same period in 2010. Although the increase in percentage is high, the real figures reveal that in reality this amounts to relatively few attacks.

The spring months have shown that the insurgents are on the offensive in Balkh, and 29 security-related incidents were reported only in the course of the first two weeks of June (ANSO 2011l, p. 9). The districts of Chimtal and Chahar Bolak are described as the epicentre for insurgent activity in the province, and these districts have significant influence over the insurgent activity in the remaining districts. A relatively strong insurgent presence appears to prevail in several other districts, and in the southern districts of the province, Sholgara, Zari and Kishindih, there has been an increase in the number of incidents. Some of the incidents in these districts can be characterized as purely criminal activity, including armed robbery.

Afghan and international forces have carried out several actions in the province. According to ISAF, a high-ranking Taliban leader was killed and another taken prisoner in an action in the Chimtal district in May 2011 (ISAF 2011b). Pajhwok reports that ten insurgents were killed in a NATO-led air strike in the Sholgar district the same year (Ehsas 2011). Approximately 500 internally displaced persons have been registered in Balkh. They are currently living in the districts of Balkh and Mazar-e Sharif (UNHCR 2011b).

Security-related incidents on the roads have been reported, and there have been cases where civilians have been caught in the crossfire (ANSO 2011k).

In the city of Mazar-e Sharif there appear to be relatively few incidents, which indicates that Governor Atta continues to have adequate control in the city. However, there are also sporadic attacks that can impact the civilian population. In April 2011, a group of demonstrators attacked the UNAMA headquarters in the city. The attack came in the wake of a demonstration against a pastor in the USA who had burnt the Koran. Several UN employees were killed, including one Norwegian officer. The Taliban denies any involvement in this incident (IWPR 2011b). Landinfo is of the opinion that this appears to be a detached, isolated episode associated with a specific occurrence and, in Landinfo's view, is not an expression of a change in the security situation for civilians. It is to be noted that the victims of this incident were not civilian population, but rather the international presence. The outcome, however, demonstrates that the Afghan security forces have an insufficient ability to handle demanding situations and emergencies.

2.2 TAKHAR

Takhar borders on the province of Kunduz, which was the hotbed of the insurgency in the north in 2008. In the course of autumn 2009 the insurgency spread across the provincial border from Kunduz to Takhar. An important difference between the two provinces is found in the composition of the population. In Takhar only ten per cent of the population are Pashtuns, whereas in Kunduz Pashtuns account for the majority of the population in certain districts. It was in the Pashtun-dominated districts that the insurgency gained a foothold. In Takhar, the insurgency has primarily developed in the Uzbek communities. Giustozzi claims that reasons for the Taliban's establishment in the province in 2010 has little to do with the Pashtun minority in the province, but rather owes to brutal governance by the current commanders:

Consequently, we face the paradoxical situation that Taliban control and heavy-handed Taliban governance, which initially led to the rise of power of the commanders, now could help the Taliban to regain control because people tend to see them as a minor evil compared with the current rulers (Giustozzi & Reuter 2011, p. 45).

In summer 2010, battles intensified in the district of Khwaja Ghar and in other districts northwest in the province, but provincial authorities did not receive reinforcements from the central authorities to repel the insurgency. In February 2011 ANSO (2011c) reported that Khwaja Ghar district had a strong presence of insurgent groups.

The international forces do not have a PRT in Takhar. The province is subordinated to the Regional Command North, which has its headquarters in Mazar-e Sharif. In September 2010, the American Special Forces commenced their “capture and kill” operations in Takhar, the purpose of which was to neutralize as many insurgents as possible. In October 2010 there was a purported ANA offensive in the province. A significant number of insurgents and local commanders were killed in the operations. These commanders have since been replaced by more radical commanders from the south who are claimed to lack knowledge of local conditions. In addition, several commanders of lower rank have purportedly surrendered to Afghan security forces (Giustozzi & Reuter 2011).

It is difficult to assess the effect of the “capture and kill” operations in the longer run. In the light of ANSO’s quarterly report for the first quarter of 2011, it may appear that these operations have had a positive effect on the security situation in the province. The report states that there were only five attacks initiated by insurgent groups in the province during the first three months of the year. This entailed a reduction of 74 per cent compared with the same period in 2010. This implies that Takhar is among the provinces that have had the strongest percentage of decrease in the number of attacks by insurgents in this period.

During the spring, the insurgents have shown effective striking power. In the end of May 2011, a suicide attack was carried out against the headquarters of the provincial governor in Taloqan, the provincial capital. Seven persons were killed. The victims were representatives of both the Afghan authorities and the international forces, including the provincial leader of the police and the police commissioner for the entire northern area, General Daoud. Governor Abdul Jabbar Taqwa was wounded in the attack, which was carried out by an insurgent dressed in a police uniform. This method has been employed in several recent attacks. The reason for the attack was a supposed ISAF bombing error in the province during the previous week. The bombing killed several civilians, including one woman and one child. ISAF claims that the victims were insurgents, a claim contested by the local population (Clark 2011). In the wake of the incident, demonstrations were arranged, resulting in several fatalities and injuries. In the provincial capital of Taloqan, more than 1,000 people participated in a similar demonstration.

ANSO (2011k) claims that the demonstrations are also an expression of increased tension between Uzbeks and Tajiks and their political groupings, respectively Jumbesh and Jamiat (ANSO 2011k). Violent clashes between two commanders in the northern areas of the province have been reported (Pajhwok Report 2011b).

Approximately 300 internally displaced persons have been registered in the district of Khawja Bahawuddin, located in the northern part of the province (UNHCR 2011b).

The situation in Takhar is described as fluid. The operations against insurgent leaders that were carried out in 2010 appear, in the short term, to have resulted in a reduction in the number of attacks by insurgent groups. There are signs, however, indicating that the insurgents are again on the offensive in the province. ANSO assesses the situation in the following manner:

The growth or deterioration of security in Takhar Province remains fluid, and will continue to be a situation that requires further monitoring and assessment (ANSO 2011h, p. 10).

2.3 SAR-E PUL

The population in Sar-e Pul consists primarily of Uzbeks, Pashtuns and Hazaras. The presence of, and attacks by, insurgent groups have particularly been seen in the northern and western parts of the province. There is no PRT with a base in the province.

The first sign of insurgency began in 2006 when an insurgent presence emerged in the districts of Sayyad and Sar-e Pol. Up until 2009, a “pocket” of insurgents developed in the north of the province, near the provincial border between Jawzjan and Faryab. The insurgency later spread to the districts of Kohistanat, Sozma Qala, Sangcharak and Gosfandi. Most of the insurgents in the province are locals, but they receive support and reinforcements from Baghdis and Faryab. According to an estimate made by the provincial governor, some 5-600 insurgents operated in the province in 2010 (Giustozzi & Reuter 2011, p. 58).

An operation led by Afghan security forces with support from ISAF, “Operation Wahdat”, targeted insurgents in the Sayyad district in Sar-e Pul (as well as Qush Tepa and Darzab districts in Jawzjan and Bilchiragh district in Faryab), an area where insurgents have had a strong presence. In May 2011, ISAF (2011a) referred to the Wahdat operation a success. According to certain reports, it is claimed that the insurgents in the province have changed alliances and have sided with the authorities. Altogether some 150 insurgents have purportedly changed sides during recent months (Central Asia Online 2011).

According to ANSO, Operation Wahdat has had a limited effect. In the report for the first half of May, after the operation was ended, the situation is characterized in the following manner:

Sar-e Pul Province continues to show signs of deteriorating security in both the widely known AOG strongholds – such as Sayyad – and the historically more operable areas, such as Sar-e Pul. This reporting period it was Sayyad that saw the most insecurity, despite the conclusion of operation Wahdat, which claimed at clearing out some of the AOG presence in the district (ANSO 2011j, p. 13).

In the latter half of May and first half of June, there were a limited number of incidents in the province. According to ANSO, this was because the insurgents were regrouping and rebuilding their capability after Operation Wahdat. A relatively large

proportion of insurgent activity in the province appears to be located in the Saayad district. The neighbouring district of Sar-e Pul has registered about 6,000 internally displaced persons (UNHCR 2011b). The insurgent groups' activity comprises checkpoints along the roads, and cases of abduction have been reported (ANSO 2011i,j,k).

ANSO's quarterly report for the first quarter of 2011 indicates a slight decrease in the number of incidents compared with the first quarter of 2010. There were 19 attacks initiated by insurgent groups during the first three months of the year, representing a reduction of 10 per cent (ANSO 2011g, p. 9).

2.4 PARWAN

The province of Parwan borders on Kabul province in the south, and the population comprises Tajiks, Pashtuns and Hazaras. The main road between the capital city area and northern Afghanistan runs through the province.

The province has long been considered relatively stable in terms of security, and with few incidents, but according to ANSO (2011g) the security situation has been deteriorating. In 2010 there were a total of 83 attacks in the province. In the first three months of the year there were 15 attacks, compared with six attacks in the same period in 2010 (ANSO 2011g, p. 9). Although this is a large percentage increase, it includes only a few actual attacks. In April 2011 as well, relatively little insurgency activity and few incidents were reported.

After 1 May 2011 when the Taliban announced the start of the spring offensive, "Operation Badr", there has been a marked increase in insurgent activity in the province. The Taliban has been very active in the Ghorband Valley and has used IEDs, direct attacks, kidnappings and targeted assassinations (ANSO 2011j). On 7 May, Pajhwok reported that a respected tribal leader who supported the authorities was killed by the Taliban in the district of Ghorband¹ (Tanha 2011b). Afghan security forces responded to the increased insurgent activity by launching two police actions during May (ANSO 2011k). The authorities' attempt to repel the insurgency has not succeeded and the insurgents have continued the attacks. Several policemen, including a district commissioner, have been killed. According to a report broadcast on Radio Free Europe, an attempt was made to assassinate the provincial governor in a suicide attack in June. The governor escaped the attack, but two civilians were killed, including a female student (Radio Free Europe 2011). The insurgents establish checkpoints in the province and they declare their views to the local population on schooling for girls and dress codes.

The security-related incidents appear to be primarily localized to the northern and eastern districts in the province. International Crisis Group describes the situation in Parwan as follows:

On the whole, Parwan is far more stable than other provinces near Kabul, but Pashtun-dominated areas such as Ghorband Valley and Koh-e Safi have increasingly come under insurgent control (International Crisis Group 2011, p. 19).

¹This district is also called Siyagerd.

International Crisis Group (2011) describes the Ghorband and Shinwar districts as “insurgent-dominated areas” (see enclosure 10 in part I of the report).

On the basis of available information, the situation in the districts of Surkh Parsa and Sheik Ali appears to be more stable than in the remainder of the province. According to a news item from Pajhwok, Surkh Parsa was declared a “peace district” after a former commander had surrendered 38 weapons to the authorities (Tanha 2011a). The majority population in the two districts are Hazaras, which differs from the composition of the population in the other districts of the province. Generally speaking, the insurgent groups have limited presence and capacity to carry out attacks in the areas where primarily Hazaras live.

2.5 HERAT

The population in Herat consists mainly of Tajiks and Pashtuns, with a minor proportion of Hazaras. During the second half of the year, some 100 000 Kuchi nomads stay in the province; many of these migrate to Ghor province during the summer. No confrontations between the resident population and nomads have been reported in Herat province.

ISAF has its headquarters for Regional Command West in Herat, and Italy leads the province PRT. As of 1 July 2011, Afghan security forces have assumed responsibility for security in Herat city (BBC News 2011c). Herat is a strategically important province because of its geographical proximity to Iran. A large percentage of trade with Iran takes place via the border crossing at Islam Qala in Herat province. The airport in Herat is located about ten kilometres south-east of the city, along the road to Farah. In February 2011 it acquired the status as an international airport.

In Landinfo’s security report (Landinfo 2011) reference is made to a local Taliban commander’s defeat and to the fact that, according to informants in Kabul, this led to a decrease in the number of security-related incidents in the central parts of the province. The decrease in the number of security incidents appears to have continued during spring 2011.

It would appear that there are fewer security-related incidents in Herat city and the surrounding districts (Injil and Guzara) than in other areas of the province. However, there is a presence of insurgents and sporadic attacks that impact the civilian population here as well. A complex attack on 30 May 2011 revealed that the insurgents have the capacity to carry out actions against central targets in the province. In the attack, a car bomb was detonated at the gates of the Italian-led provincial reconstruction team’s base. Another bomb detonated at the same time in Herat city, and this resulted in four civilians being killed and more than 30 civilians wounded (Partlow & Hamdard 2011). The previous large attack in this area was the attack on UNAMA’s compound in Guzara district in October 2010. Otherwise, more low-profile attacks in the area have been reported, including a direct attack on an ANP patrol in Herat city in the beginning of April and IEDs targeting Afghan security forces in the district of Injil in June. Despite reports of isolated cases of IED and direct attacks, the scope, according to ANSO, is not comprehensive:

Despite these figures, both IED and direct fire attacks nonetheless remain infrequent in the city and this will likely to continue being the case (ANSO 2011h, p. 15).

The announced spring offensive on the part of the insurgent groups will likely result in somewhat increased insurgent activity in the central areas of Herat as well. ANSO, however, states that:

Although further AOG related incidents in and around Herat City need to be expected, the recent events alone do not directly change the overall security situation in Herat City and such attacks are not likely to increase on a large scale or be repeated in such a dimension on a frequent base (ANSO 2011k, p. 17).

In the central districts of Herat, Injil and Guzara, a total of 55 000 internally displaced persons have been registered. There are also internally displaced persons in several of the other districts in the province, but in significantly smaller numbers, not exceeding a couple of hundred (UNHCR 2011b).

In the province as a whole, the number of attacks by insurgent groups increased during the first quarter of 2011. According to ANSO, there was an increase from 27 to 58 attacks compared to the same period in 2010. In April there were twice as many attacks in the province compared with the year before (ANSO 2011h). The insurgent groups have a strong presence and a high level of activity in the districts of Adraskan and Shindand, in the southern parts of the province. There is also an increasing presence of insurgent groups in the northern districts of the province: Gulran, Khoskh and Kushki Kuhna, all of which have had increased activity from the groups during the current year. Cases have been registered where civilians have been killed in crossfire between insurgents and Afghan security forces.

In the eastern districts of Pashtun Zarghun, Obe and Chisti Sharif, there is increasing insurgent activity. In Chisti Sharif there has been a longstanding strife between local commanders (ANSO 2011k). Insurgent groups also operate in the district, and Afghan security forces have carried out actions in the area. Together, these factors create a very complex conflict scenario and a difficult situation for the civilian population.

Incidents along the roads in the province have been reported. The main road from Herat to Kandahar appears to be exposed, but security-related incidents have also been reported on other roads in the province, including the road from Herat city to the district of Obe in the east.

2.6 NIMROZ

The largest ethnic groups in Nimroz are Balochs and Pashtuns, followed by Tajiks. The international forces do not have a separate PRT in Nimroz, but the province is subordinated the Regional Command South West, which has its headquarters in the neighbouring province of Helmand. Compared with Helmand, Nimroz has little insurgent group activity and few operations conducted by international forces. The first three months there were only 14 attacks initiated by insurgent groups in Nimroz, which entails a reduction of 33 per cent compared with the preceding year (ANSO 2011g, p. 9). The main proportion of insurgent activity takes place in the district of Khash Rod. This is due to the fact that insurgents in Helmand often operate out of bases in Khash Rod:

As seen in the past, the security situation in the Khash Rod is frequently linked to the developments in the neighbouring Helmand Province as AOG

elements active in Helmand had been using the district as a support base to reorganize themselves (ANSO 2011c, p. 22).

During periods of time there has been tension on the border between Iran and Afghanistan. In April, according to ANSO (2011h), Iranian and Afghan border police exchanged fire, resulting in two civilians being wounded. It is reported that Iranian police have fired, on several occasions, at Afghans who illegally tried to cross the border into Iran. Otherwise, security challenges in the province are related to the smuggling network and crime. On 7 March 2011 Pajhwok Afghan News reported that a man had been arrested for possession of 300 kg of heroin; his objective was to smuggle the heroin into Iran through Nimroz. The week before, another smuggler was arrested with 25 kg heroin and hashish (Ramin 2011). In January, two persons were purportedly killed in connection with a robbery on the outskirts of the provincial capital of Zaranj (Rameen 2011).

Otherwise there is relatively little information available on Nimroz. In more than half of ANSO's updates, Nimroz is not mentioned because ANSO "does not know enough about the area to comment on the significance of the incidents occurring there". There are no other provinces that are so frequently omitted from ANSO's newsletter. In those cases when Nimroz is mentioned, the accounts are often brief and somewhat schematic. There are also few other sources that report on the situation in Nimroz. No internally displaced persons are registered in the province (UNHCR 2011b).

2.7 GHAZNI

Ghazni borders on Wardak province in the north and is primarily populated by Hazaras in the western districts and Pashtuns in the south-eastern districts. There are also Tajiks and Uzbeks in the province.

The security situation in Ghazni is deteriorating, and numerous security incidents are reported. ANSO reports a 115 per cent increase in the number of attacks by insurgent groups for the first quarter of 2011 compared with the first quarter of 2010. In real numbers, this amounts to an increase from 71 to 152 incidents (ANSO 2011g, p. 9). ANSO (2011g) assesses Ghazni as an *extremely insecure* province. Especially in April and May there has been a sharp increase in the number of security-related incidents.

Much of the insurgent activity in the province targets the provincial capital, Ghazni city, and the districts in the south and east. The areas are strategically important in order to secure the flow of necessary supplies to the neighbouring provinces in the south-west, Zabul and Uruzgan (ANSO 2011j). Insurgent groups carry out a large number of direct attacks, particularly against police checkpoints, but also indirect attacks in the form of IEDs deployed on main (Highway 1) and secondary traffic arteries (ANSO 2011i).

International Crisis Group (ICG 2011) claims that the shadow governor, Mullah Najibullah, who is an ethnic Tajik, has helped the Taliban establish a strong position in Ghazni, and that insurgents have virtually full control in districts such as Andar, Moquer, Qarabagh, Giro, Gelan and Nawa. The Taliban controls the population through threats and executions. Many feel forced to support the insurgency, actively

or passively, despite the fact that they are opposed to the Taliban's operations and ideology (ICG 2011, pp 17-18).

Comprehensive insurgent activity is reported in the province's south-eastern districts, including Qarabagh, Gelan, Waghaz, Yih Dak, Rashidan, Ab Band and Khawaja Umari (ANSO 2011e,f,i,j; Himmat 2011c,d). According to ANSO (2011j), Nawa district, south in the province, is under complete control of the insurgent groups, and consequently there is little or no presence on the part of the Afghan authorities. According to a report from Pajhwok Afghan News, Afghan and international forces are said to have killed 48 insurgents on 18 May 2011 in a single action in an attempt to regain control over the district (Himmat 2011e).

In Andar district, continual clashes are reported between insurgent groups and Afghan and international security forces, in which civilians were also purportedly killed or wounded (ANSO 2011b; Himmat 2011a,b,e,f). Furthermore, it was reported in May that the main market in the district was shut down for a month's time (ANSO 2011j).

Only very few sources refer specifically to the security situation in the Hazara-dominated areas west in the province, and in Landinfo's opinion, this suggests that the situation in these districts is relatively calm and thus differs greatly from the rest of Ghazni. ANSO (2011j) reports that insurgent activity has been registered in the province's westernmost district, Ajristan. ANSO does not provide a detailed description of the kind of insurgent activity in question, but points out that the mobile telephone network has occasionally been disrupted in areas where Afghan security forces have little presence. Beyond this, ANSO does not report any security-related conditions in the Hazara-dominated districts.

Pajhwok Afghan News reports that in the Hazara-dominated areas, insurgent groups frequently prevent travellers from going into and leaving the areas, and this represents a particular challenge for the population. The district commissioner in Jaghori, Zafar Sharif, points out that people avoid travelling through the Qarabagh district because of the security situation in this district (Himmat 2011h).

Despite the difficult security situation in major parts of the province, Afghan authorities reported that 200 insurgents had surrendered to the authorities in the course of the first five months of 2011 (Himmat 2011g).

2.8 GHOR

Ghor borders on Herat and Badghis in the northwest, and the population consists primarily of Tajiks and Hazaras. In addition, the province is home to Pashtun and Uzbek minorities.

During the first quarter of 2011, the number of security-related incidents remained at the same level as in the first quarter of 2010: three attacks (ANSO 2011g, p. 9). In April and May, approximately 20 attacks by insurgent groups were reported (ANSO 2011i). Despite few reported incidents, ANSO is of the opinion that the security situation is deteriorating. Part of the reason for this may be that Ghor borders on other provinces where there is fairly widespread insurgent activity: Faryab and Badghis in the north and Helmand in the south. Groups operating in these provinces have periodically crossed the border into Ghor.

ANSO (2011i) reports a possible increase in insurgency activity in the province's northernmost district, Charsada, and that cases have been reported of illegal checkpoints along the main road between Charsada and Chaghcharan.

The leader of the police anti-terror unit in Ghor, Ghulam Yahya, was shot and killed on 3 May 2011. No one assumed responsibility for the attack, but the journalist Hakimi is of the opinion that most likely, the attack is part of the Taliban's previously announced offensive (Hakimi 2011).

The southern parts of the province, which previously have been highly affected by insurgent activities, have been relatively calm in 2011, with only a few reported security-related incidents (ANSO 2011i). Compared to previous years, in 2011 the insurgent groups have been more active in the Taywara district. Security along the road between Pasaband and Taywara is regarded as a matter of concern, among other things because of several abductions that have taken place along this stretch of road (ANSO 2011j,1).

Criminal groups are also a source of concern for the population, and sporadic attempted robberies along the road network in some of the districts of the province have been reported (ANSO 2011j). IWPR (2011a) claims that in the province there are several powerful warlords who are responsible for a number of attacks against the population, including abductions and forced marriages. The warlords have purportedly allied themselves with militias that operate independently, often under cover of being part of the authorities' local police initiative.²

The Hazara-dominated districts in the east appear to be calmer than the other districts in the province, and few security-related incidents have been reported. However, there are indications suggesting that the security situation in the northern parts of Dawlat Yar district is deteriorating, because armed groups associated with the local commander based in Murgab in Chaghcharan district have been active in Dawlat Yar (ANSO 2011k). Landinfo is unfamiliar with sources that report on security-related incidents in Lal Wa Sarjangan district.

2.9 JAWZJAN

Jawzjan borders on Balkh in the east and Faryab in the west, and the largest population groups are Turkmen and Uzbeks. There are also Pashtun, Arab and Tajik minorities in the province. In addition, nomadic Kuchis migrate into the province during the summer months.

Jawzjan was long regarded as being one of the calmest provinces in northern Afghanistan. In the first six months of 2011, the security situation has deteriorated. The number of attacks by insurgent groups increased by 175 per cent in the first three months of the year, from 12 incidents in 2010 to 33 incidents in 2011 (ANSO 2011g, p. 9). In the course of the first half-year of 2011, there have been incidents in districts that previously were not impacted by the conflict, and the province has been exposed to types of attacks that were not seen earlier, particularly along the main road between Maymana and Mazar-e Sharif. These include the kidnapping of four persons on 10 March 2011 in what was reportedly the first illegal checkpoint in

² Afghan Local Police Initiative is a US-supported programme that aim to improve security in less accessible areas of Afghanistan by recruiting local persons to patrol the local areas.

Khwaja Du Koh district. On 25 March 2011, the first illegal checkpoint in Fayzabad district was reported, and on 20 April 2011 reports on the first attack against one of the police checkpoints along the main road in Aqcha district were received (ANSO 2011i). Since January, approximately 10 attacks have been carried out each month (ANSO 2011l).

Giustozzi & Reuter (2011) point out that the authorities have poor access to the districts of Darzab and Qush Tepa (along with Sayyad district in Sari Pol province), and that these districts in 2009 and 2010 have developed into two of the most important “pockets” for the Taliban’s presence in northern Afghanistan. For example, a local commander, the Tajik Mullah Nadirk, operates as one of the Taliban’s main commanders in the area. As of April 2010, Mulla Nadir had recruited 180 Taliban soldiers from several regions including the Darzab and Qush Tepa districts (Giustozzi & Reuter 2011, p. 55). Moreover, Giustozzi & Reuter point out that the province is “predisposed” to support for the Taliban due to the traditionally weak bonds between the Turkmen majority in the province and anti-Taliban factions.

Afghan security forces and international forces have recently completed an offensive (Operation Wahdat) against the Taliban in Darzab and Qush Tepa (as well as Sayyad in Sari Pol and Bilchirag in Faryab). Several militants, including three commanders, were purportedly killed in a single incident in Qush Tepa in early May 2011 (Tamkeen 2011). In the context of the Wahdak operation, increased insurgent activity was reported in Darzab and Qush Tepa, primarily targeting Afghan authorities, both *Arbakis*³ and local police (ANSO 2011l).

As a result of Operation Wahdat, other areas of the province, particularly the Fayzabad district, have been exposed to attacks by the Taliban (ANSO 2011l). One possible cause for this could be that many insurgents have been forced out of the area of the operation. According to ANSO (2011l), increased activity in Fayzabad also owes to the fact that insurgent groups have crossed the border from Chintal and Chahar Bolak districts in Balkh province. Insurgent groups have been responsible for attacks against convoys and police checkpoints, IED attacks and assassinations of civilian Afghans accused of espionage.

The increasing number of illegal checkpoints along the main roads of the province is another threat against the local population in Jawzjan. The main road between Shibirghan and Sar-e Pul, with approximately 10 incidents in 2011, as well as Shibirghan and Mazar-e Sharif, has been particularly exposed (ANSO 2011j,k).

According to both ANSO and Pajhwok Afghan News, insurgent groups have attacked telecommunications masts in Aqcha, Fayzabad, Darzab and Mardyan districts (ANSO 2011k, Pajhwok Report 2011a). Allegedly, this has occurred because the mobile service providers have not complied with the insurgent groups’ demand that they should turn off the mobile telephone network during the night. This has been important for the insurgents to prevent their activity and movements from being traced.

It is reported that the Taliban is undertaking an increasing number of abductions with a view to extract ransom. This is reported to be the case in Darzab and Qush Tepa

³Local tribal militias who collaborate with the authorities

districts, where the Taliban is said to have been responsible for the abduction of a schoolteacher (Tamkeen, 2011a,b).

2.10 FARYAB

Faryab borders on Jawzjan and Sari Pul in the east, and the population consists primarily of Uzbeks and Pashtuns, followed by Tajiks and Turkmen.

The security situation in Faryab continues to deteriorate. The number of attacks carried out by insurgent groups increased by 45 per cent in the first quarter of 2011 compared to the first quarter in 2010. In terms of actual incidents, this represents an increase from 38 to 55 attacks (ANSO 2011g). According to the journalist Astri Sehl, at the end of May 2011 the frequency of attacks had increased by 50 per cent in comparison to the same period of 2010 (Sehl 2011). ANSO (2011g) considers Faryab to be a moderately insecure province.

Over time, Faryab has become an important province for the movement of insurgent groups between the western and northern areas of Afghanistan. The insurgent groups have thereby gained a foothold in several of the districts of the province. The entire province witnessed a deterioration of the security situation, but the groups of insurgents maintain a strong presence primarily in the south-western districts. In addition to Ghormach, which has remained unstable over a long period of time, in the Qaysar and Almar districts in particular the insurgents remain virtually in total control (ANSO 2011b). In addition, the security situation in Kohistan, Bilchirag and Pashtun Kot is reported to represent a major challenge (ANSO 2011k). There are increasingly frequent reports of incidents in which insurgent groups enter villages in Kohistan and Pashtun Kot and force the local population to provide them with food and shelter (ANSO 2011k). With regard to Pashtun Kot, ANSO (2011) points out that insurgent groups have gained a foothold in Ming Darakht village, and there is apprehension that the rest of the district will also witness an increase in insurgency activity in the near future.

The security situation in the south-western districts, particularly in Qaysar, has resulted in many civilians being displaced to district centres (Sehl 2011; ANSO 2011k). In the Qaysar district, 12 000 persons have fled from some 20 villages due to clashes between insurgent groups and Afghan and international forces. In May 2011, the Red Cross distributed food and emergency equipment to the internally displaced persons in this area (ICRC 2011; IRIN 2011). Figures from UNHCR show that Qaysar is home to nearly 28 000 IDPs (UNHCR 2011b, see enclosure 2 in part I of the report).

In the northern districts in the province, and in Dawlatabad in particular, a significant level of activity has been observed so far this year (ANSO 2011j). The district thus continues to be an area of focus for the insurgents in northern Faryab. According to ANSO (2011i), the Jungal area is particularly exposed.

As in Jawzjan, increased insurgent activity is reported in Faryab along the main roads of the province. In May and June 2011 there has been a large increase in the number of incidents, particularly along the main road between Andkhoy and Maymana, in various forms including attacks on convoys, illegal checkpoints and IED attacks. Afghan and international forces are currently undertaking an offensive (Operation Wahdat 2) to neutralize insurgents along this stretch of road, and further

clashes are expected in this context. According to ANSO (2011), seven attacks were reported in the first weeks of June 2011 in Dawlatabad district.

On 1 May 2011, the first illegal checkpoint along the ring road in Khwaja Sanz Posh district was reported, which represented the first security incident in this district during the current year (ANSO 2011j). In Shirin Tagab, a suicide attack took the lives of four civilians and wounded 22 on 22 February 2011 during a Buzkashi match. ANSO considers the powerful Pehlwan family to have been the target of the attack (ANSO 2011d).

Maymana city still remains calm and under good control of the authorities and few security-related incidents are reported. Escalating insurgent activity in the south-western districts of the provinces has so far not affected the situation in Maymana.

2.11 KABUL PROVINCE AND CITY

Kabul borders on Parwan in the north and is an ethnically diverse province composed of large groups of Pashtuns and Tajiks. Hazaras comprise a large group primarily in Kabul city. Turkmen, Balochs and Uzbeks are minority groups in the province.

The security situation in Kabul province continues to develop along the same trajectory as in 2010. ANSO (2011f) reports that there was a decrease from 24 to 22 security-related incidents in the first quarter of 2011, compared to the same period in 2010. ANSO considers the province to have low insecurity, and the province is considered to be one of the country's more tranquil areas (ANSO 2011g, p. 10). Periodically there have been extremely low levels of security-related incidents (ANSO 2011j). With a few exceptions, registered insurgent activity has been aimed at specific targets: the international forces and Afghan authorities.

The security situation in the province is affected by a number of factors. International Crisis Group (2011) points out that the province is the base for a number of criminal groups, several of which are associated with the political elite. Furthermore, the ICG points out that a corrupt government apparatus has helped the insurgents gain access to the capital city. Corruption is reported to be one of the causes why the insurgents have succeeded in infiltrating security forces, and in some cases in collaborating with elements in the state apparatus. The organization states the following:

The conflict in and around the capital is no longer a clear-cut armed conflict between an insurgency dominated by south-eastern Pashtuns and a Tajik-dominated Afghan security apparatus, backed by the US. Instead, ethnic, religious, political and economic drivers of conflict are now blurred, with an increasingly pronounced interdependency between corrupt Afghan government officials, criminal networks and insurgent commanders (International Crisis Group 2011, p. 9).

Civilian Afghans in Kabul province face a complex security situation, and insurgent activity represents only one of several threats. In addition to a generally high level of crime, particularly in Kabul city, reports on violent conflicts between various warlords have been received from several locations, including Paghman and Deh Sabz (ANSO 2011i). ANSO (2011i) also reports that there have been cases of financially-motivated abductions of businessmen with demands for ransom

payments, and there is much to suggest that “abduction cartels” have been established. The extent of this activity, however, is uncertain.

The district of Surobi appears to have a relatively high level of insurgent activity. ANSO (2011j) describes Surobi as a main base for escalation of direct attacks, particularly against the international forces’ road tanker vehicles and ambushes against security forces. International Crisis Group (2011, p. 16) also portrays Surobi as one of the province’s most insecure areas, among other reasons because two former warlords, Haji Nazrat Khan (Hezb-e-Islami and ally of the Taliban since the 1990s) and Commander Mubin (Jamiat-e-Islami and Mahaz-e Milli-e islami) still have strong influence through their networks fighting for the Taliban. Afghan security forces assumed responsibility for security in Kabul province from 1 July 2011. Surobi district, however, is not part of the security transition (ANSO 2011h).

In addition to Surobi, International Crisis Group (2011, p. 31) (see enclosure 10 in part I of the report) describes the districts of Bagrami, Charasiyab, Deh Sabz, Mir Bacha Kot, Musayi and Paghman as *insurgent-dominated areas* without providing any further details concerning the specific implications of this description. ANSO reports incidents in Musayi, Chahar Asyab and Paghman which border on Logar and Wardak in the southeast, as well as in Deh Sabz and Qarabagh which border on Parwan in the north.

Despite several spectacular suicide attacks in Kabul city, according to (ANSO 2011j), the city remains calm. On average, Kabul city has seen one suicide attack every three weeks (ANSO 2011k, p. 2). International Crisis Group (2011) points out that the large influx of internally displaced persons to Kabul city, combined with organized crime, represents a favourable basis for mobilization of insurgent groups. Reported incidents show that insurgents can enter the city and attack high-profile targets with relative ease. On 28 January 2011 insurgents attacked the food store *Finest* in the area of Wazir Akhbar Khan (BBC News 2011a). Human Rights Commissioner Hamida Barmaki and her family were killed in the action. Another high-profile suicide attack took place on 21 May 2011 in which at least six persons were killed and 23 wounded when insurgents entered a military hospital (Charsad Bestar Hospital) (BBC News 2011d). On 29 June 2011, six insurgents attacked Intercontinental Hotel and waged a five-hour-long battle that resulted in the deaths of at least ten persons in addition to six of the attackers (Aftenposten 2011). International Crisis Group (2011) claims that given the strong presence of Afghan and international forces, the Taliban is currently not interested in establishing physical control over Kabul city, but is instead attempting to conquer the city psychologically.

ANSO points out that the main focus of the insurgent groups is outside Kabul province, which may explain why the province is relatively stable:

Observing the developments in other regional center, Kabul Province and the capital city constitute only a secondary area of interest for AOGs [Armed Oppositional Groups], with local considerations (such as the cost/benefit ratio) outweighed by AOG strategic and tactical focus on other regions (ANSO 2011k, p. 2).

According to ANSO (2011i,l), the Afghan security forces maintain adequate control in the province for the time being. Purportedly, a total of 80 per cent of the security

incidents in the province are operations initiated by the security forces, including the current Operation Omeid 8. The purpose of the latter is to neutralize insurgents in rural areas of the province. ANSO (2011k) describes a situation in which momentum remains with ANSF, despite the fact that the province has been subject to several large-scale attacks in 2011.

2.12 DAY KUNDI

Day Kundi borders on Uruzgan in the south and is primarily inhabited by Hazaras. The southern districts have pockets of Pashtuns.

The security situation in Day Kundi continues to be relatively stable. In the first quarter of 2011, ANSO has registered a slight decrease (13 per cent) in the number of reported security-related incidents (compared with 2010), from 8 to 7 incidents. ANSO (2011g, p.10) considers the general security situation in the province as one of low insecurity and equal to the situation in Bamiyan, Samangan, Panjshir and Kabul.

Since 2009, the districts in the south, Kajran and Gizab, have witnessed increasing insurgent activity. This trend has continued into 2011. In the rest of the province, no security-related incidents have been reported in several periods of time. ANSO (2011a) points out that local power struggles and criminal activity along the roads represent general security challenges in the northern districts, without further identifying the districts that are most affected or the identity of local power figures who are involved. An exception to this are the reported confrontations between a local warlord and Afghan police in the Khedir district, purportedly due to the fact that the police set up a checkpoint near the warlord's residence (ANSO 2011j).

Part of the reason why the insurgents increasingly have entered Kajran and Gizab is found in the strategic location of these districts. According to ANSO (2011e), the two districts are essential for transport of insurgents and equipment to the surrounding provinces of Helmand and Uruzgan, as well as the fact that the districts represent possible safe havens for insurgents. The road network through these two districts is also important for travel to/from Kandahar and Ghazni, and on to Pakistan (ANSO 2011b,d).

2.13 NANGARHAR

Nangarhar is located on the border to Pakistan and is primarily inhabited by Pashtuns.

In the beginning of 2011, an increasing number of security incidents were reported in Nangarhar. According to ANSO (2011g, pp. 9-10) there was a 68 per cent increase in the number of incidents during the first quarter of 2011, when compared to the first quarter of 2010: from 76 to 128. Nangarhar is assessed by ANSO (2011g) as highly insecure. ANSO (2011k) points out that the trend towards a deterioration of the security situation in the beginning of the year has not continued in April and May.

ANSO (2011k) points out that Bati Kot, Khogyani, Sherzad, Shinwar and Sorkh Rod are *areas of contest, in which* neither the authorities nor the insurgents or local power figures are in control. In January 2011, Bati Kot was described as an area where insurgent groups conduct foot patrols, door-to-door actions to extract donations, as

well as checks of vehicles after nightfall. In order to counter this development, international forces have begun to conduct nightly patrols (ANSO 2011a).

Furthermore, insurgent groups maintain a strong presence in Chaparhar. Extensive use of IEDs has been reported. These include an attempt by the Taliban to assassinate a local tribal leader in an attack of this type (Hashimi 2011). Afghan and international forces have undertaken intensified military operations in the district, and ANSO (2011) reports that as a result the district has remained calm during the first weeks of June.

Despite isolated attacks in Jalalabad city, there have been periods without any reported security-related incidents. The most spectacular attack took place in February 2011, when seven suicide bombers entered a branch of Kabul Bank and killed 40 and wounded 92 persons (ANSO 2011e). This attack differs from other attacks, since it appears to have targeted civilian infrastructure and unarmed civilians. Purportedly, several persons associated with the Afghan security forces were inside the bank on their day off to collect their wages. The province police chief, Alishah Paktyamwal, and his next in command were among the wounded (BBC News 2011b). According to Pajhwok Afghan News, two of the suicide bombers who survived the attack, one person from Northern Wasiristan and one from Jalalabad, were reportedly sentenced to death and executed 20 June 2011 (Ahmad 2011).

So far this year, the use of IEDs has been one of the main tactics used by insurgent groups (ANSO 2011i,j). ANSO has reported incidents of this nature in places that include Chaparhar, Bihsud, Khogyani, Achin, Rodat, Bati Kot, Nazyan, Kuz Kunar and Jalalabad city. In addition, the stretch of road between Jalalabad and the border town of Torkham have been exposed to an increasing number of IED attacks primarily targeting tanker vehicles. A separate IED insurgent cell operating specifically to target tankers supplying the international forces with fuel is reported to have been detected (ANSO 2011j). Afghan police, however, have been relatively effective and have prevented numerous IED actions. In 2011, the number of averted IED incidents equals the number of actual detonations (ANSO 2011e).

There have also been several high-profile suicide actions in the province. ANSO (2011i) reports that the insurgents occasionally have used official military uniforms during attacks of this type.

In Sherzad and Khogyani districts, Afghan and international security forces have stepped up their efforts to combat the cultivation and production of opium, which has resulted in an increase of narcotics-related conflicts (ANSO 2011j).

Several attacks on music shops have been reported, among them attacks in Jalalabad city and Shinwar district (ANSO 2011e,l). According to the leader of the music dealers' association in Jalalabad, Abdul Ghani (quoted in Ehityar 2011), the situation has deteriorated since August 2010. Fifteen music shops are reported to have been attacked, and another eight have closed out of fear of attacks.

Increased infiltration of insurgent groups into the province's northern district, Dara-i-Nur, has been reported. According to ANSO (2011i), this reflects the rising strength of the insurgent groups in the southern parts of Kunar, and that the elements that have crossed the border and entered Nangarhar province mainly originate in this area.

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