

Exhibit 2

Afghan Taliban

AT A GLANCE

Overview
Organization
Strategy
Major Attacks
Interactions
Maps



HOW TO CITE

Mapping Militant Organizations. "Afghan Taliban." Stanford University. Last modified June 2018. <https://cisac.fsi.stanford.edu/mappingmilitants/profiles/afghan-taliban>

OVERVIEW

The Afghan Taliban – not to be confused with the Pakistani Taliban – is a Sunni Islamist militant organization created in 1994 to establish a strictly Shariah-governed Afghan state. The Taliban achieved this goal in 1996 and ruled Afghanistan as the main governmental body through 2001. After 9/11, the American-led invasion pushed the Taliban regime out of power. Since 2001, the Taliban has actively fought to push U.S. and NATO military forces out of Afghanistan and delegitimize the current government of Afghanistan. The Taliban utilizes both conventional and unconventional tactics to pursue its goals. The group's power is concentrated and maintained in the hands of mullahs from the Kandahari Pashtun tribes, known as the Quetta Shura.¹ In recent years, the Afghan government has made peace processes with the Taliban its priority, yet as of 2018, reports indicate that the Taliban is in full control of 14 districts in Afghanistan (4% of the country) and maintain an active physical presence in an additional 263 districts (66%).²

A. SUMMARY

Formed: 1994

Disbanded: Group is active.

First Attack August 1994: Taliban militia marched northward from Maiwand and captured the city of Kandahar (unknown killed, unknown wounded).³

¹ Semple, Michael. "Rhetoric, Ideology and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement." *United States Institute of Peace*, Peaceworks, 5 Dec. 2015, www.usip.org/publications/2015/01/rhetoric-ideology-and-organizational-structure-taliban-movement.

² Sharifi, Shoaib, and Louise Adamou. "Taliban Threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC Finds." *BBC News*, BBC, 31 Jan. 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42863116.

³ Rashid, Ahmed. *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1996).

Last Attack: June 20, 2018: Taliban militants attacked Afghan soldiers and captured a military base in the Western province of Badghis. This was their first major attack after a ceasefire was called for the Eid al-Fitr holiday (46 killed, unknown wounded).⁴

B. NARRATIVE SUMMARY

The Taliban, not to be confused with Pakistani Taliban emerged as an Islamist militant organization in 1994 under the spiritual leadership of Mullah Mohammad Omar. A large majority of Taliban supporters are students from Afghan and Pakistani madrasa, hence the name Taliban or - in Pashto - students. Although the Taliban officially formed in 1994, its original fighters were the mujahedeen, forces that fought the Soviet Union in Afghanistan from 1969 to 1989. During this time, the fighters were covertly supported by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency and its Pakistani counterpart, the Inter-Services Intelligence directorate (ISI).⁵

In September of 1994, Mullah Mohammad Omar, the future leader of the Taliban, left Sang-i-Hisar Madrassa in Maiwand, where he had been studying since the end of the Soviet occupation. This and other madrasas initially fomented the Taliban organization. Pakistani and Arab philanthropists gave these school funding hoping to proselytize a particular interpretation of Islam. At these madrassas, future Taliban members developed a belief in Shariah law, motivated by the suffering among the Afghan people.⁶ Disappointed that Islamic law had not been put in place following the ousting of communist rule, Mullah Omar gathered a small group of students and pledged to rid Afghanistan of warlords and criminals.⁷ With just 50 students supporting his campaign, Mullah Omar founded the group that would later become known as the Taliban. Within months, the Taliban grew to 15,000 as students from madrassas in Pakistan joined the movement. Along with these new recruits came financial and military support from Pakistan. Through this support, the Taliban was able to seize the important border town of Spin Boldak.⁸

The Taliban movement aimed to establish a divinely ordered Islamic system in Afghanistan. The group's doctrine focuses on strict obedience to the amir (leader) and a narrow concentration of power in the mullah.⁹

⁴ "Afghan Conflict: Taliban in First Major Attack since Eid Truce." *BBC News*, BBC, 20 June 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44545131; Chappell, Bill. "Explosion Kills 4 Americans At Bagram Airfield, Largest NATO Base In Afghanistan." *NPR*, NPR, 12 Nov. 2016, www.npr.org/sections/thetwo-way/2016/11/12/501821621/explosion-kills-4-at-bagram-airfield-largest-nato-base-in-afghanistan.

⁵ "The Taliban in Afghanistan." *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, www.cfr.org/afghanistan/taliban-afghanistan/p10551; "American Foreign Policy Council: Taliban." *WORLD ALMANAC OF ISLAMISM*. Web. 1 October 2013.

⁶ Matinuddin, Kamal, *The Taliban Phenomenon, Afghanistan 1994–1997*, Oxford University Press. 1999. p. 17–23

⁷ Matinuddin, Kamal, *The Taliban Phenomenon, Afghanistan 1994–1997*, Oxford University Press. 1999. p. 24–27

⁸ Felbab-Brown, V. (2010). *Shooting up: Counterinsurgency and the war on drugs*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

⁹ Semple, Michael. "Rhetoric, Ideology and Organizational Structure of the Taliban Movement." *United States Institute of Peace*, Peaceworks, 5 Dec. 2015, www.usip.org/publications/2015/01/rhetoric-ideology-and-organizational-structure-taliban-movement.

On November 3, 1994, the Taliban took control of Kandahar City in a surprise attack, losing only a dozen men in the fight.¹⁰ The Taliban gained popularity quickly due to its success in stamping out corruption, curbing lawlessness and making the roads and the areas under their control safe for commerce to flourish.¹¹ Over the next two months, the Taliban took control of 12 provinces and by February 1995, it had grown to 25,000 fighters.¹²

Following its initial mobilization, the Taliban allegedly received heavy support from Pakistan's Inter-Service Intelligence agency (ISI).¹³ The ISI utilized the Taliban to mount an offensive stance against the Afghan government in hopes of instilling a new ruling power favorable to Pakistan as well as to secure routes to open trade to the newly independent Central Asian states.¹⁴

In 1996, the Taliban successfully took control of Kabul and established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Mullah Omar became the head of state. Under the Taliban, strict Shariah law was enforced, which led to large criticism around the world for its treatment of women and children, as well as its denial of food and aid to underserved citizens. The group used various conventional and unconventional warfare techniques to achieve their goal of establishing a strictly Shariah-governed Afghan state.¹⁵

By 1998, the Taliban had come to control 90 percent of the country. Taliban-governed Afghanistan became an international pariah for its human rights abuses and refusal to surrender Osama Bin Laden, the leader of Al-Qaeda, and other internationally wanted criminals. Only three foreign governments recognized the Taliban government between 1997 and 2001: Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates. The Northern Alliance, led by Ahmed Shah Massoud, became the Taliban government's main military and political opposition, largely due to the immense ethnic differences between the two groups; the Taliban is made up mostly of Sunni Pashtuns while the Northern Alliance includes ethnic Tajiks and Uzbeks. The Northern Alliance maintained Afghanistan's seat at the United Nations, further adding to the tension between the groups.¹⁶

In 1996, Al-Qaeda arrived in Afghanistan from Sudan. The group's membership was low, hovering around 30 members, and there was significant tension between the two groups. For one, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda adhere to different strains of Islamic thought, the Taliban associated with Saudi-influenced, Wahhabi style beliefs and Al-Qaeda associated with a more radical and more rigid Hanbali school of thought. The groups also have ethnic differences; the Taliban is Afghan and Al-Qaeda is mostly Arab. The groups had tense

¹⁰ Maley, William. *Fundamentalism Reborn?: Afghanistan and the Taliban*. New York: New York UP, 1998. Print. .

¹¹ "Who Are the Taliban? - BBC News." *BBC News*. 29 Sep 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.

¹² Saikal, A. *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*. I.B.Tauris, 2004.

¹³ Forsythe, David. *Encyclopedia of human rights* (Volume 1 ed.). 1999. Oxford University Press. p. 2.

¹⁴ "The Taliban." InfoGuide. Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 20 Feb. 2016; Aziz, Omer. "The ISI's Great Game in Afghanistan." *The Diplomat*. 8 June 2014. Web. 20 Aug. 2015.

¹⁵ "The Taliban." InfoGuide. Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 20 Feb. 2016.

¹⁶ "The Taliban." InfoGuide. Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 20 Feb. 2016.

relationship and differed in their strategy. For example, Osama Bin Laden saw action against the U.S. and other countries as crucial to success, while Mullah Omar opposed them.¹⁷

Following the August 7, 1998 bombing of US embassies in Kenya and Tanzania by Al Qaeda, the US launched air strikes in Afghanistan, targeting sites believed to be part of Al Qaeda's network.¹⁸ The Taliban announced that Osama Bin Laden had not been killed in the attacks. On December 19, 2000, after more than a year of attempts to apprehend Osama Bin Laden through negotiations, the United Nations imposed wide sanctions and an air embargo on the Taliban government.¹⁹

The Taliban ruled Afghanistan until 2001. After refusing to turn over Osama Bin Laden in the wake of the September 11 attack, U.S.-led coalition forces with the help of the Northern Alliance invaded Afghanistan and overthrew the regime.²⁰ Mullah Omar and much of the Taliban leadership fled across the Pakistani border, where they were able to regroup and gain new followers, forming the Quetta Shura in the process.²¹ Mullah Omar formed the insurgent force in 2002 in order to create a Taliban base in the Baluchistan city of Quetta.²² The movement was expanded in 2003 and continued to grow with heavy Taliban support.²³ Much of the Taliban lay dormant in these Afghan and Pakistani hideouts for the next several years.²⁴

In the interim, the United Nations convened the Bonn Conference in 2001 to establish Afghanistan's post-Taliban government. Afghan representatives from across the country were invited to elect a transitional administration. The resulting power-sharing agreement privileged the Northern Alliance members, who were primarily ethnically Tajik and Uzbek and excluded the Taliban, who were ethnically Pashtun. The U.S. begins its bombing campaign in Afghanistan in 2001, prompting the Taliban to remain dormant. The Northern Alliance, an anti-Taliban group, enters Kabul shortly afterwards.²⁵ A new constitution was ratified in December 2003, and in October the following year, acting

¹⁷ Kuehn, Felix and Strick van Linschoten, Patrick. "The Enemy We Created: The Myth of the Taliban-Al-Qaeda Merger in Afghanistan." Oxford University Press; 1 edition, Aug. 2012.

¹⁸ McIntyre, Jamie. "U.S. Missiles Pound Targets in Afghanistan, Sudan." CNN. Cable News Network, 20 Aug. 1998. Web. 21 Feb. 2016.

¹⁹ State 095538: U.S. Department of State, Cable, "Usama bin Ladin: Pressing High-Level Taliban Official Jalaluddin Haqqani on Bin Ladin," May 24, 1999. Web. 21 Feb 2016; United Nations Security Council. SECURITY COUNCIL IMPOSES WIDE NEW MEASURES AGAINST TALIBAN AUTHORITIES IN AFGHANISTAN, DEMANDS ACTION ON TERRORISM Resolution 1333 (2000) Calls for Closure of Training Camps, End to Provision of Sanctuary; Ban Imposed on Military Assistance. UN. 19 Dec. 2000. Web. 21 Feb. 2016.

²⁰ Laub, Zachary. "The Taliban in Afghanistan." Council on Foreign Relations. 4 July 2014. Web. 21 Feb 2016..

²¹ "The Taliban." InfoGuide. Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 20 Feb. 2016.

²² The Quetta Shura Taliban: An Overlooked Problem, *International Affairs Review*, 2009-11-23

²³ *American Foreign Policy Council. The World Almanac of Islamism: 2014. Rowman & Littlefield, 30 Jan 2014, 1087 pages, ISBN 1442231440. Retrieved 2015-11-06.*

²⁴ Haddon, Katherine. "Afghanistan Marks 10 Years since War Started." Yahoo! News. AFP, 6 Oct. 2011. Web. 21 Feb. 2016.

²⁵ "Afghanistan Profile - Timeline." *BBC News*, BBC, 31 Jan. 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-south-asia-12024253.

president Hamid Karzai was elected president of Afghanistan. The Taliban was not invited to participate.²⁶

In May of 2003, U.S. Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld declared an end to major combat in Afghanistan, and NATO took charge of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) coalition. By 2004, the U.S. was fully at war in Iraq, which pulled resources and attention away from Afghanistan.²⁷ Capitalizing on the opportunity, the Taliban reasserted itself with new tactics including suicide attacks. Before 2004, suicide bombings were rare in Afghanistan. In 2004, there were just six such attacks committed by the Taliban. In 2005 the number more than tripled to 21, and in 2006, Afghanistan saw 141 suicide attacks, causing 1,166 casualties.²⁸

The U.S. responded to the rise in attacks by sending an additional 4,500 U.S. troops to Afghanistan in September 2008. In February 2009, the new Obama administration in the U.S. sent an additional 17,000 troops to Afghanistan to fight the resurgent Taliban. In December 2009, President Obama announced a "surge" which sent an additional 30,000 troops, raising the total U.S. troops in Afghanistan to 100,000.²⁹

In contrast to the U.S. surge in Iraq, the results of the surge against a resurgent Taliban were mixed. The additional manpower was successful in clearing the Taliban from power from its stronghold in Kandahar City and the surrounding districts such as Arghandab, Panwai, and Maiwand. The group, however, was still operationally functional and able to carry out suicide assaults, assassinations, and even a massive prison break. Most of Helmand province was also cleared of Taliban, which dealt a blow to the lucrative narcotics trade they had been operating from the province. The surge was less effective in Afghanistan's southeastern provinces Khost, Paktia, and Paktika, the Taliban's access point to their safe havens in Pakistan. The area is also of importance to the Haqqani Network, an Al Qaeda and Taliban-linked group, considered one of the most dangerous and effective Taliban allies.³⁰

With U.S. and coalition forces focused on regaining control of Southern Afghanistan, the Taliban was able to take control in Kunar and Nuristan.³¹

On September 20, 2011, Former Afghan president Burhanuddin Rabbani was assassinated, allegedly by Haqqani Network operatives. Rabbani was head of the High Peace Council and the government's chief negotiator with the Taliban.³²

²⁶ "The Taliban." InfoGuide. Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 20 Feb. 2016.

²⁷ "The Taliban." InfoGuide. Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 20 Feb. 2016.

²⁸ Rashid, A. *Taliban: The Power of Militant Islam in Afghanistan and Beyond*. I.B.Tauris, 2010.

²⁹ "The Taliban." InfoGuide. Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 20 Feb. 2016.

³⁰ Roggio, Bill, and Chris Radin. "Obama Announces Rapid Drawdown of Surge Forces from Afghanistan." *The Long War Journal*. Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, 23 June 2011. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.

³¹ Roggio, Bill, and Chris Radin. "Obama Announces Rapid Drawdown of Surge Forces from Afghanistan." *The Long War Journal*. Foundation for the Defense of Democracies, 23 June 2011. Web. 29 Feb. 2016.

³² "The Taliban." InfoGuide. Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 20 Feb. 2016.

In January 2012, the Taliban opened an office in Qatar to begin political settlement talks on the future of Afghanistan with the U.S. The office was instrumental in the negotiations over Bowe Bergdahl, the U.S. army officer held by the Taliban and considered the last American prisoner of war. Bergdahl was released in exchange for five Taliban members the U.S. had held in Guantanamo Bay, including Mullah Mohammad Fazl, who later became one of group's early commanders.³³ Despite the deal, the preliminary talks fell apart just two months later due to a perception the U.S. did not follow through on its end of the agreement.³⁴

In April of 2013, Mullah Omar died in Pakistan from an alleged illness. The group kept his death quiet until several years later.³⁵

In 2014, Mullah Abdul Qayum Zaker, a Taliban leader for thirteen years, stepped down in hopes that U.S. military and Taliban peace talks would resume. In September 2015, the Taliban seized control of Kunduz, the first provincial capital to fall under Taliban control since their defeat in 2001.³⁶ Despite heavy international and U.S. interest and involvement in eliminating the Taliban and their continued success, the group has never been classified, designated, or listed as a terrorist organization, but rather as armed insurgents.³⁷

The international community increasingly appears to view the Taliban as part of Afghanistan's future. In July 2015, Afghan government officials and Taliban leaders met for the first round of talks in a new peace process.³⁸ In addition, Russia has coordinated with the Taliban to hinder the spread of ISIS in Afghanistan.³⁹

Amid July 2015 negotiations with the Government of Afghanistan, the Taliban made the surprise announcement of the death of leader Mullah Omar. Mullah Mansoor was selected as Mullah Omar's successor, and was believed to be close to Pakistan's intelligence service, and therefore had supported the Pakistan-backed talks. The Taliban's political bureau opposed the negotiations, believing any negotiations should be conducted from its Doha office to avoid Pakistani influence.⁴⁰ One of these factions, led by Mullah Mohammad Rasool, formed an official splinter group that did not recognize Mullah Mansoor's leadership.⁴¹

³³ Entous, Adam, and Julian E. Barnes. "Behind Bowe Bergdahl's Release, a Secret Deal That Took Three Years." *The Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones & Company, 2 June 2014, www.wsj.com/articles/behind-bergdahls-release-a-secret-deal-that-took-three-years-1401673547.

³⁴ "U.S. War in Afghanistan." Council on Foreign Relations. Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 01 Mar. 2016.

³⁵ "Taliban Admit Covering up Death of Mullah Omar." *BBC News*, BBC, 31 Aug. 2015, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-34105565.

³⁶ "Who Are the Taliban? - BBC News." *BBC News*. 29 Sep 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.

³⁷ Csichust. "Call the Taliban What They Are — Terrorists." Web. 10 Aug. 2015; "Foreign Terrorist Organizations." *U.S. Department of State*. U.S. Department of State. Web. 10 Sept. 2015

³⁸ "The Taliban." InfoGuide. Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 20 Feb. 2016.

³⁹ "Isis: Russia Coordinating with Taliban Forces to Fight Terror Group." *International Business Times RSS*. 24 Dec. 2015. Web.

⁴⁰ "The Taliban." InfoGuide. Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 20 Feb. 2016.

⁴¹ "Afghan Taliban Close Ranks around New Leader." *Al Arabiya English*. Al Arabiya, 5 Feb. 2016. Web. 26 Apr. 2016.

Pakistan, Afghanistan, the United States, and China came to an agreement in late February 2016 on a road map to end the Afghan war through negotiations between Kabul and the Taliban. Taliban representatives were expected to join Afghan officials in the first round of peace talks in Pakistan in the Spring of 2016 but the death of Mullah Mansoor by a U.S. drone strike in May, 2016 has derailed Taliban cooperation.⁴²

The security situation appears to be deteriorating. Afghan forces still lack the manpower, infrastructure and training needed to take back large areas of territory from the Taliban.⁴³ The Trump administration announced in late 2017 that it would send more troops to Afghanistan as part of the U.S. grand strategy to win the war, which includes destroying IS, crushing Al-Qaeda and preventing the Taliban from gaining any more power.

As of 2018, reports indicate that the Taliban is in full control of 14 districts in Afghanistan (4% of the country) and maintain an active physical presence in an additional 263 districts (66%).⁴⁴ The Afghan government has claimed that it is ready to extend the cease-fire and start formal negotiations with the group to end the war. It remains to be seen whether the Taliban will reciprocate with similar desires.⁴⁵

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

A. LEADERSHIP

The current leadership structure, known as the Quetta Shura, is composed of the leaders of the Afghan Taliban, and has been based in Quetta, Pakistan since the collapse of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan in 2001.⁴⁶

Mullah Mohammad Omar (1994 to April 23, 2013): Mullah Mohammad Omar was the founder and leader of the Taliban until his death in 2013. In April 1996, he was named "Commander of the Faithful" by his supporters, an important title in both Afghan and Islamic history.⁴⁷ From this point

⁴² "Aziz Admits Pakistan Housing Afghan Taliban Leaders." Pakistan Today. Pakistan Today, 02 Mar. 2016. Web. 02 Mar. 2016; "Profile: Taliban Leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour - BBC News." BBC News. 30 Sept. 2015. Web. 03 Mar. 2016; "Afghan Taliban's Mullah Mansoor 'killed in US Strike'" AJE News. N.p., 23 May 2016. Web. 15 June 2016; Khan, Tahir. "Mullah Mansoor Was 'about to Join Peace Talks' When Killed." The Express Tribune. N.p., 11 July 2016. Web. 11 July 2016.

⁴³ Almkhtar, Sarah. "How Much of Afghanistan Is Under Taliban Control After 16 Years of War With the U.S.?" *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 23 Aug. 2017, www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/08/23/world/asia/afghanistan-us-taliban-isis-control.html

⁴⁴ Sharifi, Shoaib, and Louise Adamou. "Taliban Threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC Finds." *BBC News*, BBC, 31 Jan. 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42863116.

⁴⁵ Ghani, Ashraf. "I Will Negotiate with the Taliban Anywhere." *The New York Times*, NYTimes Opinion, 27 June 2018, www.nytimes.com/2018/06/27/opinion/ashraf-ghani-afghanistan-president-peace-talks-taliban-.html?rref=collection%2Ftimestopic%2FTaliban&action=click&contentCollection=timestopics®ion=stream&module=stream_unit&version=latest&contentPlacement=2&pgtype=collection.

⁴⁶ Mozul, James. "The Quetta Shura Taliban: An Overlooked Problem." *International Affairs Review*. November 23, 2009; "Aziz Admits Pakistan Housing Afghan Taliban Leaders." Pakistan Today. Pakistan Today, 02 Mar. 2016. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.}}

⁴⁷ "Profile: Mullah Mohammed Omar - BBC News." BBC News. 29 July 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.

forward, his official title was "Chairman of the Supreme Council of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan". Edicts from Mullah Omar included the death sentence for anyone converting to another religion, as well as the orders to destroy Afghanistan's ancient Buddha statues at Bamiyan. Omar was wanted by the U.S. State Department for sheltering Osama bin Laden and Al Qaeda operatives leading up to and following the September 11, 2001 attacks, and a \$10m bounty was put on his head.⁴⁸ Mullah Omar's death was announced by the Taliban in July 2015, however several sources including the Afghan government have confirmed that Omar actually died on April 23, 2013 in a Pakistani hospital.⁴⁹

Abdul Ghani Baradar (1994 to February 8, 2010): Abdul Ghani Baradar was the deputy of Mullah Mohammad Omar and was the leader of the Quetta Shura militant organization from 2007-2010. He is seen as a somewhat moderate leader within the Taliban, and is credited with attempting to engage in peace talks in 2004 and 2009. He is a member of the same Pashtun tribe as Afghan President Hamid Karzai. The U.S. placed a \$10m bounty on his head. Baradar was perceived as the "de facto" leader of the Taliban beginning in early 2009 and was captured on February 8, 2010.⁵⁰

Mullah Mohammad Fazl (unknown to November 2001): Mullah Mohammad Fazl commanded the main Taliban force fighting the U.S.-backed Northern Alliance in 2001 and served as chief of army staff for the Taliban. Fazl was detained after surrendering to Abdul Rashid Dostam, the leader of Afghanistan's Uzbek community, in November 2001 and was transferred to U.S. custody in December 2001. He was one of the first arrivals at the U.S. detention site in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba, where he was held until his release on May 31, 2014 in a prisoner swap for U.S. Army Sgt. Bowe Bergdahl. He is alleged to have association with several militant Islamist groups, including Al Qaeda.⁵¹

Mullah Dadullah (unknown – May 13, 2007): Mullah Dadullah sat on the Taliban Shura Majlis (executive council) and was the Taliban's most senior military commander. Dadullah is reported to have been one of Mullah Omar's most trusted advisors since he came to Taliban leadership in the mid 1990s. He escaped the siege of Kunduz in November 2001 and is linked to several Shi'a massacres in Afghanistan. He held his position until May 13, 2007 when he was killed while fighting NATO ISAF and Afghan forces.⁵²

Mullah Obaidullah Akhund (1996 to February 2008): Mullah Obaidullah Akhund served as Defense Minister for the Taliban's Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan from 1996-2001. As a member of the Mujahideen Shura Council since 2003, Akhund was the third highest-ranking commander in the Taliban insurgency and had direct access to Mullah Omar. He was initially captured in 2002 and was released as part of an amnesty agreement shortly after. In February 2007, Akhund was detained again. He was subsequently released in November 2007 in exchange for the release of 200 prisoners held by the Taliban in Pakistan. Following his re-arrest in 2008, he died of a heart

⁴⁸ "Profile: Mullah Mohammed Omar - BBC News." BBC News. 29 July 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.

⁴⁹ "Profile: Mullah Mohammed Omar - BBC News." BBC News. 29 July 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2016; "Taliban Admit Covering up Death of Mullah Omar - BBC News." BBC News. 31 Aug. 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.

⁵⁰ Moreau, Ron "America's New Nightmare". Newsweek. July 25, 2009. Updated February 8, 2010.

⁵¹ "The Gitmo Detainees Swapped for Bergdahl: Who Are They?" CNN. Cable News Network, 31 May 2014. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

⁵² "Mullah Dadullah, Taliban Top Commander, Killed in Helmand | The Long War Journal." The Long War Journal. Web.

disease in a Karachi prison in 2010. To date, Akhund is the highest-ranking Taliban member to have been arrested.⁵³

Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor (1996 – May 23, 2016): Mullah Mansoor was the deputy leader of the Taliban and de-facto leader between Mullah Omar's death in 2013 and the public announcement two years later. Mansoor was the Minister of Civil Aviation during Taliban rule in Afghanistan. The Taliban officially announced Mansoor as Chief commander of the Taliban in July 2015. He was killed by a U.S. drone strike in Pakistan in May, 2016.⁵⁴

Arsala Rahmani (1998 to May 13, 2012): Arsala Rahmani was elected to serve as the Deputy Minister for Higher Education in the Taliban government in 1998 and was listed as a Taliban member in UNSC Resolution 1267 (requesting terrorist suspects/convicted terrorists assets frozen). He was Deputy Leader of political affairs for Khuddamul Furqan, the first Islamic political party in Afghanistan, and later served in the Meshrano Jirga, the highest house of the Afghan National Assembly, from 2005 to 2010. President Hamid Karzai asked Rahmani to serve in the Afghan High Peace Council in September 2010, which attempted to bring the Taliban into the negotiation process. Just a year after his removal from the UNSC Resolution 1267 designation list, Rahmani was found shot dead in his car in Kabul on May 13, 2012.⁵⁵

Mullah Abdul Qayum Zakir (2001 – April 27, 2014): Mullah Abdul Qayum Zakir was a Chief Taliban Military Commander for 13 years until he stepped down in 2014. Zakir was held at the U.S. detention site in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba for an unknown duration until 2007 when he was released after he persuaded prison authorities that he was a farmer who was mistakenly arrested. Although the Taliban announced Zakir's health as the reason for his resignation, sources agree that he was forced out due to disagreements with other Taliban leaders.⁵⁶

Sirajuddin (Siraj) Haqqani (2015- present): Sirajuddin Haqqani is a leader of the Haqqani Network (HN) and the son of HN founder, Jalaluddin Haqqani. He was appointed Mansoor's deputy after the new Taliban commander was announced in July 2015.⁵⁷

Moulavi Haibatullah Akhonzada (2015 – present): Moulavi Haibatullah Akhonzada is a former judiciary chief of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan and a religious scholar. He was appointed Mansoor's deputy after the new Taliban commander was announced in July 2015.⁵⁸ In May 2016, he was elected as the emir (leader) of the Taliban after a U.S. drone strike killed Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansour.⁵⁹

⁵³ "'Taliban Leader Held' in Pakistan." BBC News. Mar. 2, 2007; "Cover-up: Taliban Leader's Death in Karachi Confirmed - The Express Tribune." The Express Tribune. 14 Feb. 2012. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

⁵⁴ "Profile: Taliban Leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour - BBC News." BBC News. 30 Sept. 2015. Web. 03 Mar. 2016; "Afghan Taliban's Mullah Mansoor 'killed in US Strike'" AJE News. N.p., 23 May 2016. Web. 15 June 2016.

⁵⁵ "Afghan peace negotiator Arsala Rahmani shot dead." BBC News. Web. May 13, 2012.

⁵⁶ "Afghan Taliban's Chief Military Commander Steps Down." WSJ. 26 April 2014. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

⁵⁷ Shah, Taimoor, and Rod Nordland. "Taliban Pick New Chief and 2 Hard-Line Deputies." The New York Times, 31 July 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016; Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Declaration of the Leading Council of the Islamic Emirate regarding the Appointment of New Amir (leader) of the Islamic Emirate. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 30 July 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

⁵⁸ Shah, Taimoor, and Rod Nordland. "Taliban Pick New Chief and 2 Hard-Line Deputies." The New York Times, 31 July 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.}} {{Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan. Declaration of the Leading Council of the Islamic Emirate regarding the Appointment of New Amir (leader) of the Islamic Emirate. Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, 30 July 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

⁵⁹ "Taliban." *Counter Extremism Project*, www.counterextremism.com/threat/taliban.

B. NAME CHANGES

There are no recorded name changes for this group.

C. SIZE ESTIMATES

- 1994: 1,500 (Brookings Institution)⁶⁰
- 1995: 25,000 (Research study, Saikal)⁶¹
- 2006: 7,000 (Al-Jazeera)⁶²
- November 7, 2006: 4,000-5,000 (UN Security Council)⁶³
- January 19, 2009: 2,000-20,000 (Justice Department)⁶⁴
- 2008: 6,000-10,000 (Cited research study, published by Antonio Giustozzi in 2009 book.)⁶⁵
- October 2009: 25,000 (Al-Jazeera, citing a report presented to President Obama on October 9, 2009.)⁶⁶
- March 3, 2010: 36,000+ (U.S. Major General Richard Barrons, published in The Sunday Times)⁶⁷
- February 18, 2016: 25,000 (Foreign Policy Magazine)⁶⁸
- January, 2018: 60,000 (NBC News)⁶⁹

D. RESOURCES

The Taliban procured many of weapons from retired mujahedeen. These mujahedeen, in turn, had received support through CIA programs during the Soviet-Afghan War.⁷⁰ Much of the Taliban's finances come from poppy production and drug trade. Between 1996 and 1999, the Taliban controlled 96% of the Afghan poppy fields. The group taxed the poppy agriculture, which funded the majority of the Taliban's activity.⁷¹ Even after U.S. forces entered the region in 2001, poppy seed agriculture and the heroin drug trade continued to fund more than 60% of the Taliban's

⁶⁰ Felbab-Brown, V. (2010). *Shooting up: Counterinsurgency and the war on drugs*. Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution Press.

⁶¹ Saikal, A. *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival*. I.B.Tauris, 2004.

⁶² "US: Taliban has grown fourfold." Al-Jazeera. October 9, 2009.

⁶³ UN Security Council. "Sixth report of the Analytical Support and Sanctions Monitoring Team appointed pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1526 (2004) and 1617 (2005) concerning Al-Qaida and the Taliban and associated individuals and entities"

⁶⁴ "Armed Conflicts Report-Afghanistan." Justice.Gov. Web.

⁶⁵ Giustozzi, Antonio. "Koran, Kalashnikov, and Laptop: The Neo-Taliban Insurgency in Afghanistan (2002-2007)." Columbia University Press; 2009. p. 34-37.

⁶⁶ "US: Taliban has grown fourfold." Al-Jazeera. October 9, 2009.

⁶⁷ Hamilton, Fiona; Coates, Sam; Savage, Michael "MajorGeneral Richard Barrons puts Taleban fighter numbers at 36000". Mar. 3, 2010. The Sunday Times.

⁶⁸ "Afghanistan on the Brink, Part 1." Foreign Policy Afghanistan on the Brink Part 1 Comments. 18 Feb. 2016. Web. 26 Apr. 2016.

⁶⁹ Kube, Courtney. "The Taliban Is Gaining Strength and Territory in Afghanistan." *NBCNews.com*, NBCUniversal News Group, 30 Jan. 2018, www.nbcnews.com/news/mideast/numbers-afghanistan-are-not-good-n842651

⁷⁰ Fitchett, Joseph. "What About the Taliban's Stingers? - NYTimes.com." The New York Times. 26 Sept. 2001. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

⁷¹ Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud. "Opium: uncovering the politics of the poppy." Harvard University Press. 2010. Web. 03 Mar. 2016

activity. In August 2007, a UN report estimated that Afghanistan was producing 93% of the world's heroin. Taliban control over poppy fields eventually decreased as NATO Coalition Forces secured more areas of the country. In 2008 a report estimated that opium trade had dropped to only funding 40% of the Taliban's operations.⁷²

The Taliban has been known to supplement opium revenue with illegal timber trading, extortion, and lucrative mining operations.⁷³ Some reports indicate the Taliban also solicit donations from local mosques and businessmen in dire times.⁷⁴ In 2017, Afghanistan ranked ninth in the world for pistachio production and as of 2017, the Taliban reportedly made \$15 million annually from the illegal harvest of pistachio trees.⁷⁵ In addition, the Taliban is known for its illegal taxation on citizens who refuse to join the group. In 2017, it was reported that the Taliban had begun collecting revenues on electricity bills, harvests, salaries and transportation.⁷⁶

The Taliban also receives financial contributions from Islamic charities and other institutions outside Afghanistan. These tend to come from countries in the Gulf region and neighboring Pakistan. With the dip in oil revenues in 2015, however, the flow of money from Gulf Cooperation Council nations has declined. The Taliban is widely believed to receive financial and logistical support from Pakistan, particularly from Pakistan's ISI. Although Pakistan has denied these claims and there has been no explicit evidence of financial support, Sartaj Aziz, Minister of Foreign Affairs, admitted that Pakistan is in fact sheltering Taliban leaders and has been doing so for decades.⁷⁷

E. GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS

The Taliban has camps in Afghanistan's southern provinces of Helmand, Zabul, and Kandahar. These areas make up the majority of Taliban operations in Afghanistan.⁷⁸ The group is estimated to have complete control of 4% of the country of Afghanistan and physical presence in an additional 66%.⁷⁹ Many estimates claim that the group has increased its presence in Afghanistan in the last two years. The executive leadership, known as the Quetta Shura Taliban (QST), reportedly moved operations to the Pakistani city of Quetta after the U.S.-led invasion in 2001.⁸⁰

⁷² Mohammad Masoom Stanekzai, "Thwarting Afghanistan's insurgency: A pragmatic approach toward peace and reconciliation," Washington, DC; United States Institute of Peace. 2008. Web. 03 Mar. 2016; "Afghanistan Taliban Could Double Opium Income Thanks to New Strain of High-yield Poppy Seed." *CBSNews*. CBS Interactive. 05 May 2015. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

⁷³ Rosenberg, Matthew. "Taliban Run Into Trouble on Battlefield, but Money Flows Just the Same." *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 13 June 2014. Web. 04 Mar. 2016; Domínguez, Gabriel. "How the Taliban Get Their Money" *DW.COM*. Deutsche Welle, 21 Jan. 2016. Web. 04 Mar. 2016.

⁷⁴ "The Taliban Have Run Out Of Money Just As U.S. Troops Prepare To Leave Afghanistan." *International Business Times*. 03 Feb 2014. Web. 03 Mar. 2016

⁷⁵ Walsh, John. "Funding Terrorism: Taliban Earns \$15M A Year From Pistachios In Afghanistan." *International Business Times*, 14 Mar. 2017, www.ibtimes.com/funding-terrorism-taliban-earns-15m-year-pistachios-afghanistan-2508055.

⁷⁶ Gall, Carlotta. "Saudis Bankroll Taliban, Even as King Officially Supports Afghan Government." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 6 Dec. 2016, www.nytimes.com/2016/12/06/world/asia/saudi-arabia-afghanistan.html.

⁷⁷ Domínguez, Gabriel. "How the Taliban Get Their Money" *DW.COM*. Deutsche Welle, 21 Jan. 2016. Web. 04 Mar. 2016; "Aziz Admits Pakistan Housing Afghan Taliban Leaders." *Pakistan Today*. Pakistan Today, 02 Mar. 2016. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.

⁷⁸ "Mapping the Taliban: Behind Taliban Lines." *Frontline*. PBS. 23 Feb 2010. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

⁷⁹ Sharifi, Shoaib, and Louise Adamou. "Taliban Threaten 70% of Afghanistan, BBC Finds." *BBC News*, BBC, 31 Jan. 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42863116.

⁸⁰ "Who Are the Taliban? - BBC News." *BBC News*. 29 Sep 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.

STRATEGY

A. IDEOLOGY AND GOALS

The Taliban's main goal is to establish a Taliban-controlled government in Afghanistan and implement Sharia law. The group's ideology is based on the study of Salafism, a radical interpretation of Islam, made evident by the name of the group which means student.⁸¹ The ideology of the Taliban is considered a shift from traditional Islamist views held by anti-Soviet Mujahedeen fighters in the 1980s and early 1990s to a combination of strict anti-modern Pashtun tribal ideology mixed with radicalized Deobandi interpretations of Islam. The Taliban has an ideological commitment to a strict interpretation and enforcement of Shariah law.⁸² The group promoted jihad as a "divine obligation" and heavily encourages it among members, citing that failure to support jihad is a sin.⁸³ The rise of ISIS prompted the Taliban to publicly encourage the preservation of pan-Islamic unity. The group views ISIS as a threat to its goal of establishing a unified Islamist movement with the goal of expelling Western powers due to its extremism.⁸⁴

B. POLITICAL ACTIVITIES

The Taliban established the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan on September 27, 1996 and officially ruled the nation until October 2001; however, its rule was only recognized by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates.⁸⁵

Since the Taliban was removed from power in 2001, more moderate members have pushed for the organization to join peace processes. Mullah Omar consistently opposed any negotiations throughout his life and authorized the assassination of political opponents. After his death in 2013, and further since the news was made public in 2015, the Taliban leadership has indicated interest in, and at times participated in, preliminary negotiations for a political solution in Afghanistan.⁸⁶

The Taliban opened a political commission under Mullah Omar's authorization in 2008 to conduct international and domestic outreach. On June 18, 2013, the group opened an office for the political commission in Doha, Qatar, which received heavy international criticism and was forced to close the same month. The office, however, continues to operate in an unofficial capacity. The Taliban has been successful in leveraging the desire of Afghan leaders and international mediating nations to bring the group to the table to achieve concessions such as removal from the Rewards

⁸¹ Ahmed Rashid, *Taliban* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2010), 88

⁸² Rashid, Ahmed. *Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia*. New Haven: Yale University Press. p. 43 (Interview with Mullah Wakil, 1996).

⁸³ Roggio, Bill, and Caleb Weiss. "Taliban Promotes 4 Previously Unidentified Training Camps in Afghanistan." *FDD's Long War Journal*, FDD's Long War Journal, 29 June 2017, www.longwarjournal.org/archives/2017/06/taliban-promotes-4-previously-unidentified-training-camps-in-afghanistan.php.

⁸⁴ Pollowitz, Greg. "The Taliban Warns ISIS of Being Too Extreme." *National Review*, National Review, 31 Dec. 2014, www.nationalreview.com/the-feed/taliban-warns-isis-being-too-extreme-greg-pollowitz/.

⁸⁵ "The Taliban." InfoGuide. Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 20 Feb. 2016.}} {{ Bush, Laura Welch. *We Are Afghan Women: Voices of Hope*. Simon and Schuster, 2016. Print.

⁸⁶ Khan, Tahir. "War-weariness?: Taliban May Launch Political Party - The Express Tribune." *The Express Tribune*. 04 Mar. 2013. Web. 05 Mar. 2016.

for Justice list, a U.S. Department of State program that pays rewards for information that prevents or resolves acts of terrorism against the United States.⁸⁷

In May 2015, the Taliban took part in informal peace talks with Afghan officials but insisted that it would not end its fighting until all foreign troops have left the country.⁸⁸ Talks collapsed shortly after, but a secret meeting between an Afghan delegation and Taliban members in Qatar at the end of February 2016 has provided an opening to future negotiations.⁸⁹

C. TARGETS AND TACTICS

The central targets of Taliban violence are coalition troops and Afghan government forces. The Taliban utilizes suicide bombings, IED's conventional warfare, unconventional warfare, rocket attacks, assassinations, guerilla warfare, massacres, kidnappings, targeting of civilians, and targeting of NGOs.⁹⁰ Civilian aid workers have increasingly been the targets of Taliban attacks and suicide bombings.⁹¹

Following the surge of U.S. troops in 2009, Taliban forces increased attacks against civilians in Afghanistan. A 2011 UN report identifies Taliban forces as responsible for 76 percent of civilian deaths in 2009, 75 percent in 2010, and 80 percent in 2011.⁹²

Since the U.S. coalition invasion of Afghanistan, the Taliban has placed explosives in public gathering locations, suicide bombers in public markets, and female suicide bombers have been used to target international forces. The Taliban has been known to use civilians to draw coalition forces into an area and subsequently detonate an explosive device or carry out an attack against these forces. These attacks often kill more civilians than coalition forces. The Taliban has consistently targeted women in their attacks; since 2007, the Taliban has placed IEDs in more than 15 girls' schools.⁹³ The Taliban has recently increased direct attacks against U.S. government entities, evident by the group's targeting of U.S. military bases and an attempted attack on U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis on September 27, 2017.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ Rubin, Barnett. "What Could Mullah Mohammad Omar's Death Mean for the Taliban Talks? - The New Yorker." *The New Yorker*. 29 July 2015. Web. 05 Mar. 2016.

⁸⁸ "Who Are the Taliban? - BBC News." *BBC News*. 29 Sep 2015. Web. 02 Mar. 2016.

⁸⁹ Donati, Jessica. "Afghan, Taliban Officials Recently Met to Discuss Efforts to End War." *Wall Street Journal*, 05 Mar. 2016. Web. 05 Mar. 2016; "Aziz Admits Pakistan Housing Afghan Taliban Leaders." *Pakistan Today*. *Pakistan Today*, 02 Mar. 2016. Web. 02 Mar. 2016; "Profile: Taliban Leader Mullah Akhtar Mansour - BBC News." *BBC News*. 30 Sept. 2015. Web. 03 Mar. 2016; "Afghan Taliban's Mullah Mansoor 'killed in US Strike'" *AJE News*. N.p., 23 May 2016. Web. 15 June 2016; Khan, Tahir. "Mullah Mansoor Was 'about to Join Peace Talks' When Killed." *The Express Tribune*. N.p., 11 July 2016. Web. 11 July 2016.

⁹⁰ Pape, Robert Anthony; James K. Feldman. *Cutting the Fuse: The Explosion of Global Suicide Terrorism and How to Stop It*. University of Chicago Press. 2010 pp. 142. 02 Mar. 2016

⁹¹ BBC News. "UK charity worker killed in Kabul." October 20, 2008.

⁹² "Citing rising death toll, UN urges better protection of Afghan civilians." *UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan*. 09 Mar. 2011. Web. 02 Mar. 2016

⁹³ Arnoldy, Ben. "In Afghanistan, Taliban kills more civilians than U.S." *Christian Science Monitor*. 31 July 2009. Web. 04 Mar. 2016.

⁹⁴ McKirdy, Euan, et al. "Mattis Target of Failed Kabul Airport Rocket Attack, Taliban Says." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 27 Sept. 2017, www.cnn.com/2017/09/26/politics/mattis-afghanistan/index.html.

MAJOR ATTACKS

Disclaimer: These are some selected major attacks in the militant organization's history. It is not a comprehensive listing, but captures some of the most famous attacks or turning points during the campaign.

August 1994: Taliban militia marched northward from Maiwand and captured the city of Kandahar losing only a couple dozen men. Shortly thereafter, Kandahar became the capital of the Taliban government (unknown killed, unknown wounded).⁹⁵

September 9, 2001: Two Al Qaeda members, posing as journalists, detonated explosives hidden in their camera during an interview with Afghan civil and military leader Ahmad Shah Massoud. At the time he was the largest opposition to the Taliban. It is speculated that the Taliban worked with Al Qaeda to assassinate Massoud. (1 killed, unknown wounded)⁹⁶

September 8, 2006: A suicide bomber drove a car into a U.S. armored vehicle outside the U.S. embassy in Kabul and detonated explosives, killing 16. Two American soldiers were killed in the attack. It was the deadliest attack since the 2001 invasion began. (16 killed, 29 wounded).⁹⁷

February 27, 2007: A suicide bomber later identified as Mullah Abdul Rahim blew himself up the front gate of the U.S. military base at Bagram while U.S. Vice President Dick Cheney was present in the compound. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack and said that Cheney was the intended target. Cheney survived the attack unharmed. The explosion killed and wounded several American and allied soldiers as well as Afghan and Pakistani truck drivers and laborers who were waiting for access at the gate. (23 killed, 12+ wounded).⁹⁸

July 12, 2011: Afghanistan's President's half-brother and governor of Kandahar, Ahmad Wali Karzai was shot by his head of security, Sardar Mohammed. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, calling it one of their top achievements in 10 years of war. (1 Killed, unknown wounded).⁹⁹

September 20, 2011: An assassin with explosives hidden in his turban was ushered into the home of Burhanuddin Rabbani, the leader of Afghanistan's High Peace Council and a former president. The assassin embraced Rabbani and then exploded the bomb, killing him and dealing a blow to the effort to reconcile with the Taliban and end 10 years of war. (1 killed, unknown wounded)¹⁰⁰

June 11, 2013: A suicide bomber detonated a bomb outside Kabul's Supreme Court killing six judges, among others. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack and said the court

⁹⁵ Rashid, Ahmed. Taliban: Militant Islam, Oil, and Fundamentalism in Central Asia. New Haven: Yale University Press. 1996).

⁹⁶ "Afghanistan in the Shadow of Ahmad Shah Massoud." - *Al Jazeera English*. 09 Sept. 2014. Web. 05 Mar 2016

⁹⁷ "Suicide bomber kills 16 in Afghanistan." *USA Today*. 08 Sept 2006. Web. 05 Mar 2016.

⁹⁸ Wafa, Abdul Wahleed. "Cheney Unhurt After Bombing in Afghanistan." *The New York Times*. 27 Feb 2007. Web. 05 Mar. 2016.

⁹⁹ "Afghan President's Brother, Ahmad Wali Karzai, Killed" *BBC News*. 12 July 2011. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁰⁰ Rubin, Alissa J. "Assassination Deals Blow to Peace Process in Afghanistan." *The New York Times*. *The New York Times*, 20 Sept. 2011. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

employees had been targeted for "legalizing the infidels" and "cruel" behavior against Afghans. (17 killed, 40+ wounded).¹⁰¹

January 17, 2014: A Taliban suicide squad attacked a restaurant in Kabul's diplomatic quarter. In what was regarded as the worst attack on foreign civilians in Afghanistan since the U.S.-led invasion in 2001. The 13 foreign victims included the country head of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and four UN staff members. (21 killed, unknown wounded)¹⁰²

September 15, 2015: Taliban insurgents seize the city of Kunduz marking the biggest advancement made by the Taliban since the U.S.-led invasion in 2001. The attack did not result in many casualties but gave control of the city to the Taliban and resulted in the release of 500 prisoners from the local jail. (4 killed, unknown wounded)¹⁰³

April 19, 2016: Armed militants in Afghanistan stormed a key government security agency in Kabul as part of a coordinated assault, killing at least 28 people and wounding more than 320. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack, which included a suicide car bombing. (28 killed, 320 wounded).¹⁰⁴

April 21, 2017: Taliban militants disguised as Afghan army personnel attack an army base in the Balkh province. The attack was conducted by multiple suicide bombers and gunmen. Afghanistan's defense minister and army chief of staff resign following the attack. (100 killed, unknown wounded).¹⁰⁵

August 3-5, 2017: 600 militants attack a village in the Sar-e Pul province, capturing the village after a 48-hour battle against the Afghan local police. Afghan officials claimed it was a joint operation conducted by the Taliban and ISIS yet the Taliban denied working with ISIS or any other foreign fighters. (50 killed, unknown wounded).¹⁰⁶

June 20, 2018: Taliban militants attacked Afghan soldiers and captured a military base in the Western province of Badghis. This was their first major attack after a ceasefire was called for the Eid al-Fitr holiday. (46 killed, unknown wounded).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰¹ Cahall, Bailey. "17 Afghan Civilians Killed in Taliban Attack on Supreme Court." *Foreign Policy*. 12 June 2013. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁰² "Taliban Suicide Attackers Kill at Least 21 at Kabul Restaurant." *The Guardian*. The Guardian, 17 Jan. 2014. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁰³ "Taliban Overrun Afghan City of Kunduz". *BBC News*. 28 Sept. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁰⁴ Smith, Josh, and Hamid Shalizi. "Afghan Taliban Kill at Least 28 in Major Attack in Central Kabul." Reuters. Thomson Reuters, 19 Apr. 2016. Web. 26 Apr. 2016.

¹⁰⁵ Amiri, Ehsanullah, and Jessica Donati. "Taliban Fighters Infiltrate Afghan Army Base, Kill More Than 100." *The Wall Street Journal*, Dow Jones & Company, 22 Apr. 2017, www.wsj.com/articles/taliban-fighters-infiltrate-afghan-army-post-killing-at-least-eight-people-1492794202.

¹⁰⁶ Al Jazeera. "Officials: Taliban, ISIL Coordinated Sar-e Pul Attack." *Israeli-Palestinian Conflict | Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 7 Aug. 2017, www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/08/sar-pul-taliban-isil-joined-forces-kill-afghans-170807085258761.html.

¹⁰⁷ AAN Team. "The Eid Ceasefire: What Did (Some of the) People Think?" *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 29 June 2018, www.afghanistan-analysts.org/the-eid-ceasefire-what-did-some-of-the-people-think/; "Afghan Conflict: Taliban in First Major Attack since Eid Truce." *BBC News*, BBC, 20 June 2018, www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-44545131.

INTERACTIONS

A. DESIGNATED/LISTED

United States: Although the White House initially designated the Taliban as a sponsor of terrorism under Executive Order 13129 in July 1999, the group is currently classified as an armed insurgent group.¹⁰⁸

New Zealand: New Zealand designated the Taliban as a terrorist organization on October 17, 2002 in accordance to the Terrorism Suppression Act.¹⁰⁹

Russia: Russia listed the Taliban as a terrorist organization on February 14, 2003.¹¹⁰

The Afghan Taliban is not designated as a terrorist group by the United States Department of State or any other U.S. government entity, United Nations, or European Union.¹¹¹

B. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

During the Taliban's leadership of the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, only Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, and the United Arab Emirates recognized their government as legitimate. Though they received funding and weapons as part of the anti-Communist resistance from the CIA during the 1980s, support now comes largely from the tribal regions where the Taliban operates, as well as from the Pakistani ISI.¹¹²

The Taliban composed largely of ethnic Pashtun tribes. Accordingly, a significant portion of Taliban members follow Pashtunwali, a strict moral and cultural code of conduct for Pashtun tribesmen.¹¹³

During the Taliban's rule of Afghanistan, the government was known for poor treatment of its citizens, particularly women and minorities. Food was often denied to the population when provided by United Nations or foreign assistance. Women were punished severely for crimes, denied access to health care, education, and were forced to follow strict dress codes and curfews.¹¹⁴

C. RELATIONS WITH OTHER GROUPS

The Taliban coordinates, is supported by, and shelters a number of militant groups. Al Qaeda members, Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU) members, and thousands of Pakistani Islamic militants have fought for the Taliban.¹¹⁵

¹⁰⁸ Cschust. "Call the Taliban What They Are — Terrorists." 19 Feb. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016; "Foreign Terrorist Organizations." *U.S. Department of State*. U.S. Department of State. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹⁰⁹ "New Zealand Police Report." *New Zealand Police*, www.police.govt.nz.

¹¹⁰ <http://www.fsb.ru/fsb/npd/terror.htm>

¹¹¹ "Taliban" Terrorist Organization Profile - START - National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹¹² "The Taliban." InfoGuide. Council on Foreign Relations. Web. 20 Feb. 2016.

¹¹³ Shaffer, Brenda. *The Limits of Culture: Islam and Foreign Policy*. MIT Press. 2006. p. 277. Print. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹¹⁴ "The Taliban's War Against Women." *U.S. Department of State*. U.S. Department of State. Web.

¹¹⁵ Rashid, Ahmed. "Afghan resistance leader feared dead in blast." *The Telegraph*. September 11, 2001.

As recently as 2013, ISAF forces have found evidence of a high level of cooperation between the Taliban and the IMU. The IMU is known to have integrated its operations with the Taliban in northern Afghanistan and maintains its base of support across the border in Pakistan.¹¹⁶ IMU leaders have also served in the Taliban's shadow government. It was reported that more than 600 IMU militants were provided to the Taliban to aid in fighting against ethnic-Tajik leader Massoud in 2000 and 2001. The Taliban and Al Qaeda are both accused of providing financial and logistical assistance to the IMU.¹¹⁷

Osama bin Laden and his followers who formed Al Qaeda returned to Afghanistan in May 1996 after being expelled from Sudan. At the time, bin Laden and Mullah Omar were not associated, but when the Taliban took control of Jalalabad, where bin Laden was living, Al Qaeda operatives fell under custody of the Taliban. The relationship between Al Qaeda and the Taliban during the second half of the 1990s was often tense. The two groups had little interaction and bin Laden pursued an independent agenda, often to the detriment of the Taliban. Mullah Omar and bin Laden eventually developed relationship although the extent and details of their association remain unclear during these years. Al Qaeda and the Afghan Taliban remain two distinct groups, with different membership, agendas, ideologies, and objectives. The interaction and contacts between the two groups are found in three main forms: individual ties, a shared religious motivation, and a shared location. Following the September 11th, 2001 attacks, Mullah Omar refused to apprehend bin Laden for foreign authorities. The Taliban did, however, release a statement condemning the attacks.¹¹⁸ Throughout their relationship, the Taliban has rarely made mention of the connection. In contrast, Al Qaeda has regularly confirmed its loyalty to the Taliban.¹¹⁹

In August 2015, Al Qaeda leader Ayman al Zawahiri pledged his support to the Afghan Taliban.¹²⁰ Mansour acknowledged and accepted the pledge of loyalty in a public message, an unusual open acknowledgement by the Taliban of its continued alliance with Al Qaeda and a blatant violation of the rules against any political reconciliation process in Afghanistan.¹²¹

The Haqqani Network (HN) is closely tied to the Taliban as well. Led by Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son, Sirajuddin, who was named a deputy head of the Taliban in 2015, the HN has been providing weapons and training to Taliban members since the mid-1990s and remains one of the largest militant organizations in the region, commanding more than 15,000 fighters throughout the FATA in Pakistan and Southern Afghanistan. Though a separate entity, militants are often tied to both groups and take part in Taliban operations throughout Afghanistan and Northwestern Pakistan. Founder Jalaluddin Haqqani pledged the loyalty of his group to Mullah Omar. Omar's death put the relationship between the Taliban and Haqqani network in turmoil but the appointment of two Haqqani leaders to Taliban leadership in July 2015 signals the two groups are

¹¹⁶ Meagan, Patrick. "ISAF Launches Multiple Raids against IMU as Fighting Season Heats up". The Long War Journal. 08 May 2013. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹¹⁷ "Narco-Terrorism: International Drug Trafficking and Terrorism: a Dangerous Mix." Statement provided by Department of Justice. 20 May 2003. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹¹⁸ Strick Van Linschoten, Alex, and Felix Kuehn. Separating the Taliban from Al-Qaeda: The Core of Success in Afghanistan. CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION. New York University, Feb. 2011. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹¹⁹ Riedel, Bruce. "The Taliban Affirm Their Alliance with Al-Qaida: Afghan Peace Talks in Doubt." The Brookings Institution. 20 Aug. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹²⁰ Shah, Saeed, and Habib Khan Totakhil. "Al Qaeda Chief Purportedly Pledges Loyalty to New Afghan Taliban Leader." Wall Street Journal, 13 Aug. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹²¹ Riedel, Bruce. "The Taliban Affirm Their Alliance with Al-Qaida: Afghan Peace Talks in Doubt." The Brookings Institution. 20 Aug. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

more intertwined than ever.¹²²

The Taliban is a separate organization from the Tehrik-e-Taliban (TTP) in Pakistan though there is some ideological overlap between the two. The TTP and Taliban are both Pashtun-dominated and have similar Deobandi interpretations of Islam but differ in their targets.¹²³ Prior to the inception of the TTP in 2007, it is estimated that between 20-40% of Taliban forces fighting in the war in Afghanistan were of Pakistani origin.¹²⁴

The Taliban leadership has voiced strong opposition to the Islamic State (IS) affiliate in Afghanistan known as the Islamic State – Khorasan Province. In June 2015 the Taliban's deputy leader Mullah Akhtar Mohammad Mansoor wrote a public letter warning IS to stay out of Afghanistan.¹²⁵ The group has publicly condemned IS actions in the region, citing that it hinders the creation of Pan-Islamist unity.

D. STATE SPONSORS

The Taliban was publicly supported and funded by the Pakistani government from 1994 to 2001 during its rule of Afghanistan.¹²⁶ Pakistan withdrew public support for the Taliban government after the U.S. invaded Afghanistan in 2001, but the ISI continue to support the Taliban covertly. Pakistan has denied claims that the ISI supports the Taliban, U.S. intelligence reports from the raid on Osama bin Laden's compound in Abbottabad, Pakistan indicate evidence that the ISI never cut relations with the Taliban.¹²⁷

In December 2015, Zamir Kabulov, President Vladimir Putin's special envoy to Afghanistan stated that Russia is coordinating with the Taliban to hinder the spread of ISIS in Afghanistan.¹²⁸ In 2017, the U.S. military claimed that it had received reports that Russia was arming the Taliban. Russia denied the allegations.¹²⁹

In 2001, Saudi Arabia began privately funding the Taliban. The Taliban finance minister claimed that the group raised money from foundations and wealthy individuals within the country.

¹²² O'Donnell, Lynne. "Internal Dispute over Taliban Succession Hints at Rifts." Associated Press, 02 Aug. 2015. Web. 06 Mar. 2016; Dressler, Jeffrey A. *The Haqqani Network*. Publication no. 6. Institute for the Study of War, 2010. Print.

¹²³ Shane, Scott. "Insurgents Share a Name, but Pursue Different Goals." *The New York Times*. October 22, 2009.

¹²⁴ "Who Are the Pakistani Taliban? - CNN.com." *CNN*. Cable News Network, 17 Dec. 2014. Web. 06 Mar. 2016.

¹²⁵ "Afghan Militant Leader Backs Islamic State." *RadioFreeEurope/RadioLiberty*. Web.

¹²⁶ "The ISI and Terrorism: Behind the Accusations." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations, 04 May 2011. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

¹²⁷ "The ISI and Terrorism: Behind the Accusations." *Council on Foreign Relations*. Council on Foreign Relations, 04 May 2011. Web. 03 Mar. 2016.

¹²⁸ "Isis: Russia Coordinating with Taliban Forces to Fight Terror Group." *International Business Times RSS*. 24 Dec. 2015. Web.

¹²⁹ Gibbons-Neff, Thomas. "Russia Is Sending Weapons to Taliban, Top U.S. General Confirms." *The Washington Post*, WP Company, 24 Apr. 2017, www.washingtonpost.com/news/checkpoint/wp/2017/04/24/russia-is-sending-weapons-to-taliban-top-u-s-general-confirms/?utm_term=.7c65db5f9086.

However, Saudi Intelligence chief Turki al-Faisal denied that the Saudi government provided any support for the Taliban.¹³⁰

MAPS FEATURING THE TALIBAN

- **Global Al-Qaeda**
- **Global IS**

¹³⁰ “Taliban, Collecting Bills for Afghan Utilities, Tap New Revenue Sources.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 22 Dec. 2017, www.nytimes.com/2017/01/28/world/asia/taliban-collecting-electricity-bills-afghan.html.