



:

Afghanistan

ON THE MILITARY-POLITICAL SITUATION IN AFGHANISTAN

The military and political situation in Afghanistan remains challenging, largely due to the activity of the terrorist underground. The country's socio-political situation can also be destabilized by the dire socio-economic situation of the population, natural disasters, and the government's policy of eradicating opium poppy cultivation in the absence of profitable alternative crops.

The total number of international terrorist organization fighters on Afghan territory is estimated at 20,000–23,000 (more than half are foreigners). The largest are: ISIS (about 3,000), the Pakistan Taliban Movement (PTM, 5,000–7,000), Al-Qaeda (400–1,500), the East Turkestan Islamic Movement (ETIM, 300–1,200), the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU, renamed the Turkestan Islamic Party, 150–500), and Jamaat Ansarullah (150–250).

The only terrorist group operating against the current Afghan regime is the Afghan branch of ISIS (Wilayat Khorasan), which maintains training camps, strongholds, and a network of sleeper cells in the country. The group is primarily based in the east, north, and northeast of Afghanistan, with the longer-term goal of expanding into Central Asia to establish an Islamic "caliphate" there.

Based on the intensity and scope of its attacks, the terrorist underground poses no threat to the regime. It is unable to take control of even isolated, hard-to-reach areas of the country. The trauma of terrorist attacks stems primarily from their reputational impact on the Afghan authorities. ISIS's goal is to undermine confidence in the Taliban government's ability to ensure stability and public order. The group conducts propaganda and recruitment activities among social groups dissatisfied with the current government's policies, primarily functionaries and

military personnel of the ousted republican regime, to whom it offers large, by local standards, cash payments.

Afghan security forces are actively identifying and neutralizing ISIS cells, regularly reporting the elimination of small terrorist groups and the discovery of weapons caches. Mosques preaching Salafist ideas aligned with ISIS are being closed, and purges of Salafist adherents in government and educational institutions are underway. Pressure has also been intensified on ideological rivals of the Taliban who are not involved in combat operations: several dozen preachers from the radical group Hizb ut-Tahrir have been arrested.

As a result of Taliban raids over the past year and a half (from October 2024 to the present), the number of ISIS terrorist attacks in Afghanistan has decreased. High-profile attacks occurred only in early 2025 – an attack on a group of religious scholars in Baghlan, the murder of a Chinese citizen in Takhar (January 2025), a crowd bombing in Kunduz (February 2025), and, in early 2026, an explosion at a Chinese restaurant in Kabul.

Al-Qaeda, the second most significant terrorist organization in Afghanistan, uses the country's territory primarily to host training camps and establish ties with various terrorist and extremist groups to expand its influence in the region. Al-Qaeda infrastructure facilities have been reported in the provinces of Ghazni, Laghman, Kunar, Nangarhar, Nuristan, Parwan, and Uruzgan.

Based primarily in southeastern and eastern Afghanistan, the Pakistan Taliban Movement (PTM) focuses on attacks on Pakistani territory. The PTM's activity complicates Afghan-Pakistani relations.

The Afghan armed opposition is small, fragmented, and uncoordinated. It poses no threat to the ruling regime. The most combat-ready groups are the National Resistance Front of Afghanistan (NRA) and the Afghan Freedom Front (AFF), led by A. Massoud Jr. and former Chief of the General Staff of the Republican Army Yasser Zia, respectively. They rely on targeted attacks and surprise attacks followed by retreat. The armed opposition's geographic reach is limited; the main NRA forces are pinned down by the Taliban in the Panjshir, Badakhshan, and Baghlan provinces.

Afghanistan remains a narcotics-producing country, despite the current authorities taking steps to eradicate the drug threat. The cultivation of opium poppy and cannabis is currently prohibited in the country. Afghan authorities will implement corresponding bans in 2022 and 2023.

According to the UNODC, the area under opium poppy cultivation in Afghanistan will have decreased by 20% in 2025 compared to 2024, from 12,800 hectares to 10,200 hectares. This is significantly lower than the 2022 figure, before the Taliban imposed a ban on cultivation, when the area under cultivation was approximately 232,000 hectares. Opium production in 2025 will be 296 tons, a 32% decrease from the previous year. Since 2024, the center of cultivation has shifted from the southwestern provinces to the northeast of the country, which accounts for more than half of the opium cultivated (primarily in Badakhshan province). The price of opium has decreased by 27%, from \$780 per kg. in 2024 to US\$570 in 2025, which is still five times higher than in 2022. Farmers' income from selling harvested opium fell by 48% - from US\$260 million for the 2024 harvest to US\$134 million for the 2025 harvest. Before the ban

In 2022, revenues from opium crops amounted to US\$1,360 million.

Against the backdrop of declining production of "traditional" drugs, the proliferation of "synthetic" narcotics is a concern. According to the UNODC, methamphetamine seizures in Afghanistan and neighboring countries increased by 50% by the end of 2024 compared to the third quarter of 2023. Methamphetamine is currently the most frequently seized Afghan drug abroad.

As of February 2026

STATEMENTS ON THE TOPIC

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Joint Statement of the Participants of the Moscow Format of Consultations on Afghanistan, Moscow, October 7, 2025

October 2, 2025 , 12:10 PM

On media accreditation for the 7th meeting of the Moscow format of consultations on Afghanistan

September 26, 2025 , 1:51 AM

On the ministerial meeting of the countries of the regional "quartet" on Afghanistan

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