Key events

- Afghanistan’s economy is expected to grow 2.6% this year, up from 2.2% in 2016, despite deteriorating security conditions, according to a report issued by the World on 21 Nov. Nonetheless, the country’s population growth of roughly 3% means the GDP per capita continues to decline.
- The EU is investigating claims its compound in Shahr-e-Naw, northwest Kabul, is at the centre of an alcohol-smuggling ring. Leaked Facebook and WhatsApp messages show beer, wine and spirits imported lawfully for the consumption of European officials sold on the black market.
- The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court on 20 Nov requested authorization to investigate the US military and CIA, Afghan government forces, the Taleban and the Haqqani network for alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity in Afghanistan since May 2003.

National overview

Afghan and coalition forces will be able to drive the Taleban from 80% of the country within the next two years, the commander of the US forces and NATO’s Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, General John Nicholson, said this week. He added the government currently controls roughly two thirds of the territory. Meanwhile, the Pentagon announced 3,000 additional troops have been deployed to Afghanistan, bringing the number of US personnel to approximately 14,000. The Pentagon is also directing more intelligence assets and firepower to the country, as gains against IS in Iraq and Syria free up resources. This has allowed for a major increase in US airstrikes, which Nicholson said reached their first highest level this year since 2012. US aircraft dropped 653 bombs, missiles and other munitions during October compared to 203 in the same month last year. Additional pressure is going to be put on the Taleban by curbing their financing, with US airstrikes targeting opium factories having already yielded results this week in Helmand province. The campaign was, however, met with criticism from local leaders, with officials saying civilians will be harmed. A Taleban spokesman claimed this week’s Helmand airstrikes did not inflict any losses on the group but killed civilians and destroyed their homes. Civilian casualties remain a persisting problem. Most recently, the UN confirmed at least 10 civilians were killed during airstrikes in Kunduz on 3 Nov, despite US claims there was no evidence civilians were affected.
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Achin, 19 Nov 2017:
Coalition airstrikes killed 14 IS militants and injured a civilian.

Imam Sahib, 19 Nov 2017:
Afghan Air Force airstrikes killed four insurgents and destroyed their vehicle.

Herat City, 21 Nov 2017:
Unidentified assailants threw acid at two female civil society activists in PD4.

Nawzad, 21 Nov 2017:
Afghan and foreign special forces raided a Taleban prison, rescuing at least 30 people, including four children under the age of 12 and two policemen. Taleban said the prisoners were criminals accused of robbery and kidnapping among other crimes.

Marjah, 19 Nov 2017:
A suicide bomber injured two policemen.

Kabul City, 20 Nov 2017:
At least 30 members of the Advocacy Association conducted a peaceful demonstration in Eidgah mosque, condemning Pakistan’s SAF and IDF attacks in Kunar province.
Central

- **Kabul City:** 22 Nov 17, recently (ISIS) plan to carry out a VBIED attack over Indian embassy, ISIS plan to fill a lorry full of explosives and bring to Kabul in order to conduct the attack, INS are collecting fake documents for the vehicle and the responsible foreign man for this attack named Samarov.

- **Kabul City:** 22 Nov 17, the General commander of (ISIS) named Mullah Muaram son of Muhammad Aziz sent (03) Suicide attackers to Jalal Abad city and from there to Kabul city, in order to carry out suicide attacks over Qahraman e Karbala mosque located in Taimani e Sabeqa square.

- **Jalrez District:** 22 Nov 17, a group of the (10) INS, led by Mullah Nimatullah are planning to lay mines over the way of ANSF personnel in Kota e Ursher and Zakat areas, targeting ANSF supply personnel commuting in Dara e Khumar areas.

East

- **Gelan District:** 22 Nov 17, the commander of the Taliban named Zabiullah intend the current night to carry out guerilla attacks over the security CPs located in Bakhtyar and Jandah areas of the mentioned district.

- **Jaji Aryub District:** 22 Nov 17, (45) armed INS, belonging to Haqani Network led by Jahad Gul are planning to launch attack over ANSF CPs around mentioned District.

North

- **Kunduz-Aliabad District Highway:** 22 Nov 17, Spinkai, who is the responsible for the INS operation around Aliabad District is planning to lay (05) barrel IEDs along Kunduz-Aliabad highway. Intend to target the ANSF.

- **Shirin Tagab District:** 22 Nov 17, The terroristic groups and military commission chief named Mullah Eh-Sanaullah Tufaan plan the current night to carry out attacks over the security CPs especially a CP named (17) located near to Jumjumah Qala areas and the HQ command of the mentioned district.

West

- **Kishk-e Kohna District:** 22 Nov 17, a number of the armed INS, led by Mullah Edris, have laid (04) anti-vehicle IEDs along mentioned District highway. Intend to target the ANSF vehicles.

- **Pusht-e Rod District:** 22 Nov 17, a number of the INS, equipped with different type of weapons, led by Haji Sardar, Mullah Abdul Ali, and Saifullah have been placed in Seyah Qalah Village near to (606) high way. They are planning to launch aggressive attack over the security CPs located in over high ways.

South

- **Tarin Kot City:** 22 Nov 17, One of the Female in Khochola village of the mentioned city is ready to conduct suicide attack over ANSF installation recorded in earlier times in the mentioned city, the female attacker is now kept by Mullah Khaksar son of Muhammad Wali and is moving in blacked glasses vehicle around the city.

- **Girishk District:** 22 Nov 17, INS laid (11) IEDs along Naseryan Villages and roadways. to targeting ANSF personnel.
The reporting period featured a limited number of violent incidents following the 16 Nov suicide bombing outside a restaurant near Lab-e-Jar square, PD4, that targeted a gathering of supporters of the incumbent Balkh governor and leader of the mainly ethnic Tajik Jamiat-i-Islami party Atta Mohammad Noor. IS claimed responsibility for the attack. Security conditions in Kabul have deteriorated in recent weeks, with the city having witnessed several high profile attacks, including a bombing within the Green Zone, towards the end of October and the beginning of this month. Nonetheless, overall levels of violent incidents remain low. Of note during the reporting period, on 19 Nov, unidentified assailants fired an AK-47 rifle targeting a private vehicle in PD15, killing the owner of the car. An investigation is underway. Also of note, the National Directorate of Security said a suicide vest was recovered on 18 Nov, while two students of the Nema University were arrested and 1.5 kilograms of explosives were seized on 19 Nov. A fire broke out in Bush Market, PD21, at approximately 1000hrs on 21 Nov; there were no reported casualties. The market, named after former US President George Bush, was created in 2001 following the deployment of US troops to Afghanistan. The area is infamous for selling stolen goods from NATO bases across the country. Also on 21 Nov, an explosion was heard at the Haji Abdul Rahman mosque in PD2. Authorities said a gas cylinder blew up accidentally; there were no reported casualties. In other developments, President Ghani expressed his concern this week over a looming water crisis threatening Kabul and other major urban centres. Ghani said the lack of a water management strategy is one of the worst legacies left to his administration. The president added construction of a new dam is expected to commence in the short term to improve Kabul’s water situation.
Hostile activity remained heightened in Wardak province, with several clashes between security forces and the Taliban recorded in Jalrez district. The province continued to account for the majority of violent incidents in central Afghanistan during the reporting period. Of note, provincial authorities stated on 19 Nov three insurgents were killed and two wounded, while a large cache cleared during operations in districts bordering Kabul province. Police sources also confirmed 16 militants, including three senior Taliban commanders known to have received training in Pakistan, were killed during operations in central Wardak on 21 Nov. Meanwhile, provincial council leadership elections were carried out in all 34 provinces on 18 Nov, with three women elected to the top leadership positions of the Wardak Provincial Council for the first time. In the wider Kabul province, violent incidents remained limited. Most notably, on 22 Nov, a suicide attacker riding a motorcycle laden with explosives detonated in Petaw area of Qarabagh district, killing a civilian and two security personnel as well as injuring another 13 civilians. Also of note, on 19 Nov, an IED magnetically attached to a ranger vehicle owned by a government employee detonated in Bagram district, injuring the driver of the vehicle. Sporadic SAF attacks were recorded in Parwan, Kapisa and Logar provinces. Most notably, on 20 Nov, at least eight militants, including senior Taliban commander Agha Gul, were killed during security forces operations in Pul-e Alam city. Attacks also continued to be reported in Tagab district, Kapisa. Of note, on 20 Nov Taliban ambushed security forces in Mullah Khel Sheikh area of the district, killing two personnel. Although there were no reported incidents in Pnajshayr and Bamyyan, criminality and sporadic SAF continue to pose a credible threat.
Faryab province continues to account for the majority of hostile activity in northern Afghanistan, with several clashes between militants and security forces having been reported during the past week. Also of note, it was reported on 22 Nov, the Taliban have cut electricity supply to the capital and four districts in the northwest of the province, with at least 57,000 families without access to power. Sporadic violent incidents were recorded elsewhere in the north. Provincial authorities said on 21 Nov that the crime rate across Sar-e Pol province has decreased 40% in the first eight months of this year. That being said, despite generally low levels of hostile activity, sporadic militant attacks and criminality continue to pose a credible threat across the province. Militant attacks continued to be reported in Baghlan, amid an increase in violent incidents in the province in recent months. Notably, on 21 Nov, insurgents attacked a police base in Pul-e Khumri city, killing an officer and injuring another six. Concerns remain over the growing infiltration of IS-Khorasan militants in Jowzjan province. US Defence Secretary Jim Mattis characterized the fight against IS as going “in the right direction” in July when IS-Khorasan leader Abu Sayed was killed in an airstrike in Kunar, eastern Afghanistan. As a result of sustained efforts targeting IS in the east, US officials estimated the group’s ranks had been cut from a peak of about 3,000 to 600 fighters. However, new estimates indicate IS has regrouped, with infiltration of Jowzjan of particular concern, as IS is believed to have been relocating its fighters to the province, with many of those aligned with the Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan. Afghan officials expressed their concern of the increasing number of foreign fighters from Pakistan and Uzbekistan, also fearing further increases as IS continues to be pushed out of Iraq and Syria.
The majority of violent incidents recorded throughout the country during the reporting period were concentrated in eastern Afghanistan. Coalition aerial activity and militant attacks on security forces remained heightened in Nangharhar province. Of note, on 20 Nov, eight IS militants and two children were killed in coalition airstrikes in Achin district. Military sources said at least 20 militants were also killed during operations in Achin, Chaparhar and Khugyani districts on 20 Nov. Regular clashes between militants and Afghan security forces were recorded elsewhere in the east. Of note, on 16 Nov, security forces reported a ranger truck laden with explosives was targeted in Choni area, PD1, Gardez City, destroying the vehicle. A rocket was fired at the vehicle following intelligence of an impending SVBIED attack. Clashes between Taleban and IS militants also continue to be reported. Notably, in Laghman province, on 17 Nov, two IS militants were killed during a clash between the two groups in Alingar district. Sporadic attacks were reported in Nuristan and Khost provinces. Most notably, on 20 Nov, 13 Taleban, including their local commander, were killed during an assault on a security forces convoy in Kamdish district, near the Durand line. Tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan also remained heightened following the attack on a military outpost in Bajaur. Although Pakistani hostile activity decreased from the previous reporting period, several incidents of SAF and IDF were recorded this week in Kunar province. In other developments, weather conditions are deteriorating, as winter approaches. Officials on 18 Nov confirmed the death of 13 people in avalanches in Chapa Dara district, Kunar. Another three casualties were reported in Achin district, Nangharhar. Local authorities have appealed to the government to take immediate steps to protect vulnerable communities in remote mountainous areas.
Violent incidents were prevalent in Farah province for a consecutive week. Heavy clashes continued to be reported in Bala Boluk district. Most notably, on 19 Nov, Taleban attacked security checkpoints in Farah Road Bazar, Sar-e Pul Farah Road and Mandawi areas in the district. The militants gained temporary control of the Mandawi checkpoint, with security forces having subsequently recaptured the area. At least four Afghan policemen were killed, while the Taleban managed to steal three PKM, a grenade launcher and 10 AK-47s. Another clash in the district on 20 Nov resulted in the death of four Afghan soldiers and 15 Taleban, with another three soldiers and 24 militants wounded. Hostile activity also remained heightened in Herat province, with continuing militant attacks in Shindand district. Provincial authorities said on 21 Nov, at least 75 Taleban, including the Taleban shadow deputy governor for Herat province, were killed, 25 wounded and 12 arrested during 10-day-long operations in Azizabad area, Shindand. Six Taleban bases and several vehicles were destroyed. A number of militant attacks on security checkpoints were reported in Badghis province, particularly in Moqur and Qadis districts. An Afghan National Army spokesman said 23 Taleban were killed during clashes in Qadis on 21 Nov. Meanwhile, the security environment remained stable in Ghor province, with no recorded hostile activity. Of note, protests in Ghor continued for an 11th consecutive day on Monday 20 Nov. Demonstrators are demanding the construction of the Herat-Ghor-Kabul highway and the Puza Leech Dam as well as improvements in electricity supply in the province. A government delegation has been sent to the area, amid warnings by protesters they will block government offices in the province if their demands are not met. Nonetheless, thus far protest activity has been peaceful.
The security environment in Kandahar, Helmand and Uruzgan provinces remained volatile during the reporting period, amid continuing Taliban attacks on security personnel and an increase in coalition aerial activity in the south of the country. Elsewhere in the south, the security environment remained relatively stable, although sporadic SAF and IED attacks as well as criminality continue to be witnessed in Nimroz and Zabul provinces. The most significant development in the southern parts of the country over the past week was an announcement by the commander of the US forces and NATO’s Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan, General John Nicholson, of the commencement of a “war on drugs,” part of President Trump’s new Afghanistan strategy. The US military and Afghan Air Force hit a Taliban command and control center and eight opium factories on 19 Nov in what the coalition described as “previously untargeted safe havens.” According to the general, the Taliban earn over USD200 million of narcotics revenue annually, with the group responsible for up to 85% of global opium production. A presidential statement dated 20 Nov reiterated there is a need to fight narcotics, as this is the main source of funding for terrorist groups in the country. The airstrikes took place in three Taliban controlled or contested districts in northern Helmand, with another four narcotics processing sites destroyed in airstrikes in the south of the province on 22 Nov. Meanwhile, amid continuing fighting in Kandahar province, the Taliban released a video of its fighters displaying a captured US HUMVEE and other weapons seized after a raid on a military outpost in Shorabak district; the district is currently assessed to be under Taliban control. The video is similar to others produced by the Taliban that highlights the group’s battlefield gains.
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