



Summary

To summarise the week's security events, the core provinces (highlighted at the start of each regional section) continue to make up the majority of the security events across the country, and travel to each one should be carefully considered and planned. No surprise to regular readers, the south and east saw the majority of the security incidents across the country, with one government source claiming that 170 militants were killed in operations there during the past week. Interestingly, the highest number of incidents occurred in Kunar, as opposed to Kandahar, which normally is the most violent province; activities in Nuristan were also particularly active. An interesting statistic revealed during the last reporting period that the group most at threat from attacks in the country is that of Afghan policemen. Since March, roughly six to 10 Afghan policemen have been killed per day. Afghan police are more lightly armed and armoured, and as such are more vulnerable than ANA or ISAF soldiers. For foreign troops, the biggest threat remains IEDs. However, as the summer fighting intensifies and troops attempt to "clear" areas of militants in an effort to allow Afghans the space to vote in safety, the number of deaths from kinetic attacks will increase. Readers should be aware that increased deaths, while tragic, does not necessarily mean that the war is going badly, or rather, worse compared to when there were fewer deaths. To draw a comparison, when US-led troops increased the intensity of their fighting in Anbar province, Iraq, the number of military deaths increased significantly. After a peak of deaths (and as the security situation in the region improved) the number of military casualties has fallen constantly. It should be mentioned, however, that comparisons with Iraq are often clumsily applied to Afghanistan, and the two wars have great differences. For example, the people, terrain and enemy all mean soldiers in Afghanistan face different challenges, and while there are some similarities and some sharing of tactics, comparisons between the two should be approached with a degree of scepticism. Those openly associated with the election are at an increased risk and should ensure proper security is in place. A consequence of the increased deaths appears to be more media coverage, particularly in Britain. Partly to reflect this coverage and partly as the issue is an interesting one in itself, the North and South regional sections of this report look at polls from various interested countries (German and Britain respectively), as public support for the war is an important issue. The political aspect of the war has a significant and direct impact on the security section, something that both pro- and anti-government forces are keenly aware of.



Flashpoints

The following section lists the locations of significant incidents over the past reporting period. It is intended as a guide for personnel intending to travel to such areas; and for companies and organisations with facilities and staff permanently based there.

Central

Nirakh District; Maidan Shar City; Saydabad District; Chak District, Jaghatu District, Jalrez District; (**Wardak Province**); Khushi District; Puli Alam District; Baraki Barak District; Mohammed Agha District; Kar Wahr District; Azra District; Charkh District; (**Logar Province**); Bagram District; Khak Jabar District; Surobi District; (**Kabul Province**); Salah District; Koh Safi District; Bagram District (**Parwan Province**) Gelan District; Ajristan District; Giro District; Gaylan District; Ghazni Centre; Moqor District; Andar District; Qara Bagh District, (**Ghazni Province**); Nirjab District, Mosahi District, Surobi District, Da Sabz District; Kabul City Tagab District (**Kapisa Province**) Bamyán Centre (**Bamyán Province**)

North

Eshkamesh District; Ali Abad District Kunduz District; Khanabad District, Dashti Archi District; (**Kunduz Province**) Taluquan City; Ishkamish District (**Takhar Province**) Darwaz, District; Faizabad District; (**Badaghshan Province**) Darzab District; (**Jawzjan Province**) Ghowrmach District, Ghor Mach District; Jawjand District; Bala Morghab District, Moqor District; Murghab District, (**Badghis Province**); Nahrin District; Naghlani Jadid District; Burkha District; (**Baghlan Province**) Balkh District, Chimtal District; Mazar City; (**Balkh Province**);

West

Dilaram District; Khak Safed District; Balaboluk District, Farah City, (**Farah Province**); Pasadaband District, Car Sadah District, Chaghcharan District; (**Ghor Province**); Injin District; Pashtun Zarghun District, Adraskan District, Herat City, Chisti Sharif District; Gulran District; (**Herat Province**) Meymanah District; Gorwmach District; Dawlatabad District; Khujaqachy District; Pashton Kot District; Almar District, Qaysar District; Kohistan District; (**Faryab Province**);

East

Barg Matal District; Kot District, Kamdesh District, (**Nuristan Province**) Mihtarlam District (inc. City), Qarghayi District, Mangol District; Shigal District; Wata Poor District; Narang District Chapa Dara, Ghazi Abad District, Water Pur District, Asadabad District; Mano Gai District; Kamdesh District, Pech Valley, Korangal Valley, Asmar District; (**Kunar Province**); Shinwar District; Kama District, Jalalabad City, Hisarak District; Goshta District, Khogyani District, Deh Bala District; (**Nangarhar Province**);

South-East

Khost Matun District, Tani District; Bak District; Tere Zeyi District; Musa Quel District, Shegal District, Sabari District; Sapura District; Gurbuz District; (**Khost Province**); Zurmat District, Gardez District, Danda Patan District; Wozoy Zadran District; (**Paktya Province**); Wormamoy District, Yahya Khail District; Gayan District, Samkani District, Mata Khan District; Yousef Khel District, Zarghun Shar District; Sharana District, (**Paktika Province**);

South

Shajoy District, Qalat District; Mizan District; (**Zabul Province**); Dand District, Spin Boldak District, Shorabak District; Zhari District; Arghandab District, Kandahar City, Shah Wali Kot District, Panjwaji District, Jeray District, Daman District (**Kandahar Province**) Tirin Kot District, Chora District; (**Uruzgan Province**); Zaranj City; Kang District; Khash Rod District; (**Nimroz Province**) Nahhr-e Sarraj District, Gerersk District; Nawa District; Nawzad District, Musa Qala District; Lashkar Gar City, Nad Ali District, Sangin Valley, Garmsir District; Nahri Saraj District (**Helmand Province**);

Projections

All those involved in the upcoming elections, particularly in rural areas, should be prepared for increased targeting by anti-government groups over the next month. This will also continue after the elections. Insurgents are particularly seeking to target campaign offices, as was the case in a number

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of provinces during the last reporting period; some offices have been closed in response to attacks. They should be considered high-risk areas for the next month as they are likely to be a magnet for violent activity for the duration of that time. Anti-government groups will seek to target individuals associated with the elections, such as candidates, observers and NGO groups assisting the election process. Candidates could be targeted for assassinations, but even more likely for abductions. These will intensify as the election draws near, with the days leading up to the election likely to be among the highest risk. Attacks will be aimed at persuading Afghans not to vote and to give the impression that the government is not capable of providing security.

News that “foreign fighters” have entered the country, and that various improvised explosive devices thought to be intended for use in suicide attacks have been recovered over this last week, it is highly likely that there will be yet further suicide attacks and attempts at such. The most common area to be targeted appears to be Kandahar; however, devices have been detonated further east, such as in Khost Province. Obviously, Kabul would be very high on the list of priority targets, but the disproportionate amount of security in and around the city means that it is less likely a device will slip through the net. A brazen attempt to attack an ANP compound by a suicide bomber on foot shows the confidence of the Taliban, as well as their ability to bypass security. The compound in Uruzghan city was targeted on 11 June, and while it killed no one but the bomber himself, the fact that it was carried out at 1300 hrs is notable.

Private security companies have experienced a significant increase in the severity, sophistication and frequency of attacks in the last several weeks. This is expected to continue over the summer. The vast majority of PSC employees are local employees, often supervised by foreign supervisors or team leaders. Due to manpower shortages, ISAF has outsourced a significant amount of their logistical convoys to protection by PSCs with occasional ANA support. The convoys, their drivers and security detail, therefore, are seen as high-value targets by insurgent forces, which was reflected in the number of attacks.

As mentioned in numerous past reports, IEDs are likely to increase. In a sense, the use of IEDs can be taken as a sign of success by the coalition. As insurgent forces are thrown onto the back foot in the face of continued military operations (especially in Helmand), it is only to be expected that they will rely more heavily on asymmetric techniques. The use of IEDs and suicide attacks will increase, while it is likely that fewer resources will be devoted to attacks and ambushes. Large unit assaults that aim to wrestle entire areas from CF control *for extended periods of time* will be less likely to occur; however, the propaganda value of such attacks precludes predicting that they will die out entirely (large unit assaults will most likely continue to target specific targets such as district police headquarters).

Attacks against softer targets are also likely to increase – reconstruction personnel and those involved in transporting supplies destined for the coalition have already been attacked with increasing frequency since the spring; the latest group to be targeted judging from recent reports is the media, potentially indicating an appetite for softer targets still. Local journalists remain the group most at risk – although there remains a considerable threat to international media, especially regarding kidnap. It must be stressed, however, that personal feuds are far more likely to be of direct threat to local media than are ideologically motivated attacks.

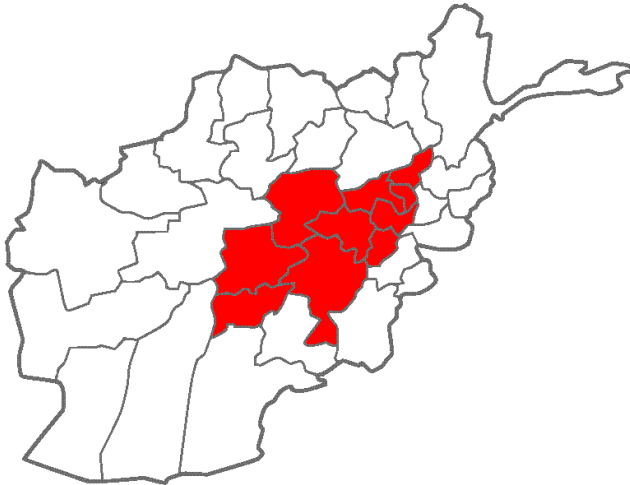
Areas of continued concern

Southern Afghanistan is generally considered the most dangerous part of the country, especially Helmand, Kandahar and Uruzgan. The eastern provinces of Paktika, Khost, Kunar, Paktya, Nangarhar and Nuristan (especially Kamdesh and Mandol districts) are also volatile, indeed, some view Khost, Kunar, and Paktika as even more dangerous than southern Afghanistan. There are some signs of stability in the western provinces of Herat, Ghor, and Farah although they still remain susceptible to insurgent attacks and banditry. Militants have fairly extensive opportunity to operate in the central provinces, in particular Logar, Ghazni and Wardak. They can be considered somewhat of an insurgent stronghold and personnel in the area remain vulnerable to attack. Districts that host

major roads in Logar and Ghazni are of special concern. Furthermore, some Hazara-majority areas should be considered vulnerable to ethnic tension.

Likely targets for insurgent attacks include district offices, outposts, convoys and other organisations that are associated with the Afghan security forces, such as the local police, Afghan National Army (ANA) and the Afghan National Police (ANP). The risk also extends to facilities and personnel affiliated with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF, which consists mostly of NATO troops although several non-member nations have committed personnel), United Nations, and other NGO organs. Attacks on the bases of ISAF and other coalition forces are more common in the south (Helmand and Kandahar) and the east (Kunar) and individuals staying in military bases in the southern, central and eastern regions must be aware of the increased likelihood of stand-off attacks. These often involve rockets, mortars, and rocket-propelled grenades (RPGs). These attacks can come without warning and the smaller and more remote bases are considered to be more at risk although this is not to suggest that larger bases like the Kandahar Airfield are not susceptible. It should also be noted that given Afghanistan's recent history, many of the more remote areas still suffer from landmines and other unexploded ordnance (UXO) that are left over from previous conflicts.

Central (Ghazni, Logar, Wardak, Bamyan, Parwan, Kapisa, Panjsher, Day Kundi)



The triangle of provinces of Logar, Wardak and Ghazni remain by far the most dangerous in the central provinces, as was reflected in the statistical information gathered by AKE during the last reporting period. Soft targets, namely the police, remain the most common targets. The Jalrez district of Wardak should be considered among the most dangerous areas in the central region, despite it lying only 60km from the capital. During the last reporting period an IED hit the vehicle of the district police chief while it was heading to monitor the situation in a remote village of Kata Sang.

The insurgency's efforts to disrupt elections are pervasive and undoubtedly effective despite the increase in troop numbers. On 12 July in one of Afghanistan's safest provinces Panjsher, a bomb exploded beside Karzai's campaign office causing significant damage to the building.

Kabul

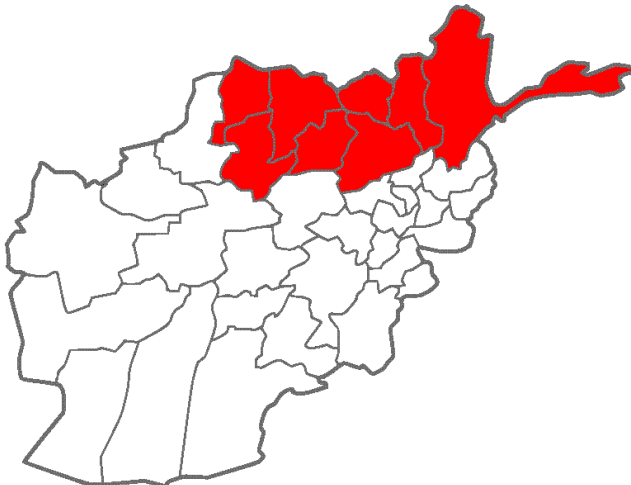
No major incidents were reported in the capital during the last reporting period. Security is currently extremely high ahead of the presidential elections. Afghan security officials arrested six people in Kabul who they were said to be planning to launch terrorist attacks in key regions of the capital. This is evidence that insurgents are planning attacks, but as yet the Afghan security forces have been able to thwart all major recent attacks. The insurgents were said to be planning suicide attacks on the Justice Ministry and two high-ranking government officials.

AKE stated the following last week, and the same assessment can be applied to this reporting period and the time up until the election: "It looks increasingly like militants are trying to carry out another

spectacular attack in the capital, and it is likely they would use a large truck bomb. During the last [two weeks ago] reporting period a single haul of 150kg of explosives was found. In the past, bombings in heavily populated areas have been rare, as killing large amounts of innocents does not help the Taliban cause.

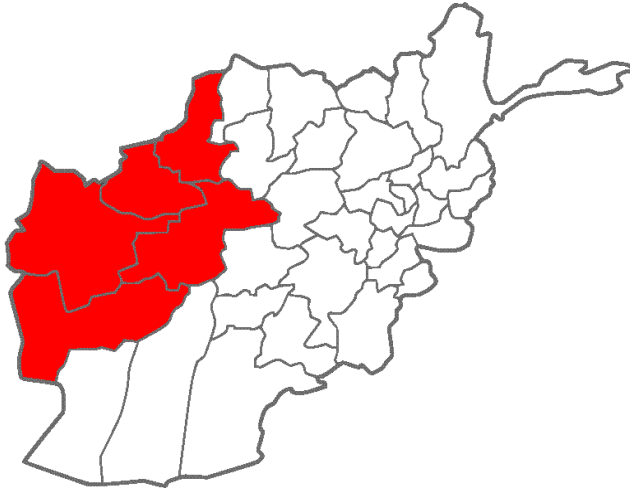
However, the political capital from a major attack on the capital might outweigh the loss of faith in some sections of the population, as the government has made a strong point of their ability to provide security in the capital, particularly under the new interior minister. A spectacular attack in the capital would thus be of significant symbolic value and cannot be ruled out.”

North (Badaghshan, Takhar, **Kunduz**, **Baghlan**, Samangan, Balkh, Sari Pul, Jawzjan)



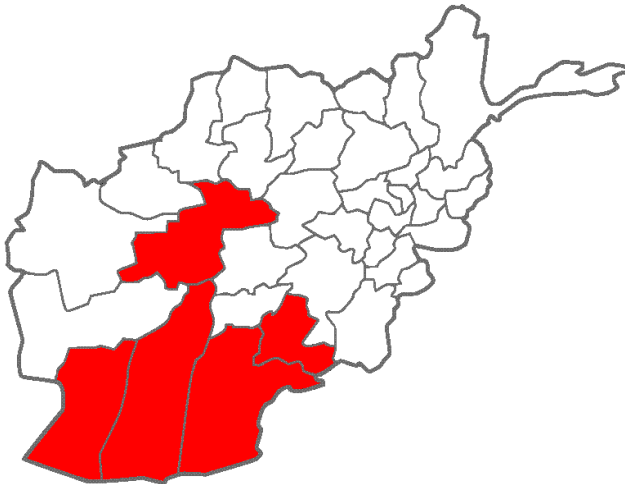
According to a poll published last Thursday by the German public broadcaster ARD, 69 per cent of Germans believe that the Bundeswehr should leave Afghanistan as soon as possible. This is a five per cent increase since April of last year, and the highest figure yet in the ARD polls on the issue. The death of three German soldiers in Kunduz in late June may have contributed to this. German newspapers such as the center-right Franfurter Allgemeine Zeitung acknowledged the Americanisation of the war but did not criticise this process. Instead, despite public approval most German newspapers applauded the defence minister’s refusal to set a date for withdrawal from Afghanistan. Aibak city, provincial capital of the Samangan, saw the closure of the two election campaign offices during the last reporting period. A female provincial level candidate has also gone missing, presumed kidnapped.

West (Faryab, Badghis, Ghor, Herat, Farah)



The number of incidents in the last reporting period was in line with previous periods. Of note, AKE has noticed a decline in the security situation in Faryab province, which is now seeing more incidents than at any time throughout the year. Meymanah, Gorwmach, Dawlatabad and Khujaqachy Districts are considered dangerous. Landmines, attacks on police checkpoints and fire fights with insurgents all occurred during the last reporting period.

South (Nimroz, Helmand, Kandahar, Zabul, Uruzgan)



Following Kunar, Kandahar saw the second-most incidents during the last reporting period. Due to the very high number, some are highlighted here to show the type of attacks that are most common, as opposed to an in-depth look at each incident. An explosion outside a religious shrine in the remote Wanaka area near Spin Boldak killed 11 civilians. This is not an uncommon event as IEDs are particularly prevalent in the province, and do not always kill their intended targets. It is unlikely that the Taliban deliberately set the device off intending to kill the civilians – they are aware of that they need to try and persuade the population that they are acting in their interests – but the incident is indicative of the crude weapons that they are using and the type of risk that exists in the south. In another incident in the province, six civilians were killed and 14 were wounded in an air strike on a village in Shawalikot district.

In the British context, the recent deaths in Helmand province have led to a reassessment of the reasons behind British involvement in the war in Afghanistan. Interestingly the ICM Research poll published in the last reporting period indicated support for the war has actually increased compared to polls taken three years ago with 47 per cent of the public supporting the war in Afghanistan while 46 per cent oppose it. This marks an increase of 15 per cent in support for the war from 2006.

Dutch domestic support for the war in Afghanistan has been apparent by its absence for well over a year. Plans to withdraw Dutch troops from Afghanistan are likely to go ahead. A commonly held view is that despite the best efforts of Dutch troops in Uruzgan province, a sense of resentment exists because heavy handedness by other coalition troops in neighbouring provinces has undone everything achieved by these troops. Plans to withdraw Dutch troops from Southern Afghanistan in 2010 are set to go ahead despite the best efforts of NATO.

Canadian domestic support for the war in Afghanistan is akin to Germany and the Netherlands with the majority of people surveyed urging the government to stick to the planned withdrawal date of 2011.

East - (Nangarhar, Laghman, Kunar, Nuristan)



Judging by the statistical data compiled by AKE, the months of April and May saw an extraordinary amount of attacks in Kunar province. The number of attacks peaked in late May at 21 and have declined in correspondence with the Pakistani offensive in Waziristan, as corroborated by anecdotal reports from US soldiers in the province. Insurgent activity remains relatively high in Kunar province but, according to the latest figures, the number of attacks has been halved since April/May. The level of co-operation between Afghan and Pakistani forces has had a positive effect on curbing Taliban activity in the region. Previous breakdowns in communications between the two armies allowed insurgents to carry out attacks in one country and flee to the other.

To prevent this, both countries, along with members of ISAF, established regular border meetings, such as one held at Nawa Pass on 5 July. Previously a safe haven for insurgents, the Nawa Pass is an excellent example of how co-operation among the three parties can lead to success along the border. Clearly under pressure from fighting a two-front war, the Taliban are being prevented from crossing the border at will. However, not all borderland in Kunar province can be secured from insurgent crossings. The brazen attack on the US base at Bari Alai, which resulted in it being overrun in May, vividly demonstrated this. Although the situation in Kunar has improved markedly since then it remains extremely dangerous. The restrictions on US troop movement serve to emphasise the central problem facing the counter-insurgency effort in Afghanistan: not enough troops. Troop levels must be increased to allow enough protection for bases and outlook centres for extended periods at a time – at least 24 hours. This would allow effective patrolling of hostile areas by ISAF and ANA forces, which is impossible when faced with a time restriction as they are now.

In other significant news from the east, Afghan forces recaptured Bargimatal district in central Nuristan. The province had been overrun by Taliban forces, but was taken back within days in a morning attack. It is difficult to evaluate what actually happened without clear information from the ground, particularly as officials denied that it was over-run, only admitting that clashes had occurred. In many cases, when the district headquarters are taken, then the district is classified as "taken" when in actual fact other areas remain in government control.

South East (Paktya, Khost, Paktika)



As expected, the Taliban are using the captured US soldier as capital to try and extract concessions from ISAF. They have most recently claimed that they will kill the unnamed soldier unless the US pull out of Paktika province's Khoshamand district and Ghazni province's Giro district. Taliban commander Mawlavi Sangin has claimed that the final decision on the soldier's fate lies with Mullah Omar. Interestingly, the Taliban claim that the soldier was captured while stumbling drunk outside of his base. This is clearly unlikely, but shows the type of propaganda that the Taliban are using to try and persuade the local population that Americans are ungodly and act in ways that would offend Muslims. US defence sources say he "just walked off" post with three Afghans after work, and have no idea why he did so. The US military is said to be distributing leaflets in two towns near the area where he went missing, which threaten villagers with the prospect of being "targeted" or "hunted" if they do not return the soldier alive.

Political Developments

Last Saturday President Karzai called on Taliban and other militants to "vote for the president they want" in Afghanistan's presidential election, while a Taliban spokesman said militants would "disrupt" the vote without harming civilians. Karzai called on the international community to be impartial in the election, and he appeared to criticise a recent meeting between US ambassador Karl Eikenberry and top challenger and former foreign minister Abdullah Abdullah, who has said he would seek to decentralise power out of Kabul and give provincial capitals more authority.

Karzai himself seems reluctant to appear in public. Since the official campaign began last month, his aides said, more than 50 rallies have been organised by supporters across the country, but he has not yet attended one. Karzai has also turned down proposals by television stations to publicly debate his major rivals, saying certain conditions were required without specifying what these were.

Despite Karzai's declining popularity both at home and abroad, until recently he was widely tipped to easily gain the 50.01 per cent of votes that would result in first round victory. However, many senior aides have recently bemoaned the campaign's disorganisation. Compounding the sense of concern in the Karzai camp is the defection of an influential governor to the Abdullah camp and a series of high-profile meetings between the US ambassador and opposition candidates.

Furthermore, in spite of added troop numbers, much of Karzai's home base in the south and the core of his Pashtun ethnic constituency is in the grip of Taliban terror. Many predict therefore that voters in areas such as Kandahar will decline the opportunity to vote out of fear for their safety.

Kidnap and Ransom

The prevention of kidnap

Whilst there is no foolproof way to prevent kidnap and ransom situations, there are ways in which you can significantly mitigate the risk of such an eventuality happening to you.

It is important to make your colleagues aware of your movements, even journeys that may seem unimportant and short.

Always carry communications equipment. View your mobile phone or radio as a vital piece of kit. It is important to be familiar with the area in which you are operating. Find out all you can about it prior to departure and once on the ground get to know 'your area', the areas around your office/facility and your residence.

Similarly, it is vitally important that you know where to obtain emergency assistance.

'Safe havens' may save your life. Be aware of areas that you can be protected in until assistance arrives.

Remember to limit the time you are exposed to danger.

Counter-surveillance

Although an obvious point, to be kidnapped one needs to be accessible to potential captors. To ensure this they are likely to watch their victim's movements to determine the best possible time and place to take them. The easier it is to determine a target's movements and likely actions, the easier it is to abduct them. Comparatively simple measures may mitigate your exposure to risk.

- Alter the colour and styling of your clothing
- Widen your field of vision. Most people when walking will only take in what is in their immediate field of vision (roughly 30 degrees to your front). Look around you and observe other people's movements/actions.
- Vary your routes to and from work, residence, restaurants, shops etc. If at all possible use different entrances and exits into the various buildings you go to.
- Avoid routine, for example do not always hold a meeting at 11 am on a Tuesday at a specific location.
- Study your surroundings. Look for people or objects that appear out of place such as cars or vans (especially those without windows or tinted glass).

AKE's Afghanistan Security Briefing is an all-source intelligence product compiled with information from an array of open and privileged sources, and essential contribution from AKE Security Risk Specialists. AKE would like to thank the Afghanistan NGO Security Office (ANSO) in particular for the provision of incident report information.

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