

# Inquiry into Operation Burnham and related matters

## Public module 1: MFAT background paper

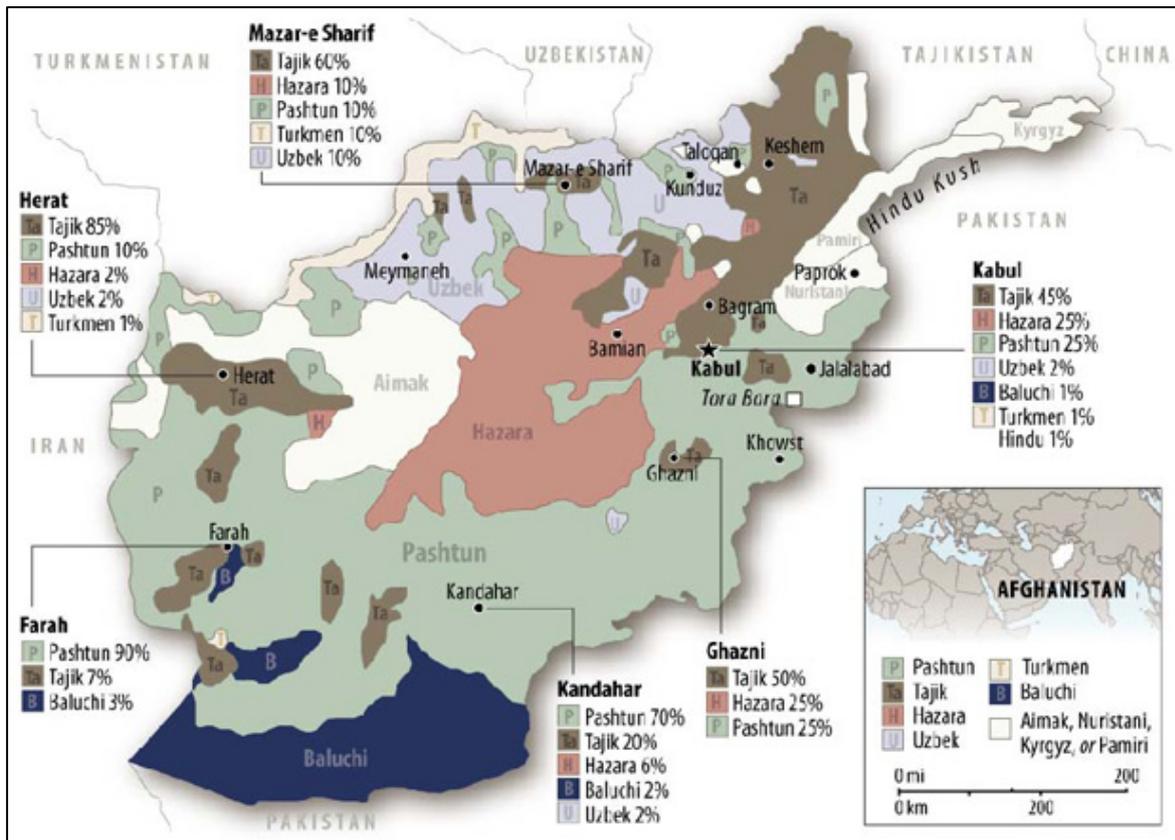
### Introduction

This paper responds to the Inquiry's invitation for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MFAT) to produce a background paper as specified in Inquiry Minute No.8. The paper provides an overview of Afghanistan, explains New Zealand's relationship with the Afghanistan Government, outlines the response of the international community to the events of September 11 2001 insofar as they related to Afghanistan, and summarises the security situation in Afghanistan.

### Afghanistan: an overview

Afghanistan is a mountainous, landlocked country on the border of South and Central Asia. It is mostly arid to semi-arid with hot summers and cold winters. It sits at the crossroads of central Asia, sharing a border with six countries: Pakistan to the south and east, Iran to the west, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan to the north, and China to the extreme northeast.

Fig. 1: the distribution of ethnic groups across Afghanistan



The country is rich in linguistic and cultural diversity. A single national identity has never taken hold and instead the country is characterised by a patchwork of tribal and ethnic loyalties, as illustrated in the map above.<sup>1</sup>

The country has experienced a long history of conflict, resulting both from internal power struggles and the intervention of external powers. Since 1979, its experience of conflict has been almost continuous, involving a Soviet invasion and occupation (1979 – 1989); a civil war (1989 – 1996); a UN-backed intervention (2001); and an ongoing armed conflict not only between different Afghan groups but also between the Taliban, terrorist groups and international coalitions (2001 - ).

As a result of decades of armed conflict, and significant challenges in forging national consensus on how the country should be governed, Afghanistan continues to face significant security, economic and governance challenges. In 2017, Afghanistan was placed at 168 out of 189 countries in the UNDP's Human Development Index, a measure that assess long term progress across three basic dimensions of human development a long and healthy life, access to knowledge, and a decent standard of living (UNDP 2018).

## New Zealand's Relationship with Afghanistan

New Zealand's relationship with the Afghanistan Government rests significantly on our security and humanitarian contributions to Afghanistan post-2001. A large number of Afghans have made New Zealand their home and continue to do so within the Government's Refugee Quota Programme.

Since 2001, New Zealand has invested approximately NZ\$100m in development initiatives in Afghanistan at the national, regional and provincial level. Our support has been focused on improving basic education, human rights, policing capability and capacity, demining, renewable energy and agriculture development. Over 3,500 New Zealand personnel have served in Afghanistan since 2001. This has included three Special Air Service (SAS – Special Forces) deployments, a decade-long military commitment to the Bamyán Provincial Reconstruction Team, and police support to EUPOL training programmes. Attached at **Annex D** is a comprehensive report produced by MFAT, summarising New Zealand's support to Bamyán in the 10 years preceding 2013.

Since 2013, we have focused on supporting training at the UK-led Afghan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA) in Kabul, which is a training academy for young Afghan officers. In September 2018, the deployment of 11 New Zealand Defence Force personnel to the Officer Academy was extended to September 2019.<sup>2</sup> Alongside the ANAOA deployment, two personnel are deployed to NATO's Resolute Support Mission Headquarters, who assist with operational planning and training advice. New Zealand

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/background/taliban-afghanistan>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.defence.govt.nz/publications/publication/september-2018-proposal-to-continue-nz-contribution-to-afghanistan-army-training>.

also currently contributes USD\$2m per annum to the UNDP-managed Law and Order Trust Fund for Afghanistan (LOTFA) to support the capacity-building of Afghan security and law enforcement forces.

New Zealand focused on Afghanistan during our 2015-16 term as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, including as chair of the 1988 (Taliban) and 1267 ISIL/Al-Qaida Sanctions Committees.

### **New Zealand trade (year ended December 2018)**

New Zealand exports	NZ\$1.6 million
Main exports	Dairy products
New Zealand imports	NZ\$158,665
Main imports	Machinery parts

### **Representation**

- New Zealand is accredited to Afghanistan from Tehran. New Zealand opened an embassy in Kabul in 2010, co-located in the British Embassy. The embassy was opened to help support the significant overseas development assistance and defence contributions provided by New Zealand to Afghanistan at the time. The embassy closed in December 2014 as New Zealand's contribution was scaled back, and accreditation reverted to Tehran. New Zealand diplomats visit Kabul from Tehran approximately twice a year.
- Afghanistan is accredited to New Zealand from Canberra.

### **Visits**

Minister of Defence Ron Mark and Minister of Justice Andrew Little visited Kabul in February 2018.

GG LT GEN Sir Jerry Mateparae and Minister of Defence Jonathan Coleman visited Kabul and Bamyan in April 2013.

Prime Minister John Key visited Kabul and Bamyan in May 2010.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Murray McCully visited Kabul in July 2010.

Minister of Defence Wayne Mapp visited Kabul in October 2009.

Afghan Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr Zalmay Rassoul visited Wellington in 2013.

## The international community and Afghanistan since 9/11

This section outlines the key events in the response of the international community to the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and its subsequent engagement in conflict, stabilisation, peace keeping and capacity-building in Afghanistan. It is not intended to be a comprehensive account and does not engage in the merits of the policies, strategies and decisions of the international community throughout the period.

A timeline of key events is attached at **Annex A**.

A schedule of relevant UN Security Council Resolutions is at **Annex B**.

### Setting the Scene: Al-Qaida in the Taliban's Afghanistan

The Taliban emerged victorious from the Afghan Civil War to rule the country in 1996. Al-Qaida had sought sanctuary in Afghanistan since being evicted from Sudan in the mid-1990s.

The UN Security Council specifically focused its attention on the threat posed by the two groups in 1999, when **UNSC Resolution 1267** was adopted. This UNSC resolution created the (then) al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee, linking the two groups as terrorist entities and imposing sanctions on their funding, travel and arms shipments. In return for al-Qaida being allowed to base their training camps in southern Afghanistan, the Taliban sought (and received) a pledge of allegiance from Osama bin Laden and requested that the group not conduct activities which might result in a foreign military intervention.

Two days prior to the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the US, al-Qaida operatives assassinated Ahmad Shah Massoud, the commander of the anti-Taliban Northern Alliance. A Council for Foreign Relations report indicates that terrorism experts "believe his assassination assured Osama bin Laden protection by the Taliban after the 9/11 attacks."<sup>3</sup>

### The immediate aftermath of 9/11 – and the genesis of Operation Enduring Freedom

The 9/11 terrorist attacks on the two World Trade Centre towers in New York, the Pentagon in Washington, and the crashed fourth aircraft, cost over 3,000 lives.

The day after the attacks, on 12 September 2001, the United Nations Security Council adopted **Resolution 1368**, condemning the events of 11 September as acts of terrorism and determining the situation in Afghanistan to be a threat to international peace and

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

security. Acting under Chapter VII of the UN Charter,<sup>4</sup> Resolution 1368 recognised the inherent right of individual or collective self-defence in accordance with the UN Charter; called for States to work together urgently to bring the 'perpetrators, organizers and sponsors to justice'; stated that those responsible for 'aiding, supporting or harbouring' such persons 'will be held accountable'; called on the international community to 'redouble their efforts to prevent and suppress terrorist acts'; and expressed its readiness to 'take all necessary steps to respond to the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001, and to combat all forms of terrorism, in accordance with its responsibilities under the Charter of the United Nations'.

On 20 September 2001, then US President Bush announced that the terrorist group al-Qaida was responsible for the attacks. President Bush called on the Taliban regime to "deliver to the United States authorities all the leaders of al-Qaida who hide in your land," or share in their fate. The Taliban refused to comply with this request unless the US produced evidence of al-Qaida's culpability. A later offer by the Taliban, to detain bin Laden and try him under Islamic law in Afghanistan if the United States made a formal request and presented them with sufficient evidence, was rejected by the US.

New Zealand's then Prime Minister Helen Clark announced on 21 September 2001 that New Zealand was prepared to make a military contribution to the US / UN Security Council call for effective action to combat terrorism.<sup>5</sup>

On 26 September 2001, the UN Security Council adopted **Resolution 1373**, which reaffirmed the inherent right to individual or collective self-defence as recognised by the UN Charter and the need to combat by all means, in accordance with the UN Charter, threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts. Resolution 1373 called on all States to prevent and suppress the financing of terrorist acts in a number of ways, including (but not limited to): preventing and suppressing terrorist financing; taking all necessary steps to prevent the commission of terrorist acts; and affording one another the greatest measure of assistance in information sharing, investigations or proceedings relating to terrorist acts or financing. The Resolution also established the Counter-Terrorism Committee, tasked with monitoring Member States' implementation efforts.

On 3 October 2001, a special debate was held in New Zealand's Parliament for the House to declare its support for the offer of Special Air Services troops and other assistance as part of the response of the United States and the international coalition to the terrorist attacks that were carried out on 11 September. The motion included both full support

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<sup>4</sup> Pursuant to the Charter of the United Nations, the UN Security Council has the primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. A decision (Resolution) of the UN Security Council adopted under Chapter VII of the UN Charter is legally binding on all UN Member States.

<sup>5</sup> Prime Minister, NZ shares US determination to root out terrorism, 21 Sept. 2001 <http://www.beehive.govt.nz/release/nz-shares-us-determination-root-out-terrorism>.

for the US approach and for UN Security Council Resolutions 1368 and 1373, and carried 112-7.<sup>6</sup>

On 7 October, the US (with UK support) began Operation Enduring Freedom, initially a bombing campaign on al-Qaida and Taliban positions in Afghanistan. The US cited the right of self-defence as justification for the airstrikes.<sup>7</sup> The first US Special Forces and conventional forces were quickly deployed to Afghanistan following the bombing campaign to support Northern Alliance allies in removing the Taliban from power. Major provincial capitals fell quickly to the Northern Alliance, while Kabul was abandoned by the Taliban on 13 November 2001. Neither the Taliban leader, Mohammed Omar, nor Osama bin Laden were captured or confirmed as killed following the Taliban's retreat. Bin Laden escaped from his stronghold cave complex in Tora Bora to Pakistan in mid-December.

On 14 November 2001, the UN Security Council adopted **Resolution 1378**, calling for the United Nations to have "a central role" in establishing a transitional administration. The resolution invited Member States to send peacekeeping forces to promote stability and aid delivery.

Afghan groups met in Bonn, Germany in December 2001 and agreed to form an interim government (The Bonn Agreement).

On 20 December 2001, the UN Security Council adopted **Resolution 1386** which established the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to assist the new interim government consolidate its authority around Kabul. The Resolution called on Member States to contribute 'personnel, equipment and other resources to ISAF' and authorised Member States participating in ISAF to 'take all necessary measures to fulfill its mandate'. The first contingent of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) military personnel arrived in Afghanistan in January 2002, representing the beginning of a 19-year plus commitment to Afghanistan by NATO. Hamid Karzai was sworn in as head of an interim power-sharing government, a position confirmed by an emergency loya Jirga (grand council) in June the following year.

### **A new reconstruction model and a growing NATO presence**

Following the fall of the Taliban in mid-November 2001, the international mission in Afghanistan was transformed from a military operation to a combination of security, development and peace-building.

On 28 March 2002, UN Security Council **Resolution 1401** established the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) at the request of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. UNAMA's initial mandate was to fulfil the UN's responsibilities under the Bonn Agreement, including responsibilities related to

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<sup>6</sup> NZPD, 3 Oct. 2001, v. 595, p. 11996.

<sup>7</sup> The text of the letter from the US President to the UNSC can be found at <http://www.un.int/usa/s-2001-946.htm>.

human rights, the rule of law and gender issues, promote national reconciliation and rapprochement throughout the country and manage the UN's efforts in humanitarian relief, recovery and reconstruction activities.<sup>8</sup>

Alongside the ongoing counter-terrorism activities in Operation Enduring Freedom, the US military also coordinated redevelopment efforts by the UN, nongovernmental organisations, and the Afghan government. The first Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) was established in Gardez in November 2002, followed by PRTs in Bamyan, Kunduz, Mazar-e-Sharif, Kandahar, and Herat. Initially, PRTs were US-funded and directed. However, as the PRT program evolved, other NATO members and NATO partners took over the leadership of some PRTs. In late 2003, New Zealand assumed the leadership of the PRT in Bamyan Province in the central highlands of Afghanistan.

NATO assumed control of ISAF in Afghanistan in 2003, expanding NATO/ISAF's role to support the Afghan government in the maintenance of security outside of Kabul and across the country under UN Security Council **Resolution 1510**.<sup>9</sup> NATO further expanded its footprint in Afghanistan in September 2005, July 2006, and October 2006. The number of ISAF troops grew accordingly, from an initial five thousand to around sixty-five thousand troops from forty-two countries, including all twenty-eight NATO member states and several NATO partners. In 2006, ISAF assumed command of the international military forces in eastern Afghanistan from the US-led coalition, and also became more involved in intensive combat operations in southern Afghanistan against remnants of the Taliban.

In the political realm, presidential elections were held in 2004 and Hamid Karzai was elected President. The following year, parliamentary elections were held for the first time in more than 30 years.

### **A resurgent Taliban**

In spite of an increased NATO troop presence, the summer of 2006 saw violence increase across Afghanistan, especially in the south, with a sharp spike in the number of suicide attacks and remotely detonated bombings. At the **NATO summit in Riga**, NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer set a target of 2008 for the Afghan National Army to begin to take control of security in Afghanistan.

From 2006, the Taliban expanded their influence across Afghanistan year on year. This resulted in a deepening conflict, as the NATO-ISAF and US troops in Afghanistan began fighting a growing insurgency. While the Taliban lost its stronghold in Kandahar City and lost significant territory in Helmand Province, they retained their

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<sup>8</sup> UNAMA's mandate is renewed annually and has been amended over time to reflect the needs of Afghanistan. Its mandate was last renewed on 15 March 2019 by UN Security Council Resolution 2640 (2019).

<sup>9</sup> Since 2003, NATO (and UNAMA) mandates have been extended from time to time by subsequent UN Security Council Resolutions. Please see Annex B for a list of full UN Security Council Resolutions.

presence in southeastern provinces such as Khost, Paktia and Paktika.<sup>10</sup> With the international military focused on regaining control of Southern Afghanistan, Taliban influence was able to spread to areas which were previously uncontested, such as Kunar and Nuristan provinces.

### **The surge begins**

Following President Bush's decision to send an extra 4,500 US troops to Afghanistan in September 2008, President Obama announced a plan to send an additional 17,000 troops to Afghanistan in early 2009. NATO countries pledged to increase their military and capacity building commitments. Addressing Congress, US Secretary of Defense Robert Gates described the original mission in Afghanistan as "too broad" and called for more limited goals such as preventing and limiting terrorist safe havens.<sup>11</sup> Consequently the US announced a new strategy for Afghanistan in March 2009, explicitly linking success in Afghanistan to a stable Pakistan, with a core goal being "to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaida and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan".<sup>12</sup> Four thousand additional US personnel were deployed to train and bolster the Afghan army and police. NATO members were asked by the US to increase their contributions of non-military assets to better support efforts to build a civil society in Afghanistan. In April 2009, NATO agreed to provide an additional 5,000 troops to train the Afghan army and police force.

Following Hamid Karzai's 2009 re-election as President of Afghanistan, President Obama decided again to boost US troop numbers, this time by 30,000, which brought the total to 100,000. President Obama stated at the time that the additional forces "will increase our ability to train competent Afghan Security Forces, and to partner with them so that more Afghans can get into the fight. And they will help create the conditions for the United States to transfer responsibility to the Afghans." He also set a timeline for beginning the withdrawal of the US military presence, from July 2011. This timeline was reconfirmed at the November 2010 **NATO summit in Lisbon**, where NATO members signed a declaration agreeing to hand over full responsibility for security to Afghan forces by the end of 2014.

Osama bin Laden was killed in a US raid on Abbottabad, Pakistan, on 1 May 2011.

In June 2011, President Obama announced that 33,000 US troops would be withdrawn within the next year, leaving approximately 70,000 US troops in Afghanistan until the end of 2014. He also confirmed that the US had begun preliminary peace talks with the Taliban (later suspended in March 2012). With an eye to a possible peace deal, the UNSC split the al-Qaida and Taliban sanctions list into separate lists for each entity, allowing them greater flexibility to add and remove individuals from the Taliban list.

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<sup>10</sup> <https://web.stanford.edu/group/mappingmilitants/cgi-bin/groups/view/367>.

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.cfr.org/timeline/us-war-afghanistan>.

<sup>12</sup> <https://obamawhitehouse.archives.gov/blog/2009/03/27/a-new-strategy-afghanistan-and-pakistan>.

In November 2011, President Karzai won the endorsement of tribal elders to negotiate a 10-year military partnership with the US at a loya jirga, which would allow US troops to remain in Afghanistan beyond 2014 (when foreign troops were due to leave). The **Bonn Conference** attendees were unable to agree a roadmap to transition Afghanistan to a self-sustaining and secure country.

President Karzai asked for US\$10bn annually for 10 years from the international community to support security and reconstruction in Afghanistan. The following year at the **Tokyo Conference**, US\$16bn in civilian aid was pledged to Afghanistan for the period 2012-2016.

### **The transition to Afghan-led security**

The **2012 NATO summit in Chicago** again endorsed the plan to withdraw foreign combat troops by the end of 2014. Hastened by several incidents in 2012 which sparked anger and protests among Afghans, NATO-ISAF and US troops were first withdrawn from village outposts to military bases and then security responsibility nationwide was handed over to Afghan forces in June 2013. The first tranche of PRTs, including the New Zealand led PRT in Bamyán Province, handed back security responsibility to Afghanistan security forces. New Zealand's PRT officially concluded its operations in April 2013. The US and NATO-ISAF shifted from combat to training the Afghan security forces and counterterrorism operations.

In May 2014, President Obama extended the timeline for withdrawing the majority of US troops to the end of 2016. However, along with the UK, the US concluded its combat operations in Afghanistan in October 2014. Two months later on 28 December, **NATO-ISAF formally ended its 13 year combat mission** in Afghanistan.

**Resolute Support Mission**, NATO's follow-on mission from ISAF, commenced on 1 January 2015, with 12,000 personnel in place to provide further training and support for capacity building in the Afghan security forces. The UN Security Council welcomed the Mission, agreed between NATO and the Afghan government in **Resolution 2189** (2014).

### **Afghanistan holds its first peaceful leadership transition as security situation worsens**

In September 2014, Ashraf Ghani and his rival for the Afghan presidency Abdullah Abdullah signed a power-sharing agreement following a contested election result. Ghani became president while Abdullah assumed the newly-created position of CEO.

The security situation in Afghanistan remained unstable: 2014 had been a particularly violent year. In addition, Islamic State in Khorasan Province (ISKP – Daesh's Afghan operation) emerged as a force in late 2014 /early 2015, particularly in Nangarhar Province.

At President Ghani's request, in March 2015 President Obama announced that the US would delay its troop withdrawal. In May, the Taliban and Afghan officials held informal peace talks in Qatar, with the Taliban holding steadfast to their insistence that they would not agree to a ceasefire until all foreign troops had left Afghanistan. Later that summer, the Taliban overran and briefly held the northern city of Kunduz, their most significant advance since their ouster from power in 2001. The worsening security situation resulted in Obama announcing that 9,800 US troops would remain in Afghanistan until the end of 2016.<sup>13</sup>

At the July **2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw**, leaders decided to sustain the presence of Resolute Support Mission beyond 2016. The US announced its military presence would remain in Afghanistan into 2017, while NATO agreed to maintain troop numbers and support local security forces until 2020. In November 2017, NATO Defence Ministers agreed to increase the size of the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission from around 13,000 to around 16,000 troops over the course of 2018.

US President Trump announced in August 2017 that the US would deploy further troops to fight a resurgent Taliban.

At the July **2018 NATO Summit in Brussels**, NATO members and their operational partners recommitted to sustaining the mission in Afghanistan until conditions indicated that a change was appropriate; to extending financial sustainment of the Afghan security forces through 2024; and to making further progress on developing a political and practical partnership with Afghanistan.<sup>14</sup> NATO also welcomed two new troop-contributing nations, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar. Those two countries are currently finalising the details of their contribution to Resolute Support Mission.

*Fig. 1: NATO Resolute Support Mission Troop Contributing Countries as of March 2019<sup>15</sup>*

Albania	135	Germany	1300	Portugal	193
Armenia	121	Greece	12	Romania	733
Australia	300	Hungary	93	Slovakia	36
Austria	17	Iceland	3	Slovenia	8
Azerbaijan	120	Italy	895	Spain	67
Belgium	82	Latvia	42	Sweden	29
Bosnia-Herzegovina	63	Lithuania	50	North Macedonia	47
Bulgaria	159	Luxembourg	2	Turkey	593
Croatia	106	Mongolia	233	Ukraine	16
Czech Republic	357	Montenegro	29	UK	1100
Denmark	155	Netherlands	160	USA	8475
Estonia	39	New	13		

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/16/world/asia/obama-troop-withdrawal-afghanistan.html>.

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics\\_8189.htm](https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_8189.htm).

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.nato.int/nato\\_static\\_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf\\_2019\\_03/20190305\\_2019-03-RSM-Placemat.pdf](https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_2019_03/20190305_2019-03-RSM-Placemat.pdf).

		Zealand			
Finland	24	Norway	54		
Georgia	870	Poland	303		
				<b>Total</b>	<b>17034</b>

### **Peace talks recommence**

In early 2019, the US confirmed it had restarted peace talks with the Taliban, led by former US Ambassador to Afghanistan Zalmay Khalilzad and senior Taliban negotiator Sher Muhammad Abbas Stanikzai. While peace talks are in a nascent stage they do offer a glimmer of hope for Afghanistan. The talks build on the three-day Eid ceasefire in June 2018, which was the first effective ceasefire in 17 years of conflict, and President Ghani's public offer of unconditional peace talks with the Taliban. A grass-roots peace march from Kandahar to Kabul in June 2018 highlighted a desire for peace amongst the Afghan population. There are many difficult issues to negotiate: the Taliban demands the ultimate withdrawal of all foreign forces from Afghanistan, while the US seeks an initial commitment to a ceasefire from the Taliban. The Government of Afghanistan is also seeking a role in the peace negotiations. It remains unclear how the Taliban could then participate in Afghanistan's political processes and how Taliban fighters might be reintegrated into society. Notwithstanding the very real challenges facing the US and Taliban negotiators, the peace talks continue.

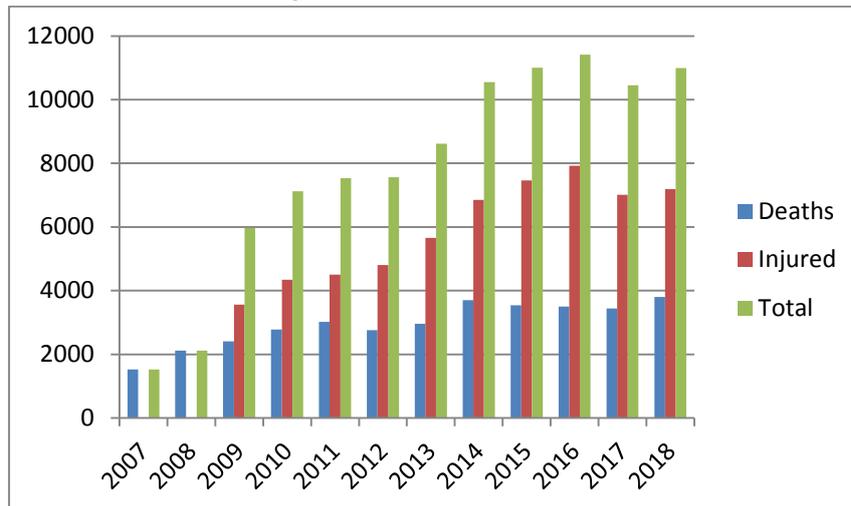
Afghanistan is also preparing for presidential elections, currently scheduled to be held on 28 September. President Ghani has indicated he will seek a second term. Several high-profile Afghan political figures will compete for election.

## The security situation in Afghanistan

There has been an ongoing and serious conflict in Afghanistan since 2001. That conflict has been between different Afghan groups but also between the Taliban, terrorist groups and international coalitions. As a result, the security situation has been consistently unstable.

Since 2001, MFAT has advised against travel to Afghanistan, warning of the “extreme risk” to safety. MFAT travel advisories<sup>16</sup> since 2001 have noted the high threat of terrorism, including in the form of suicide car bombings, improvised explosive devices, and specific terrorist threats against western organisations and individuals. They have noted the risk of kidnapping, rocket and bomb attacks, and specific threats against foreigners (including those working for NGOs).

*Fig. 2. Civilian casualty figures from UNAMA Reports on the protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict for Afghanistan 2007-2018<sup>17</sup>*



UNAMA reporting demonstrates how the violence in Afghanistan – once largely centred in the south and east of the country – increasingly spread across the country. Civilian casualty figures demonstrate the toll the expanded conflict has had on the Afghan people. UNAMA and NATO Resolute Support both publish annual reports into civilian casualty figures, which exceeded 3,000 deaths and 10,000 total casualties for each of the

<sup>16</sup> The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade provides advice on security and safety concerns in many global destinations, via its website [www.safetravel.govt.nz](http://www.safetravel.govt.nz). This advice is based on information from a number of sources and reflects potential risks, and MFAT’s assessment of what these might mean for New Zealanders. These assessments may also take into account actions of local authorities, and the New Zealand Government’s ability to provide assistance to New Zealanders in need. The advice is designed to assist New Zealanders make informed decisions about travel destinations.

<sup>17</sup> Source: UNAMA Reports on the protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict accessed via the UNAMA documents and resource centre <https://unama.unmissions.org/protection-of-civilians-reports>.

past five years, and exceeded 2,000 deaths and 6,000 total casualties for each year from 2009 - 2012.<sup>18</sup>

MFAT has frequently warned of the risks of road travel in Afghanistan. Since 2005, roadside bombs and Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs) have been a feature of the Afghan conflict. By 2009, IED attacks had become the principal cause of death for US and NATO-led troops in Afghanistan, as well as Afghan civilians. In 2005, there were 465 bombs reported by the US military. That figure grew to 8,894 events in 2009, before spiking at 13,481 by the end of November in 2010, a growth of more than 50 percent in just one year.<sup>19</sup> IEDs continue to be a leading cause of civilian casualties in Afghanistan.

Foreigners have been particularly vulnerable to kidnapping and attack. There have been a number of attacks in Kabul on hotels and restaurants frequented by the international community, including attacks on the Serena Hotel in 2008 and 2014, and the Intercontinental Hotel in 2011 and 2018. Embassies and international organisations tend to be based in the green zone diplomatic quarter and have very high levels of security. They are not, however, immune from attack, as evidenced by the 31 May 2017 green zone bombing which destroyed the German Embassy.

There have been a number of major, complex attacks or bombings in Kabul in recent years, including:

- 8 March 2017 – an attack on a military hospital in Kabul killed over 100.
- 31 May 2017 – a truck bomb in Kabul’s diplomatic quarter killed over 150.
- 25 August 2017 – ISKP targeted a Shi’a shrine in Kabul killing more than 20.
- 20 January 2018 – The Kabul Intercontinental Hotel attack resulted in more 22 dead.
- 27 January 2018 – an ambulance bomb in Kabul near the government quarter killed 103.
- 21 March 2018 – a suicide bomber killed 29 near a shrine in Kabul.

Outside Kabul, the security picture has been mixed. In Bamyán province, where New Zealand was based until 2013, the security situation has generally been more stable. In neighbouring Baghlan province, however, security has been considerably more precarious, reflecting the strategic importance of the province and the more intense conflict there. In general terms, security outside Kabul is poor. A series of attacks on NGO workers in provincial cities has seen a number of prominent NGOs including Médecins Sans Frontières either scale back their operations to Kabul only, or in the example of Save the Children (whose office in Jalalabad was attacked in January 2018), suspend operations in Afghanistan altogether.

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<sup>18</sup> The figures between the two organisations reports do not match. UNAMA has a broader definition of “civilian” than NATO does, while NATO and Afghan troops on the ground are possibly able to feed more accurate reporting into their headquarters. The 2018 [NATO Resolute Support Civilian Casualties backgrounder \(PDF\)](#) provides specific examples of discrepancies between the two organisations’ reporting. UNAMA reports from 2007 and 2008 only have civilian death numbers, not injuries.

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.wired.com/2010/12/afghan-bombs-kill-wound-3800-troops-in-2010/>.

## Current security situation in Afghanistan

The US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford, described the security situation in Afghanistan in November 2018 as a stalemate, commenting further that the Taliban is “not losing right now.”<sup>20</sup> The number of Afghans who live in areas of government control or influence (an important metric for NATO / US planners) continues to hover around the 65% mark, a figure that has not changed significantly since 2016.<sup>21</sup> The Afghan Government’s control or influence of districts has slightly decreased since 2016 to 54%. From a NATO perspective, the stability of these figures over successive years supports the assessment that this conflict has ground to a stalemate – a precondition many Afghan watchers (academics, journalists, politicians, government officials) had considered would be necessary to entice the Taliban to peace talks. In the latest quarterly report by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) to Congress, NATO Resolute Support commented: “Taliban participation in various [peace] talks (Russia, US, etc.) suggests they have a similar assessment [of stalemate]. There is no explanation for Taliban behaviour if they are advancing their interest militarily.”<sup>22</sup>

Despite the nascent peace talks, the violence in Afghanistan continues. Complex mass casualty attacks, use of IEDs, suicide attacks, direct fire, kidnappings, and assassinations, all continue to be routinely used by the Taliban, ISKP, and other anti-Government elements in Afghanistan. The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces, supported by NATO and US troops continue to defend and attempt to retake territory. The 308,000+ personnel in the Afghan National Defence and Security Forces continue to take high casualties.<sup>23</sup> Civilian casualty levels – including deaths – reached record levels in 2018 according to UNAMA (3,804 dead, 7,189 injured).<sup>24</sup> Afghanistan remains, in many parts of the country, unstable, dangerous, and insecure.

MFAT’s current travel advice for Afghanistan states:<sup>25</sup>

***Do not travel to Afghanistan. The hostile and unpredictable security situation, high and ongoing threat of terrorism and kidnapping of foreigners present a significant risk to New Zealanders in Afghanistan. New Zealanders currently in Afghanistan are advised to depart as soon as it is safe to do so.***<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>

[https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/11/20/in-afghanistan-a-17-year-stalemate-us-war-pentagon/?utm\\_source=PostUp&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=7660&utm\\_term=Editor#39;s%20Picks%20OC](https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/11/20/in-afghanistan-a-17-year-stalemate-us-war-pentagon/?utm_source=PostUp&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=7660&utm_term=Editor#39;s%20Picks%20OC)

<sup>21</sup> NATO district stability data from October 2018 suggested this had decreased slightly to 63.5%.

<sup>22</sup> <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2019-01-30qr.pdf>, p.68.

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2019-01-30qr.pdf>, p.80.

<sup>24</sup>

[https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan\\_protection\\_of\\_civilians\\_annual\\_report\\_2018\\_final\\_24\\_feb\\_2019\\_1.pdf](https://unama.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/afghanistan_protection_of_civilians_annual_report_2018_final_24_feb_2019_1.pdf).

<sup>25</sup> see Annex C

<sup>26</sup> <https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/afghanistan>.

The travel advice records an *"ongoing and extreme risk of terrorism throughout Afghanistan"* and notes that *"kidnapping for ransom and the hostage taking of foreign nationals is a significant problem."* Road travel throughout Afghanistan is recorded as *"extremely dangerous"* including on account of the risk of suicide bombings, roadside bombs, carjacking, armed robbery and banditry. The travel advice records specific recent terrorist attacks in Kabul and notes that *"beyond Kabul the security situation is unpredictable and volatile"*.

In spite of all these negative security trends, the nascent peace process has generated some hope. NATO has indicated to all Resolute Support Mission partners that, to give these talks their best chance of success, coalition members need retain their commitments to Afghanistan and solidarity with the Afghan government. Accordingly, NATO continues to build and broaden the coalition, with two new troop contributing countries being announced in 2018 – Qatar and the United Arab Emirates.

**Annex A – Timeline of the International Community’s involvement in Afghanistan (1996 – to present)**

1996

- The Taliban was declared an Islamic Emirate after seizing Kabul.
- Al-Qaida relocated from Sudan to Afghanistan.

1999

- UN Security Council Resolution 1267 was adopted (creating the al-Qaida and Taliban Sanctions Committee).

2001

- 9 September – Ahmad Shah Massoud, Commander of the Northern Alliance, was assassinated.
- 11 September – 9/11 terrorist attacks carried out in the US.
- 12 September – The UN Security Council adopted UNSC Resolution 1368 (2001), condemning the 9/11 attacks as acts of terrorism and determining the situation in Afghanistan as a threat to international peace and security.
- 20 September – US President Bush attributed responsibility for the attacks to al Qaeda.
- 21 September – NZ Prime Minister Clark announced that New Zealand was prepared to make a military contribution to support international efforts to combat terrorism in Afghanistan.
- 26 September – UN Security Council adopted UNSC Resolution 1373 (2001) reaffirming the inherent right to individual or collective self-defence and called on all Member States to implement a range of measures to combat terrorism.
- 7 October – Operation Enduring Freedom began with the bombing of al-Qaida and Taliban positions in Afghanistan. US Special Forces and conventional troops were subsequently deployed to assist the Northern Alliance in ousting the Taliban.
- 13 November – Kabul was abandoned by the Taliban and Northern Alliance forces took the city.
- 14 November – UNSC Resolution 1378 was adopted, calling for a central role for the UN in establishing a transitional administration in Afghanistan and inviting contributions to peacekeeping forces from UN member states.
- 5 December – Afghan groups agreed to form an interim government with Hamid Karzai as its leader (a position confirmed by an emergency loya jirga in June 2002).
- 20 December – UNSC Resolution 1386 established the mandate for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF).

2002

- January – The first NATO-ISAF personnel arrived in Afghanistan.
- 28 March – UNSC Resolution 1401 established the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).
- November – The first Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) was established by the US military in Gardez Province.

2003

- 13 October – UNSC Resolution 1510 (2003) was adopted, expanding NATO-ISAF’s role from the provision of security in Kabul to the entirety of Afghanistan.

## 2004

- 28 June – At the Istanbul NATO Summit, NATO announced they will assume command of four new PRTs and deploy extra troops to Afghanistan, including to support the upcoming election.
- October – NATO-ISAF assumed command of the international forces in northern Afghanistan.
- 4 November – Hamid Karzai was declared the winner of Afghanistan's presidential election.

## 2005

- 10 February – NATO announced that ISAF would expand into western Afghanistan.
- September – 2,000 additional NATO troops were temporarily deployed to Afghanistan to support 18 September provincial and parliamentary elections.

## 2006

- 31 July – ISAF assumed command of the southern region of Afghanistan from US-led coalition forces.
- 5 October – ISAF assumed command of international military forces in eastern Afghanistan from US-led coalition forces.

## 2007

- 29 January – NATO-ISAF troop numbers reached 35,000.

## 2008

- President Bush sent an additional 4,500 US troops to Afghanistan.

## 2009

- 27 March – US announced a new strategy for Afghanistan, with 4,000 additional personnel being deployed to train and assist the Afghan army and police.
- April – NATO agreed to provide an additional 5,000 troops.
- 2 November – Hamid Karzai won a second term as President of Afghanistan.
- 1 December – President Obama announced an additional 30,000 troops to Afghanistan, which would take US forces to approximately 100,000 personnel. This was known as "The Surge". July 2011 was set as the start of the US troop drawdown.
- December – NATO announced it would send an additional 7,000 non-US troops to complement the Surge efforts.

## 2010

- 19-20 November – at the NATO Lisbon Summit NATO members signed a declaration agreeing to hand over full responsibility for security to Afghan forces by the end of 2014.

## 2011

- 1 May – Osama bin Laden was killed in a US raid in Abbottabad, Pakistan.
- June – President Obama announced the beginning of the withdrawal of US Surge forces.
- 17 June – UNSC Resolutions 1988 and 1989 split the Taliban and al-Qaida sanctions list into two separate lists to assist with the delisting of Taliban persons and entities in the event that peace talks were to make progress.
- November – President Karzai won the endorsement of tribal elders to negotiate a 10-year military partnership with the US at a loya jirja.

## 2012

- 20-21 May – at the NATO Chicago Summit, NATO members endorsed a plan to withdraw foreign troops by the end of 2014.
- 8 July – at the Tokyo Conference, donors pledged US\$16bn in civilian aid to Afghanistan for the period 2012-2016.

## 2013

- April – The New Zealand PRT concluded its operations and New Zealand military forces left the provinces.
- June – Afghan security forces took over responsibility for all of Afghanistan. The NATO-ISAF and US focus in Afghanistan shifted to training and counter terrorism operations.
- 19 June – The US announced that the Taliban and U.S. officials would resume peace talks in Doha, Qatar, where the Taliban had opened an office.

## 2014

- 27 May – President Obama announced a timetable for withdrawal of US forces by the end of 2016, with 9,800 troops to remain beyond 2014 to train Afghan forces and conduct counter terrorism operations against al-Qaida remnants.
- 21 September – Ashraf Ghani was announced the winner of the presidential elections, with runner up Abdullah Abdullah to take up a role as CEO.
- October – US and UK troops end their combat operations in Afghanistan.
- 28 December – NATO ISAF formally ends its 13 year combat mission in Afghanistan.
- Late 2014 - Islamic State in Khoroson Province (ISKP – Daesh's Afghan franchise) emerged.

## 2015

- 1 January – NATO Resolute Support Mission formally commenced, with 12,000 personnel in place to train, advise and assist the Afghan Security Forces.
- 24 March – President Obama announced a delay to US troop withdrawal.
- 30 July – the Taliban confirmed that their long-term leader Mullah Omar died in 2013.
- 28 September – Taliban forces took control of Kunduz City in northern Afghanistan, the first major city to be held by the Taliban since 2001.
- 13 October – Kunduz was retaken by Afghan forces, supported by US air cover.
- 16 October – President Obama announced that 9,800 US troops would stay in Afghanistan until the end of 2016.

## 2016

- July – At the NATO Warsaw Summit, NATO members agreed to sustain the presence of Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan beyond 2016.
- 2/3 October – Taliban forces attempted to retake Kunduz City but were pushed back.
- By 31 December – US drew down its troop numbers in Afghanistan to 8,400.

## 2017

- 31 May – a suicide bombing in Kabul near the German Embassy, for which the Taliban subsequently claimed responsibility, killed 150 Afghans.
- 21 August – President Trump announced that the US would deploy further troops to fight a resurgent Taliban.

2018

- January – a series of Taliban attacks in Kabul killed over 160 Afghans.
- 11-12 July – at the NATO Brussels Summit, NATO members committed to sustaining Resolute Support Mission until conditions improve and welcomed the UAE and Qatar as the mission’s newest troop contributing countries.
- 20 October – Parliamentary elections were held in Afghanistan.

2019

- February – The US confirmed that peace talks between the US and the Taliban had restarted.
- 20 March – Afghanistan’s electoral agency announced that the Presidential election would be delayed until 28 September.

## Annex B – United Nations Security Council Resolutions on Afghanistan (2001 – to present)

All Resolutions are available on the UN Security Council's website:

<https://www.un.org/securitycouncil/content/resolutions-0>

Resolutions relating to the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan are available on the UNAMA's website: <https://unama.unmissions.org/security-council-resolutions>

<b>Title</b>	<b>UN Document number</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Security Council resolution 1267 (1999) on the situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1267 (1999)	15/10/1999	Establishment of Al-Qaeda sanctions committee
Security Council resolution 1368 (2001) Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	S/RES/1368 (2001)	12/09/2001	Determination of situation in Afghanistan as a threat to international peace and security
Security Council resolution 1373 (2001) Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	S/RES/1373 (2001)	28/09/2001	Calls on all Member States to implement measures to combat terrorism
Security Council resolution 1378 (2001) on the situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1378 (2001)	14/11/2001	Affirms UN to play a central role in supporting a new and transitional administration and calls on Member States to provide assistance
Security Council resolution 1383 (2001) on the situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1383 (2001)	06/12/2001	Endorsement of interim arrangements in Afghanistan
Security Council resolution 1386 (2001) on the situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1386 (2001)	20/12/2001	Endorsement of the Bonn Agreement and authorisation of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to assist the Afghan Interim Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul, for an initial period of 6 months
Security Council resolution 1388(2002) The situation	S/RES/1388 (2002)	15/01/2002	Termination of sanctions against Ariana Afghan

in Afghanistan			Airlines (as airline no longer controlled by or on behalf of the Taliban)
Security Council resolution 1390 (2002) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1390 (2002)	16/01/2002	Imposition of further sanctions on Osama bin Laden, al-Qaida, the Taliban and their associates
Security Council resolution 1401 (2002) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1401 (2002)	28/03/2002	Endorsed establishment of UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)
Security Council resolution 1413 (2002) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1413 (2002)	12/05/2002	Extension of ISAF mandate beyond 20 June 2002
Security Council resolution 1419 (2002) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1419 (2002)	26/06/2002	Welcomed developments in Afghanistan including the loya jirga, election of Hamid Karzai and called for cooperation with the Transitional Authority
Security Council resolution 1444 (2002) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1444 (2002)	27/11/2002	Extension of ISAF mandate beyond 20 December 2002
Security Council resolution 1453 (2002) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1453 (2002)	24/12/2002	Endorsement of the Kabul Declaration of 22 December 2002 and calls on States to respect and support its implementation
Security Council resolution 1471 (2003) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1471 (2003)	28/03/2003	Renewal of UNAMA mandate
Security Council resolution 1510 (2003) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1510 (2003)	13/10/2003	Authorisation of expansion of ISAF mandate to outside Kabul and mandate renewal
Security Council resolution 1536 (2004) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1536 (2004)	26/03/2004	Renewal of UNAMA mandate
Security Council resolution 1563 (2004) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1563 (2004)	17/09/2004	Renewal of ISAF mandate
Security Council resolution 1589 (2005) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1589 (2005)	24/03/2005	Renewal of UNAMA mandate

Security Council resolution 1623 (2005) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1623 (2005)	13/09/2005	Renewal of ISAF mandate
Security Council resolution 1707 (2006) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1707 (2006)	12/09/2006	Renewal of ISAF mandate
Security Council resolution 1746 (2007) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1746 (2007)	23/03/2007	Renewal of UNAMA mandate and requests UN Secretary-General to report to the Council every six months on developments in Afghanistan
Security Council resolution 1776 (2007) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1776 (2007)	19/09/2007	Renewal of ISAF mandate
Security Council resolution 1806 (2008) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1806 (2008)	20/03/2008	Renewal of UNAMA mandate
Security Council resolution 1817 (2008) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1817 (2008)	11/06/2008	Expresses concern of the high level of opium cultivation, production and trafficking in Afghanistan and calls upon Member States to increase international and regional cooperation to counter illicit production and drugs trafficking in Afghanistan
Security Council resolution 1833 (2008) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1833 (2008)	22/09/2008	Renewal of ISAF mandate
Security Council resolution 1868 (2009) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1868 (2009)	23/03/2009	Renewal of UNAMA mandate
Security Council resolution 1890 (2009) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1890 (2009)	08/10/2009	Renewal of ISAF mandate
Security Council resolution 1917 (2010) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1917 (2010)	22/03/2010	Renewal of UNAMA mandate
Security Council resolution 1943 (2010) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1943 (2010)	13/10/2010	Renewal of ISAF mandate

Security Council resolution 1974 (2011) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/1974 (2011)	22/03/2011	Renewal of UNAMA mandate
Security Council resolution 2011 (2011) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/2011 (2011)	12/10/2011	Renewal of ISAF mandate
Security Council resolution 2041 (2012) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/2041 (2012)	22/03/2012	Renewal of UNAMA mandate
Security Council resolution 2069 (2012) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/2069 (2012)	09/10/2012	Renewal of ISAF mandate
Security Council resolution 2082 (2012) Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	S/RES/2082 (2012)	17/12/2012	Additional sanctions against the Taliban and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities
Security Council resolution 2083 (2012) Threats to international peace and security caused by terrorist acts	S/RES/2083 (2012)	17/12/2012	Additional sanctions against al-Qaida and associated individuals, groups, undertakings and entities
Security Council resolution 2096 (2013) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/2096 (2013)	19/03/2013	Renewal of UNAMA mandate
Security Council resolution 2120 (2013) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/2120 (2013)	10/10/2013	Renewal of ISAF mandate
Security Council resolution 2145 (2014) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/2145 (2014)	17/03/2014	Renewal of UNAMA mandate
Security Council resolution 2189 (2014) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/2189 (2014)	12/12/2014	Welcomed the Afghanistan-NATO agreement to establish (the post-2014 non-combat) Resolute Support Mission
Security Council resolution 2210 (2015) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/2210 (2015)	16/03/2015	Renewal of UNAMA mandate
Security Council resolution 2274 (2016) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/2274 (2016)	15/03/2016	Renewal of UNAMA mandate
Security Council resolution 2344 (2017) The situation	S/RES/2344 (2017)	17/03/2017	Renewal of UNAMA mandate

in Afghanistan			
Security Council resolution 2405 (2018) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/2405 (2018)	08/03/2018	Renewal of UNAMA mandate
Security Council resolution 2460 (2019) The situation in Afghanistan	S/RES/2460 (2019)	16/03/2019	Renewal of UNAMA mandate

**Annex C: MFAT Afghanistan travel advice as at 28 March 2019<sup>27</sup>**

**Do not travel to Afghanistan.** The hostile and unpredictable security situation, high and ongoing threat of terrorism and kidnapping of foreigners present a significant risk to New Zealanders in Afghanistan. New Zealanders currently in Afghanistan are advised to depart as soon as it is safe to do so.

New Zealanders who decide to travel to Afghanistan against our advice should ensure that appropriate personal security protection measures are in place at all times. We strongly recommend you consult a reputable security company with experience in Afghanistan for advice on security arrangements. Security arrangements should be reviewed on a regular basis. Such measures may mitigate the risks to your safety but cannot eliminate them entirely.

**Terrorism**

There is an ongoing and extreme risk of terrorism throughout Afghanistan. Suicide bomb attacks, roadside bombs, car bombs, rocket attacks and small arms attacks occur frequently. Attacks could occur at anytime, anywhere in Afghanistan.

The threat to foreigners is extremely high and there are frequent attacks on foreign or Western interests and organisations. These attacks commonly target hotels, housing compounds, restaurants and other places that are frequented by foreigners.

In 2018, several attacks took place in Kabul. On 28 November 2018, an attack on a British security compound in Kabul killed at least 10 people and injured at least 35 others. On 20 November 2018, a suicide attack on a wedding hall in Kabul killed at least 55 people and injured over 85. On 20 January 2018, four gunmen held a 12 hour siege at the Intercontinental Hotel in Kabul, where 18 people died. On 27 January 2018, attackers blew up an ambulance near an interior ministry building, killing 103 people and injuring 191 others. Insurgents have signalled their intention to continue targeting foreign nationals in Afghanistan.

Many attacks target Afghan and international security forces. Further possible targets include (but are not limited to) embassies, hotels, housing compounds, markets, shops, schools, medical facilities, aid agencies, Afghan government buildings and Kabul International Airport.

New Zealanders in Afghanistan should monitor local information sources for information on new safety and security risks as the security situation can change very quickly.

**Kidnapping**

Kidnapping for ransom and the hostage taking of foreign nationals is a significant problem throughout Afghanistan. Foreign nationals, including aid workers, journalists and those working for non-governmental organisations and international organisations, have been frequently targeted in the past and will likely continue to be targeted. In addition to taking professional security advice, you should vary your routines to avoid setting predictable patterns of movement, particularly around travel routes.

**Local travel**

Road travel in Afghanistan is extremely dangerous, including in Kabul. Suicide bombers in vehicles have attacked international convoys, including those travelling to and from Kabul International Airport. Attackers often use fake checkpoints to launch attacks.

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<sup>27</sup> <https://www.safetravel.govt.nz/afghanistan>

Roadside bombs also cause a significant number of casualties. Travel by road should only be undertaken in secure transport, with armed protection, using reputable local drivers and guides. We advise against travelling at night.

Beyond Kabul the security situation is unpredictable and volatile, particularly in the south and east. Violent crime such as carjacking, armed robbery and banditry is also an issue, particularly in rural areas.

**Landmines**

Unexploded landmines and munitions are a hazard throughout the country.

**General travel advice**

As there is no New Zealand diplomatic presence in Afghanistan, the ability of the New Zealand Government to provide assistance to New Zealand citizens is severely limited. We offer advice to New Zealanders about contingency planning that travellers to Afghanistan should consider.

New Zealanders are advised to respect religious and social traditions in Afghanistan to avoid offending local sensitivities. Modesty and discretion should be exercised in both dress and behaviour.

New Zealanders travelling or living in Afghanistan should have a comprehensive travel insurance policy in place that includes provision for medical evacuation by air. You should check that your travel insurance policy covers travel in Afghanistan – exclusions may well apply. Only very limited medical facilities are available in Afghanistan and there are shortages of even the most basic medical supplies.

New Zealanders who decide to travel or live in Afghanistan despite this advisory are strongly advised to register their details with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

**Annex D: New Zealand's Achievements from 10 Years of Development Assistance in Bamyan, Afghanistan.**