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TO: NATO HEADQUARTERS, SITUATION CENTRE

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## INTERNATIONAL SECURITY ASSISTANCE FORCE (ISAF) – AFGHANISTAN

### Overview

1. With the poppy harvest coming to a close, the expected increase in INS activity is steadily materializing. The past week saw a number of incidents, including the 24 May 11 failed attempt by INS to take over the Do Ab District Centre (Nuristan Province, RC(E)), the 26 May 11 Kandahar IED strike that killed eight USA ISAF soldiers and the 28 May 11 remote-controlled IED in the Governor's Palace in Taloqan District (Takhar Province (RC(N)) that killed the Regional Chief of Police LTG Daoud Daoud and wounded the RC(N) commander, MG Kneip. The Taloqan attack is the latest in a series<sup>1</sup> of high profile attacks in RC(N), targeting senior provincial GIRoA figures.

2. The 19 May 11 spike in INS activity in RC(SW) reported in last week's SHAPE Weekly effectively marked the beginning of the fighting season. However, despite the incidents mentioned in Paragraph 1, Regional Commands continue to report INS activity below normal levels for the Spring period. For example, RC(N) noted that the INS are focusing on defending their remaining area of operations against ANSF and ISAF instead of executing offensive operations. Intelligence indicates that although some INS leaders are planning to retake key terrain to regain some influence, they also fear a possible ISAF and ANSF reaction should they expose their fighters.

3. RC(SW) provided some interesting and encouraging insights into the 19 May spike of incidents in Helmand. It appears the INS had planned to execute a three day offensive but required rest and refit after just one day of operations. Also, unlike previous operations, the Taliban (TB) leadership was closely involved in the tactical planning and the execution of the attacks. This is a possible indication of low level commanders

<sup>1</sup> On 8 Oct 10, 10 Feb 11, 21 Feb 11, 10 Mar 11 and 14 Mar 11 IED attacks targeted key GIRoA personnel in RC(N), killing among others the Kunduz Provincial Chief of Police and the Kunduz Provincial Governor.

incapable or unwilling to commit themselves and illustrates the growing gap between the senior leadership and tactical commanders. Intelligence sources assess that ISAF and ANSF targeting of the INS command and control structures and logistical chain during the past months appears to be having an impact. However, it should be noted that the ability and willingness of the INS to fight, although diminished, is still present. ISAF anticipates a further increase in kinetic activity over the summer, but with a greater number of lulls between attacks, since the INS are forced to rest and resupply more frequently as a consequence of the increased ANSF and ISAF footprint and operations.

4. Insurgent Command and Control (C2). Taliban senior leaders (TBSL) primarily operate out of PAK and rarely venture into AFG out for fear of ANSF and ISAF targeting. This distance limits leaders' situational awareness, inhibits effective communications, and complicates command of operations in AFG. Additionally, the autonomy exercised at lower levels of the insurgency limits the effective control exercised by the TB hierarchy, interfering with implementation of a coherent strategy. Despite continued TB assertions of confidence in their success, the insurgency currently faces pressure on virtually all aspects of operations. C2 issues have been of particular concern for TBSL, and are exacerbated by a continuing degradation of facilitation lines, loss of AFG sanctuaries, and strained resources. Limited influence over tactical commanders and leadership degradation will also pose obstacles to the insurgency. The level of ANSF/ISAF pressure on the insurgency will continue to challenge the bonds between TBSL in PAK and the local networks that make up the majority of the INS fighting force. Weakened links between TB echelons will likely impede implementation of a coherent INS military strategy and lead to disparate elements operating in a manner counter-productive to the strategic aims of the insurgency.

5. ISAF Lines of Communication. Since the death of Osama Bin Laden, both the PAK government and public have expressed anger over the USA raid on PAK soil. On 14 May 11, the PAK Parliament passed a resolution calling for a commission to investigate the Abbottabad raid, as well as calling for an end to UAV strikes. The resolution threatened that continuation of UAV strikes may lead to PAK government withdrawal of NATO transit authority. However, subsequent UAV strikes and the 17 May 11 helicopter cross border<sup>2</sup> incident have not provoked any additional PAK reactions. Previous closures of the border crossings have lasted two to twelve days, with no effect on ISAF's ability to conduct operations over the short term (14 days or less). Further, border closures have significant economic and employment impacts within PAK and hence PAK is unlikely to respond with such a stance.

6. Concerning the issue of shipping ISAF equipment using the northern lines of communication, during the Lisbon Summit (Nov 10) an agreement was reached with Russia to allow reverse transit of weapons-free vehicles, and Kazakhstan indicated it would allow the same. Despite this, NATO will not be able to use the northern route to their full potential until Uzbekistan also permits transit or alternate agreements are made. Following the Uzbekistan presidential visit to Brussels in Jan 11, the country announced it would not allow NATO to make reverse shipments or move armoured vehicles through its territory, even without weapons.

7. Improvements to Afghan Health Care. During the 64<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly in Geneva on 17 May 11, the AFG Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) stated that AFG has

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<sup>2</sup> On 17 May 11 two CF attack helicopters supporting operation Oqab Behar VI in Khost Province (RC(E)) inadvertently crossed into PAK airspace in Khost (RC(E)). The helicopters received fire from a PAKMIL OP and subsequently returned fire, wounding two PAKMIL.