**(U) Overview**

(U) Landlocked Afghanistan lies in the heart of Asia and links three major cultural and geographic regions: the Indian subcontinent to the southeast, central Asia to the north, and the Iranian plateau in the west. Its emergence in modern form began in the nineteenth century when the territory of Afghanistan was caught up in the great power rivalry between British India and czarist Russia, including two wars with the British. It remained peacefully neutral in the first and second world wars, although it experienced a brief civil war in 1929. In the mid-twentieth century, Afghanistan was transformed into a proxy country for the cold war struggle between the United States and the Soviet Union that reached its climax with the Soviet invasion in 1979 and its withdrawal ten years later. In the subsequent civil war that erupted in the 1990s, Afghanistan became a failed state, ignored by the world. At the beginning of the twenty- first century it burst back on to the world scene when radical Muslim jihadists planned the 9/11 attack against the United States from there and provoked a U.S. invasion in retaliation. Since that time, a new Afghan government has struggled to bring stability to the country in the face of an Islamist insurgency.

**(U) Ethnic Divisions (Part I)**

(U) Afghanistan, particularly rural Afghanistan, provides an excellent example of a place where tribal and ethnic groups take primacy over the individual or state. Local tribal or ethnic divisions are an outstanding feature of life here. People?s primary loyalty is, respectively, to their own kin, village, tribe, or ethnic group. Afghanistan?s population is divided into a myriad of these groups at the local level. Defining and identifying such divisions and loyalties are complex and must be contextualized based upon who is asking. Ethnic group definitions are based on multiple criteria that are often locally idiosyncratic. Criteria considered critical in one region may be deemed irrelevant in another. Therefore, it is a mistake to see Afghan ethnic groups as fixed ?nationalities? that have some overriding commonality and history that demands political unity. Finally, even when mapped at a fine scale, ethnic boundaries are always problematic on the ground. They frequently overlap in areas with mixed populations, and hide the crosscutting patterns of intermarriage, bilingualism, and unity through common geography. People of a shared locality may display more solidarity with their immediate neighbors of different ethnicities than they do with co-ethnics from other parts of the country. There is a practical rule of thumb for sorting out the large number of ethnic groups in Afghanistan: if people identify themselves as the ?major/minor ethnic group?, and their neighbors agree that they are the ?major/minor ethnic group?, then they are the ?major/minor ethnic group?.

**(U) Ethnic Divisions (Part II)**

(U) Ethnic groups in Afghanistan come in two flavors: tribal and nontribal. Tribes are a type of ethnic group that defines its membership through the unilineal descent from a common ancestor, real or assumed. In Afghanistan such descent is through the male line. The Pashtuns are the best example of this. When the common ancestor is not known or assumed, the highest level of organization is a set of clans that assert a relationship with one another but cannot trace it. Examples here include the Uzbeks, Turkmen, Hazaras Kirghiz and Aimaqs. By contrast, nontribal ethnic groups do not assert a common descent but do maintain a common identity, distinguishing themselves primarily by residence. The Persian-speaking Tajiks are the largest such group in Afghanistan.

**(U) Ethnic Divisions (Part III)**

(U) Afghans often assert that ethnic groups are so distinct that they can be identified by their physical appearance alone, which is sometimes true when an individual fits an ethnic stereotype. Still, because of long-standing intermarriage, there is such a wide diversity within any single ethnic group, particularly large ones, that exceptions are as common as the rule. In practice, the belief that ethnic identity can be recognized visually stems as much from cues that men themselves provide through their style of dress (robes and headgear particularly). Women in rural areas often have even more ethnically distinct styles of dress and jewelry, but most never appear before strangers or are anonymously veiled when in public.

**(U) Settlement Patterns (Part I)**

(U) Afghanistan is a land of small villages, which traditionally accounted for about 80 percent of the population, spread out over a territory the size of France (or Texas, if you prefer). The practice of subsistence farming and pastoralism has always given these villages considerable autonomy. Although agricultural practices and crops vary from region to region, the national economy is based on rural production with no modern industries. Cities, although always politically dominant historically, constituted no greater percentage of the country?s population than did the country?s nomads (about one million each before 1978). The population throughout the first three- quarters of the twentieth century was about twelve million?a figure first estimated by the British in 1912 and reconfirmed in an unpublished Afghan census in 1974. This lack of growth is simple to explain. Afghanistan had a demographic profile typical of a premodern society in which a high birthrate was matched by a high death rate. In part because of higher growth rates among refugee populations that have returned to Afghanistan, the country?s current estimated population of twenty-five to thirty million is now significantly larger. As part of a war-induced urbanization that began with the Soviet invasion, cities and towns also now house a much greater percentage of the population. Before 1978 Kabul had about a population of a half million, and today is home to between three and four million.

**(U) Settlement Patterns (Part II)**

(U) Settlement patterns in Afghanistan can be divided into three basic types: rural villages, nomadic encampments, and towns. There is a close link among them. Villages depend on towns to supply them with manufactured goods, and the wealth of the towns depends on the surplus that their hinterlands provide. Nowhere is this clearer than on ?bazaar day,? a once or twice weekly event during which the people of the countryside swarm into town to buy or sell, or just to experience the crowd. Sleepy towns that on other days of the week do not seem to justify the scores of shops lining their unpaved streets are on these days bustling with mercantile activity and the teahouses overflowing with people eager for news and gossip. Nomads camped on uncultivated land away from towns and villages, by contrast, seem to live in a world of their own. But this is an illusion. Despite their migrations and mobile tents, nomads travel by regular routes, and have close economic connections with towns in their winter areas and rural villages in their summer areas. In many parts of the country they also own land, so the distinction between nomad and villager is not a strict one.

**(U) Religious Identity (Part I)**

(U) Afghanistan is a Muslim country, mostly Sunni (85 percent) with a minority (15 percent) of Shias and Ismailis. It is an example of an older form of Islamic society in which religion is not an ideology but remains an all-encompassing way of life. When religion is a way of life, it permeates all aspects of everyday social relations, and nothing is separate from it. This is the state of Islam in Afghanistan. Its influence is ever present in people?s everyday conversations, business transactions, dispute resolutions, and moral judgments. All relationships, whether political, economic, or social, are validated by religion. Hard bargaining can be brought to a smooth end by a simple prayer that blesses and sanctifies the final agreement. Similarly, disputing parties that refuse to give any ground (because it might show weakness) can be moved to compromise when a mediator asks for it ?in the name of God.? Who can refuse a request like that?

**(U) Religious Identity (Part II)**

(U) In such a society it is impossible to separate religion from politics because the two are so closely intertwined. It is therefore hard for most Afghans to even conceive of the separation of religion and government because in their minds the two are so intrinsically linked. It would be like asking a fish to separate itself from the water it swims in. Indeed, because Islam is so much a part of everyday life, the declaration of an ?Islamic Republic of Afghanistan? in the constitution of 2004 provoked neither discussion nor concern. This was because the Afghan view of an Islamic government is descriptive, not prescriptive. It is a government composed of good Muslims, not one empowered to impose a particular religious or political agenda.

**(U) Religious Identity (Part III)**

(U) In Afghanistan, this intrinsic Islamic identity is also fused with a strong cultural identity. Issues of identity politics and cultural practice that spark debate in other Islamic countries, which originated in their experiences of a colonial past, mass education, urbanization, rapid economic changes, and mass mobilization through explicitly political parties, have had little resonance in Afghanistan. Afghanistan was never a colony. It has low levels of literacy and an economy that is still overwhelmingly agrarian. Kinship and ethnic ties have always trumped political relations based on ideologies. Afghanistan is a place where the concept of Islamic politics is little debated, but only because its people assume there can be any be no other type. Few peoples in the world, particularly the Islamic world, have maintained such a strong and unproblematic sense of themselves, their culture, and their superiority as the Afghans. In abstract terms all foreigners, especially non-Muslims, are viewed as inferior to Afghans. Although the great powers might have been militarily, technologically, and economically stronger, because they were nonbelievers, or infidels, their values and way of life were naturally suspect. Afghanistan?s Muslim neighbors, however, fared only slightly better in (Sunni) Afghan eyes. From an Afghan?s perspective: the Uzbeks must have been asleep to allow the Russians to occupy central Asia for more than a century; Pakistan is a suspect land of recent Muslim converts from Hinduism (Pashtuns and Baluch excepted) that never should have become a nation; and Iran is a nest of Shiite heretics who speak Persian with a ludicrous accent. Convinced they are natural-born Muslims, Afghans cede precedence to no one in matters of religion. They refused to take doctrinal advice from foreign Salafis, who claimed they had a superior vision of Islam, coming as they did from the Islam?s Arabian heartland. Instead, even under the Taliban, Afghans continued to bedeck graves commemorating martyrs with poles and flags, tied cloth swatches to sacred trees, made pilgrimages to the shrines of saints reputed to cure illnesses or help women conceive, and placed magical charms on their children and valuable domestic animals to ward off the evil eye. Afghans responded to any criticism of these practices by arguing that since there are no purer or stronger believers in Islam than themselves, their customs must be consistent with Islam. Otherwise they would not practice them. Islamic Sufi orders are also well established in the country and give a mystic turn to what sometimes appears to be an austere faith.

**(U) Geographic Division (Part 1)**

(U) Afghanistan?s physical geography has had a profound impact on the country?s history and culture. The complex set of mountains that lie at the heart of the country is one of the most obvious features. They are worth discussing in some detail because they set the limits on agriculture by altitude and determine the water available for irrigation through the river systems that flow from them. Specific river systems and their watersheds have also sustained Afghanistan?s distinct regions: Herat in the west, Qandahar in the south, Mazar-i-sharif in the north, and the Kabul-Peshawar axis in the east. These regions (and Afghanistan itself) are part of the larger cultural- historical unit of Turko-Persia that encompasses the entire Iranian plateau. Afghanistan has not always existed within its present historical boundaries, or for that matter existed at all as a single entity. Its international borders are arbitrary and divide communities that continue to see themselves as one. They also include people and places that at other times and under different political orders had only limited connections to today?s Afghanistan.

**(U) Geographic Division (Part II)**

(U) Of course, the same could be said more cuttingly of Afghanistan?s northern neighbors in central Asia, whose boundaries and ethnic character were bequeathed by Joseph Stalin. And an even greater historic wrong, in the eyes of the Afghans, was the imposition in 1893 of the Durand Line, which split the region?s Pashtun population between British India and Afghanistan. For this reason no Afghan government (royalist, republican, socialist, Islamist, or democratic) has ever accepted the border between it and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (formerly known as the North-West Frontier Province or NWFP) of Pakistan as truly legitimate. Thus it distorts reality to use the modern nation-state as a fixed unit of historical analysis, particularly when its boundaries are projected into the past. Afghanistan, the land of the Hindu Kush, does have an ancient history, but its current form is only one of its many incarnations. What has continually existed are Afghanistan?s main regional components. These, like toy Lego blocks, have been fitted together in many different ways over the course of time, but each block has always remained recognizable as such. Sometimes they were provinces within world empires, like that of the ancient Persians in the fifth century BCEE who united everything from Egypt and the Mediterranean coast to the India?s Punjab. Sometimes they were themselves the centers of regional empires, like those established by the Kushans (in the second century) or Ghaznavids (during the tenth to eleventh centuries). Sometimes, as in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, they were the contested and bloody frontiers of rival regional empires: the Uzbeks in central Asia, the Safavids in Iran, and the Mughals in India. And for many periods they were either independent kingdoms, ungoverned by any central power at all, or autonomous principalities that paid tribute and homage to a political center but remained locally autonomous in all other ways, including the right to raise revenue and troops.

**(U) Geographic Division (Part III)**

(U) Today?s Afghanistan has four of these basic regional building blocks. They can be most easily identified by their ancient urban centers: Herat in the west, Qandahar in the south, Mazar-i-Sharif in the north, and Kabul in the east. Peshawar and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (former NWFP) constitute a fifth region, Afghanistan?s phantom limb that was bequeathed to Pakistan when the British departed. Each of these regions dominates well-irrigated plains or river valleys that produce great agricultural surpluses, and have supported urban life for millennia. All had their own fluctuating frontiers in terms of how much of their adjacent mountain, steppe, and desert hinterland they controlled. But each survives and reemerges as a distinct region no matter the changes in political organization, arrivals of new populations or religions, or attempts to impose larger and more uniform identities on them.

**(U) Distinct Civilizations (Part I)**

(U) Regions and ethnic groups aside, there is a more profound binary division that is strongly marked in Afghanistan: the marked differences between rural and urban civilizations. Rural civilizations were those human communities based on subsistence agriculture or livestock farming that organized themselves along kinship lines under conditions of low population density. They were located in geographically marginal areas, which proved difficult for outsiders to dominate effectively or that did not repay the cost of doing so. Urban civilizations were those human communities based on surplus agricultural production that sustained dense populations and created complex economies. They were located in broad river valleys and irrigated plains, which allowed for the emergence of central villages and cities. Such communities were organized on the basis of residency, but were divided by class and occupational structures with a considerable division of labor. They were centers of learning and high culture as well as markets for regional trade and international commerce. In filling a blank map, the rural communities overspread the greatest geographic space, but the people concentrated in the limited areas of irrigated agriculture or in urban centers equaled or exceeded them in numbers. More significantly, the urbanized areas controlled the region?s productive capital and produced the bulk of its wealth.

**(U) Distinct Civilizations (Part II)**

(U) The two systems were not sealed off from each other. On the contrary, they had intense interactions and close connections, particularly because of population movements. While rural areas existed first, once cities arose there was a constant population flow from the rural areas in the mountains, deserts, and steppes toward the cities and irrigated valleys. By contrast, city residents showed no desire to take up the harder and more austere life of the desert nomad or mountain villager. The push factor in this equation was demographic: the rural areas produced more people than its limited subsistence base could support. The pull factor was cultural and economic: city life has always been more appealing than that found in mountain villages or nomad camps. Cities and productive agricultural lands provided opportunities to indulge in normally unavailable luxuries for the rich and powerful, while the poor were attracted by the constant demand for new workers. In fact, this population flow was essential to the survival of premodern cities because their death rates exceeded their birthrates. Urban centers could not maintain a stable population (let alone grow) without a constant influx of migrants. Over time, this could lead to what amounted to a wholesale population replacement. But the reverse also was true because of the cultural power of city life was so strong. Immigrants drawn from many disparate groups of people adopted the language of the cities that they moved to and lost their own native tongues over the course of a few generations.

**(U) COMPLEXITY AND NUANCE**

(U) The traditional stress on ethnicity and region as the most significant divisions in Afghanistan requires re-consideration. Important though they are, these values assume a commonality can be deceptive and perhaps even false. Members of different ethnic groups living together in cities or irrigated valleys often have more in common with each other than they do with co-ethnics who reside in completely different economic and social worlds. The urbanized Pashtun in Qandahar or a Tajik in Kabul experiences a political, occupational, and cultural milieu far removed from their fellow Pashtuns or Tajiks inhabiting remote mountainous Uruzghan or Badakhshan. In cities, financial ties may be more important than kinship, the circles of acquaintanceship are normally larger, and the levels of education are often higher. On first sight, the harsh restrictions the Taliban imposed on daily life in Kabul (no music, no games or kite flying, and required beards and prayers) appear rooted solely in their severe vision of Islam. But beneath the surface lay an older and deeper conflict. The Taliban?s hatred of the residents of Kabul, and the Kabul people?s contempt and fear of the Taliban, had less to do with Islam than it did with the long-standing clash of values between luxury-loving urbanites and the puritanical rural villagers who had come to wield power over them. If these mountain puritans saw themselves as closer to being good in a moral sense than were city people, it was only because their rural life offered far fewer opportunities for corruption. And having power and wealth in an urban setting could always be counted on to change this equation over time.

**(U) 3000-2000 BCE**

(U) Modern-day Kandahar emerges as possible regional capital

**(U) 2000-1500 BCE**

(U) Village in Kabul Valley established

**(U) 1100-550 BCE**

(U) Zoroastrianism religion introduced and spreads

**(U) 522-330 BCE**

(U) Afghanistan?s seven provinces are created

**(U) 330-324 BCE**

(U) Alexander the Great invades

**(U) 323-180 BCE**

(U) Mauryan Period with Greek rule of present-day Balkh; Ashoka the Great introduces Buddhism and erects Buddha relics and pillars

**(U) 155 BCE?50 CE**

(U) Indo-Greek ruler converts and accelerates the advance of Buddhism; Zoroastrianism remains

**(U) 50-652**

(U) Kushan, Sassanian, Hepthalite (Huns), and Hindu Shahi periods rule over a patchwork of Buddhist, Hindu, Zoroastrian, Nestorian Christian and pagan population

**(U) 700-900**

(U) Islamic Conquest of Afghanistan: Afghans remain predominantly Buddhist, Zoroastrian, Manichean, Hindu and Pagan until circa 997; Many Nestorian Christians and Jews Remain until the 14th century

**(U) 962-1151**

(U) Mamluk (Turkish) Dynasty; present-day Ghazni founded

**(U) 1220-1332**

(U) Mongol rule; Origin of ?Khan? and Chai tea in Afghanistan; many Mongols convert to Shi?a Islam in the 1300s

**(U) 1528-1700**

(U) ?Gunpowder Empires?; Ottomans (Turkey), Safavids (Persia/Iran), and Mughlas (India); Pashtuns first appear

**(U) 1709-1738**

(U) Hotaki Dynasty; first Pashtun rule

**(U) 1738**

(U) Nadir Shah takes Kandahar and is assassinated in 1747

**(U) 1747-1826**

(U) Durani Empire begins, Ahmed Shah Sadozai Durani comes to power; Kabul is the largest Muslim empire in the second half of the century

**(U) 1839-1842**

(U) First Anglo-Afghan War; Amir Dost Mohammad Khan surrenders to the British and is deported to India; Shah Shuja is installed as a ?puppet king? by the British

**(U) 1842**

(U) Afghan hero Akbar Khan is victorious against the British at Kabul (complete annihilation with only one soldier escaping of 16,500)

**(U) 1843**

(U) Afghanistan becomes mostly independent after the defeat of the British

**(U) 1845**

(U) Afghan hero Akbar Khan dies

**(U) 1859**

(U) British take Baluchistan; Afghanistan becomes landlocked

**(U) 1865**

(U) Russia takes Bukhara, Tashkent and Samarkand

**(U) 1873**

(U) Russia establishes a fixed boundary between Afghanistan and its new territories

**(U) 1878-1880**

(U) Second Anglo-Afghan War; British invade; Afghans exert strong resistance; ruler Sher Ali dies in Mazar-i-Sharif; Amir Muhammad Yaqub Khan concedes Kurram, Khyber, Michni, Pishinand Sibi (in present-day western Pakistan) to the British; Afghanistan permanently loses these territories as the British withdraw and establish new fixed borders, significantly reducing Afghanistan?s size

**(U) 1885**

(U) The Panjdeh Incident, where Russian forces seize the Panjdeh Oasis within Afghan territory north of the Oxus River; Afghanistan concedes the territory

**(U) 1893**

(U) The Durand line fixes borders of Afghaistan with British India, splitting traditional Afghan tribal areas (Pashtunistan) between Afghanistan and present-day Pakistan. Negotiated by Sir Mortimer Durand and representatives of Amir Abdul Rahman, it cut through tribes and villages with no regard for the realities of topography, demography or strategy

**(U) 1901**

(U) Abdul Rahman dies; his son Habibullah succeeds him, slows steps toward modernization

**(U) 1907**

(U) Russia and Great Britain sign the convention of St. Petersburg, in which Afghanistan is declared outside Russia?s sphere of influence

**(U) 1918**

(U) Habibullah is assassinated and succeeded by his son Amanullah, The Reform King

**(U) 1921**

(U) Third Anglo-Afghan War; British are defeated, with true Afghanistan independence achieved as the British involvement in Afghan affairs comes to an end

**(U) 1923**

(U) Amanullah Khan changes his title from Amir to King and initiates social and political modernization

**(U) 1929**

(U) Tajik Rule from January-October; afterwards begins the Musahiban (Barakzai) Dynasty; Mohammad Nadir establishes full control and abolishes Amanullah Khan?s reforms

**(U) 1933**

(U) Mohammad Nadir assassinated; his son, Mohammad Zahir Shah inherits the throne, rules until 1973, when he is toppled by a Soviet-backed coup

**(U) 1934**

(U) The United States of America formally recognizes Afghanistan

**(U) 1940**

(U) Zahir Shah declares Afghanistan neutral during WW2

**(U) 1947**

(U) Britain withdraws from India. Pakistan is carved out of Indian and Afghan lands (the Durand Treaty)

**(U) 1949**

(U) Afghanistan?s Parliament denounces the Durand Treaty and refuses to recognize it as the legal boundary between Pakistan and Afghanistan. Pashtuns in Pashtunistan (occupied Afghan land) proclaim their independence; the world does not recognize their claim

**(U) 1953**

(U) Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan becomes Prime Minister

**(U) 1954**

(U) The U.S. rejects Afghanistan?s request to buy military equipment to modernize the army

**(U) 1955**

(U) Daoud turns to the Soviet Union (Russia) for military aid; the Pashtunistan issue re-ignites

**(U) 1956**

(U) Soviet Premier Krushchev agrees to help Afghanistan; close ties between the two countries resume

**(U) 1960s**

(U) In a USAID program in Helmand Province conducted under the auspices of the Helmand Valley Authority (modeled after the US? Tennessee Valley Authority), American engineers oversaw the largest development program in Afghanistan's history, constructing two huge earthen dams, 300 miles of irrigation canals and 1,200 miles of gravel roads. All told, the project made 250,000 acres of desert bloom. The town, officially known as "Lashkar Gah," was the new capital of Helmand province and an ultra-modern world of workshops and offices. Afghans called it "Little America." The development program was abandoned when pro-Soviet Union forces seized power in 1978, although much of the province is still irrigated by the Authority (now known as the Helmand and Arghandab Valley Authority).

**(U) 1961**

(U) Afghanistan and Pakistan reach the brink of war over Pashtunistan

**(U) 1973**

(U) Afghan government is overthrown in a military coup headed by Mohammad Daoud Khan and the PDPA (People?s Democratic Party of Afghanistan); Daoud Khan abolishes the monarchy; proclaims himself king of the newly-established Republic of Afghanistan and rules until he is assassinated in 1978 (the Sauer Revolution)

**(U) 1978**

(U) Marxist coup; Mohammad Daoud is killed; the PDPA headed by Nur Mohammad Taraki comes to power; mass arrests and tortures ensue; friendship pact with the Soviet Union is signed; Afghan guerilla movement (Mujahideen) is born

**(U) 1979**

(U) Mass killings and civil war ensue; US Ambassador is killed; President Taraki is killed; Hafizullah Amin assumes the Presidency, is executed and replaced by Babrak Karmal:

**(U) 1979 (December)**

(U) Soviet Union invades

**(U) 1980**

(U) Najibullah returns from the USSR to run the Afghan secret police

**(U) 1980-1987**

(U) Rural resistance fighters, jihadists and Mujahideen, with support from the US, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, make gains against the Soviets

**(U) 1986-1987**

(U) Najibullah replaces Karmal as President; Mujahideen refuse to deal with a Soviet ?puppet government?

**(U) 1988-1989**

(U) Soviet Union defeated; 40,000-50,000 Soviet casualties reported; peace accords signed in Geneva; Soviet withdrawal completed on 15 FEB 1989. Mujahideen continue to fight against Najibullah?s regime, electing their own head of government-in-exile.

**(U) 1992**

(U) Mujahideen take Kabul, form an Islamic State (The Islamic Jihad Council); Professor Burhannudin Rabbani is elected President; civil war ensues; Pakistani interference increases

**(U) 1993**

(U) Fighting between Rabbani?s administration and Gulbuddin Hekmatyar?s Hizb-e Islami forces kills thousands of civilians in Kabul. Hekmatyar earns the nickname ?The Butcher of Kabul?.

**(U) 1994 (January)**

(U) General Dostum and Hekmatyar join forces to attack Kabul

**(U) 1994 (November)**

(U) The Taliban (Students of Islamic Knowledge) emerge to challenge Hekmatyar and other militant groups. The Taliban successfully capture Kandahar and Helmand Provinces within the month before advancing North against warring powers.

**(U) 1995**

(U) Taliban make significant gains; Pakistani and Iranian interference increases; Taliban militia capture Kabul in September, force President Rabbani out and execute Najibullah

**(U) 1995 (January)**

(U) More than 3,000 are recruited for the Taliban from madrasas in Pakistan

**(U) 1995 (February-October)**

(U) The Taliban capture Logar, Wardak, Herat, and Farah Provinces before assaulting Kabul in late October. Hekmatyar flees ahead of the advancing Taliban.

**(U) 1995 (November)**

(U) The Taliban begin shelling and rocketing Kabul and the remaining government forces

**(U) 1996**

(U) Taliban religious order enforced across Afghanistan; human rights violations multiply

**(U) 1996 (March)**

(U) Mullah Omar assumes control of the Taliban at a religious Shura with more than 1000 religious leaders and tribal elders in attendance. Jihad against Rabbani is declared.

**(U) 1996 (September-October)**

(U) The Taliban capture Jalalabad, the capital of Nangarhar Province. Kabul is captured by the Taliban, Najibullah Rabbani is unable to escape and is hung by the Taliban in the streets. Masud continues to hold out against the Taliban in Panjshir.

**(U) 1997**

(U) Taliban attempt to capture Mazar-i-Sharif; General Abdul Malik captures and kills 1,500-2,000 Taliban soldiers (mass grave found, prompting Taliban attack the following year)

**(U) 1997 (January-May)**

(U) Taliban continu push for the north of Afghanistan. General Dostum is betrayed by General Abdul Malik, one of his commanders, flees to Uzbekistan. Taliban capture Badghis, Sar-e Pul, and Faryab Provinces.

**(U) 1997 (September)**

(U) Dostum returns from Iran and resumes control after Malik flees

**(U) 1998**

(U) Taliban re-capture Mazar-i-Sharif, massacre thousands of civilians, including Iranian diplomats; US launches cruise missiles against Al Qaeda terrorist camps in Afghanistan?s Khost region; Iran moves 70,000 troops to the border but no fighting occurs

**(U) 1999**

(U) UN Security Council Resolution 1267 is adopted, applying sanctions against the Taliban for providing sanctuary for Al Qaeda

**(U) 1999 (February)**

(U) Mullah Omar rejects US demands for Bin Laden to be handed over. Cites Pashtunwali and calls Bin Laden a guest in Afghanistan; promises, however, to restrict the Al Qaeda leader.

**(U) 1999 (March)**

(U) President Clinton condemns Taliban human rights abuses, Taliban responds condemning US foreign policy

**(U) 1999 (June)**

(U) FBI places Bin Laden on most wanted list, offers $5 million for capture. Reward is not enough to persuade Taliban to hand him over.

**(U) 1999 (August)**

(U) Taliban continue fighting Masud in the north, lose more than 2,000 fighters trying to capture territory.

**(U) 1999 (September)**

(U) Taliban begin advance against the Northern Alliance?s capital. 97 percent of Afghanistan is now under Taliban control.

**(U) 2000**

(U) Taliban atrocities increase; UN Security Council Resolution 1333 is adopted, increasing sanctions against the Taliban for their continued support of terrorism and cultivation of narcotics.

**(U) 2000 (July)**

(U) Taliban launch summer offensive against remaining Northern Alliance forces. Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan begins launching attacks in Central Asia from Afghanistan.

**(U) 2001 (January)**

(U) Taliban conduct mass execution of Hazaras at Yakaolang

**(U) 2001 (February)**

(U) Taliban soldiers direct tank fire at the Bamiyan Buddhas, fail to destroy them

**(U) 2001 (March)**

(U) Taliban destroy ancient Buddhist and other ?idolatrous? sculpture, including the Bamiyan Buddhas (with high explosives)

**(U) 2001 (April)**

(U) Northern Alliance Commander Ahmed Shah Masood visits Europe to gather support against the Taliban

**(U) 2001 (9 September)**

(U) Commander Ahmad Shah Masood is murdered by Arabs posing as journalists.

**(U) 2001 (May)**

(U) Taliban order Hindus in Afghanistan to wear yellow badges of identification

**(U) 2001 (11 September)**

(U) Al Qaeda terrorists crash commercial jets into the World Trade Center and Pentagon; fourth plane crashes in Pennsylvania

**(U) 2001 (26 September)**

(U) First CIA teams arrive in Afghanistan to aid the Northern Alliance efforts against the Taliban.

**(U) 2001 (7 October)**

(U) Coalition forces begin air strikes against key Taliban positions

**(U) 2001 (November)**

(U) Coalition forces capture Mazar-i-Sharif and several key cities; on November 14, the UN Security Council passes Resolution 1378, calling for a "central role" for the United Nations in establishing a transitional administration and inviting member states to send peacekeeping forces

**(U) 2001 (7 December)**

(U) Taliban leave their last stronghold in Kandahar; Mullah Omar, the Taliban Supreme Leader, remains at large; Osama bin Laden escapes from Tora Bora to Pakistan

**(U) 2001 (21 December)**

(U) Afghan opposition groups meet in Bonn, Germany and elect Hamid Karzai chairman of the Afghan Interim Authority

**(U) 2002**

(U) Grand Assembly (Loya Jirga) elects Karzai president of the Transitional Islamic State of Afghanistan (TISA); despite conducting the large Operation Anaconda in March, the US begins to shift military and intelligence resources away from Afghanistan in the direction of Iraq; US stands up Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT)

**(U) 2002 (January)**

(U) The first International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) arrives in Kabul.

**(U) 2002 (March)**

(U) Operation Anaconda is launched. Largest NATO combat mission in the early war on terror. Mission was to push the Taliban and Al Qaeda out of the Shah-I Khot Vally.

**(U) 2003**

(U) NATO, in its first armed mission outside Europe, begins mission to provide security; road from Kabul to Kandahar officially opens; US declares and end to ?major combat? in Afghanistan; only 8,000 US soldiers in the country

**(U) 2004**

(U) President Karzai signs the new constitution adopted by the Constitutional Loya Jirga and becomes the first democratically elected head of Afghanistan; voters turn out in high numbers despite violent threats; Karzai's election victory is marred by accusations of fraud by his opponents and by the kidnapping of three foreign UN election workers by a militant group. But the election is nonetheless hailed as a victory for the fragile nation; Afghans had not gone to the polls since 1969, when they cast ballots in parliamentary elections during the reign of King Mohammed Zahir Shah; Bin Laden releases videotape message condemning US occupation of Afghanistan

**(U) 2005**

(U) Afghan president Hamid Karzai and U.S. president George W. Bush issue a joint declaration that pronounces their respective countries strategic partners. More than six million Afghans turn out to vote for the Wolesi Jirga (Council of People), the Meshrano Jirga (Council of Elders), and local councils. Considered the most democratic elections ever in Afghanistan, nearly half those casting ballots are women, viewed as a sign of political progress in a highly patriarchal and conservative society. Sixty-eight out of 249 seats are set aside for female members of Afghanistan's lower house of parliament and 23 out of 102 are reserved in the upper house

**(U) 2006**

(U) Violence increases across the country during the summer months, with intense fighting erupting in the south in July. The number of suicide attacks quintuples from 27 in 2005 to 139 in 2006, while remotely detonated bombings more than double, to 1,677; At the NATO summit in Riga, rifts emerge among member states on troop commitments to Afghanistan. NATO Secretary-General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer sets a target of 2008 for the Afghan National Army to begin to take control of security

**(U) 2007**

(U) A notorious Taliban military commander, Mullah Dadullah, is killed in a joint operation by Afghan, U.S., and NATO forces in the south of Afghanistan. Dadullah is believed to have been a leader of guerrilla forces in the war in Helmand Province, deploying suicide bombers and ordering the kidnapping of Westerners

**(U) 2008**

(U) Afghan and UN investigations find that errant fire from a U.S. gunship killed dozens of Afghan civilians in the Shindand District of western Herat Province, drawing condemnation from President Hamid Karzai and bolstering Taliban claims that coalition forces are unable to protect the population. U.S. military officials dispute the death toll in this incident as well as claims a separate incident in Farah Province

**(U) 2009 (January)**

(U) U.S. president Barack Obama announces plans to send seventeen thousand more troops to the war zone. Obama reaffirms campaign statements that Afghanistan is the more important U.S. front against terrorist forces. As of January 2009 the Pentagon has thirty-seven thousand troops in Afghanistan, roughly divided between U.S. and NATO commands. Reinforcements focus on countering a "resurgent" Taliban and stemming the flow of foreign fighters over the Afghan-Pakistan border in the south.

**(U) 2009 (March)**

(U) President Obama announces a new strategy for the war effort, linking success in Afghanistan to a stable Pakistan. The core goal of the strategy, as outlined in an interagency white paper, is "to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan." The strategy urges the passage of increased aid to Pakistan and a strict standard of measuring progress in fighting al-Qaeda and the Taliban. Plans also call for the deployment of an additional four thousand soldiers to help train the Afghan army and police force. President Hamid Karzai of Afghanistan welcomes the strategy, stating that the plan will bring Afghanistan and the international community closer to success.

**(U) 2009 (April)**

(U) Senior U.S. military officials and commanders call on NATO nations to supply non-military assets to Afghanistan. Officials stress the need for NATO members to step up in building Afghan civil society, such as providing resources for provincial reconstruction teams, or PRTs. A two-day NATO summit in early April ends with a promise by NATO nations to send an additional five thousand troops to train the Afghan army and police force, and to provide security for the country's August presidential election.

**(U) 2009 (May)**

(U) Secretary of Defense Robert Gates replaces the top U.S. commander in Afghanistan, Gen. David D. McKiernan, with the experienced counterinsurgency and special operations commander, Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal.

**(U) 2009 (July)**

(U) U.S. Marines launch a major offensive in southern Afghanistan, representing a major test for the U.S. military's new counterinsurgency strategy. The offensive, involving four thousand Marines, is launched in response to a growing Taliban insurgency in the country's southern provinces, especially Helmand Province. The operation focuses on restoring government services, bolstering local police forces, and protecting civilians from Taliban incursion. By August 2009 U.S. forces are to number between sixty thousand and sixty-eight thousand.

**(U) 2009 (November)**

(U) After more than two months of uncertainty following a disputed presidential election on August 20, President Hamid Karzai wins another term. The August 20 election was marred by fraud allegations. An investigation by the Electoral Complaints Commission finds Karzai won only 49.67 percent of the vote, below the 50 percent-plus-one threshold needed to avoid a runoff. Under international pressure, Karzai agrees to a runoff vote on November 7. But a week before the runoff, Karzai's main rival Abdullah pulls out, and Karzai is declared the winner. Concerns over Karzai's legitimacy grow, and the United States and other international partners call for improved governance.

**(U) 2010 (June)**

(U) Gen. Stanley McChrystal is relieved of his post as commander of U.S. forces in Afghanistan, following a controversial Rolling Stone article in which he and his aides were quoted criticizing the administration. President Barack Obama nominates Gen. David Petraeus, head of the military's Central Command and architect of the 2007 Iraq surge, to replace McChrystal. The change in command comes at a crucial time in the war, as additional surge forces are scheduled to arrive ahead of a critical operation in Kandahar.

**(U) 2010 (18 September)**

(U) Parliamentary elections were held for representatives of the Wolesi Jirga (the lower house of the National Assembly), the second parliamentary poll and the fourth national election conducted since the fall of the Taliban. More than 2,500 candidates ? including nearly 400 women ? contested seats to the 249-member chamber. The elections suffered from widespread fraud and complaints and recounts delayed the final electoral results for months. Election officials disqualified 24 winning candidates due to suspected fraud and threw out 1.3 million votes -- almost 25% -- due to irregularities. Afghan authorities seized thousands of forged voter registration cards prior to the vote. Security was a significant challenge during the elections. On 5 September 2010, the Taliban claimed the elections were illegitimate and threatened to attack polling stations and promised to take any necessary measures to disrupt the polling process and retaliate against voters, candidates, and supporters. At least 23 people, including four candidates, were killed in election-related violence. Some election officials and campaign workers were kidnapped, and some female candidates and election workers suffered intimidation.

**(U) 2010 (November)**

(U) At a summit in Lisbon, NATO member countries sign a declaration agreeing to hand over full responsibility for security in Afghanistan to Afghan forces by the end of 2014. The transition process is set to begin in July 2011, with local security forces taking over control in relatively stable provinces and cities.

**(U) 2011 (May)**

(U) On May 1, 2011, al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden is killed by U.S. forces in Pakistan. The death of America's primary target for a war that started ten years ago fuels the long-simmering debate about continuing the Afghanistan war. Meanwhile, anti-Pakistan rhetoric grows in Afghanistan, where officials have long blamed terrorist safe havens in Pakistan for violence in Afghanistan.

**(U) 2011 (June)**

(U) President Obama outlines a plan to withdraw thirty-three thousand troops by the summer of 2012?the surge troops sent in December 2009?including ten thousand by the end of 2011. After the surge troops leave, an estimated seventy thousand U.S. troops are scheduled to stay through at least 2014. Obama confirms that the U.S. is holding preliminary peace talks with the Taliban leadership. With reconciliation in mind, the UN Security Council days earlier splits a sanctions list between members of al-Qaeda and the Taliban, making it easier to add and remove people and entities.

**(U) 2011 (October)**

(U) The U.S. war in Afghanistan marks its tenth anniversary, with about hundred thousand U.S. troops deployed in a counterinsurgency role, primarily in southern and eastern regions. President Barack Obama plans to withdraw all combat troops by 2014, but serious doubts remain about the Afghan government's capacity to secure the country. President Karzai suspends the talks following the September 20 assassination of Burhanuddin Rabbani, the government's chief negotiator, which Afghan officials blame on the Pakistan-based Haqqani network. The group denies it.

**(U) 2011 (December)**

(U) Ten years after the first international conference that discussed Afghanistan's political future, dozens of countries and organizations meet again in Bonn, Germany, to devise a roadmap of cooperation beyond the international troop withdrawal in 2014. The conference fails to achieve its objectives--to lay down a blueprint for Afghanistan's transition to a self-sustaining and secure government--as the insurgency continues to rage, and Pakistan, a crucial player, refuses to attend.

**(U) 2012**

(U) In January, the Taliban strikes a deal to open an office in Qatar, a move toward peace talks that the United States sees as a crucial part of a political settlement to ensure a stable Afghanistan. But two months later, the Taliban suspends preliminary talks, accusing Washington of reneging on promises to take meaningful steps toward a prisoner swap. In February, U.S. Defense Secretary Leon Panetta announces the Pentagon's plan to conclude combat missions by as early as mid-2013 and shift to a primarily security assistance role in Afghanistan. President Hamid Karzai demands that foreign troops be withdrawn from village outposts and confined to military bases.

**(U) 2013**

(U) Afghan forces take the lead in security responsibility nationwide as NATO hands over control of the remaining ninety-five districts. The U.S.-led coalition's focus shifts to military training and special operations-driven counterterrorism. The handover occurs on the same day as the announcement that Taliban and U.S. officials will resume talks in Doha, Qatar, where the Taliban has just opened an office. President Hamid Karzai, believing the office will confer legitimacy on the insurgent group and serve as a diplomatic outpost, suspends negotiations with the United States. With its mandate expiring in December 2014, the United States must negotiate a bilateral security agreement with the Karzai government to maintain a military presence.

**(U) 2014 (February-April)**

(U) Presidential Elections were conducted with a field of 11 initial candidates, from 2 February to 5 April 2014. Issues included the US-Afghan Bilateral Security Agreement, government transparency, women's issues, the role of governors, and the Taliban. Turnout was relatively high, especially in cities and insurgent attacks were largely ineffective. The 2014 Post Election Results ended with Abdullah Abdullah receiving approximately 45 percent of the vote while Ashraf Ghani Ahmedzai received 31.6 percent, resulting in a Runoff Election. The runoff election was also disputed, with Abdullah again claiming that the Ghani campaign had committed widespread electoral fraud in collusion with the Independent Election Commission and the Karzai administration.

**(U) 2014 (May)**

(U) President Barack Obama announces a timetable for withdrawing most U.S. forces from Afghanistan by the end of 2016. The first phase of his plan calls for 9,800 U.S. troops to remain after the combat mission concludes at the end of 2014, limited to training Afghan forces and conducting operations against ?the remnants of al-Qaeda.? Both candidates vying to succeed President Hamid Karzai have promised to sign the security agreement that is a prerequisite of any post-2014 U.S. troop presence.

**(U) 2014 (September)**

(U) Ashraf Ghani, the newly elected president, signs a power-sharing agreement with his chief opponent, Abdullah Abdullah, who had mobilized thousands of protestors as he challenged the voting results. Ghani, a former World Bank specialist, is a Pashtun from the country?s south, like Karzai, but is seen by the Obama administration as a welcome change. Karzai had railed against civilian casualties in the U.S. war effort and was seen as fostering public corruption.

**(U) 2014 (December)**

(U) The transition to Afghan lead for security, which started in 2011, was completed as the ISAF operation officially ended and the Afghans assumed full responsibility for security of their country. By the end of 2014, PRTs had been phased out and their functions were handed over to Afghan authorities.

**(U) 2015 (January, Part I)**

(U) NATO launched the Resolute Support Mission (RSM) to train, advise and assist Afghan security forces and institutions. Currently, it numbers around 17,000 troops from 39 NATO Allies and partner countries, operating in one hub (Kabul/Bagram) and four spokes (Mazar-e Sharif in the north, Herat in the west, Kandahar in the south, and Laghman in the east).

**(U) 2015 (January, Part II)**

(U) ISIS-K, founded in 2014, publicly emerges. Pakistani national Hafiz Saeed Khan was chosen to spearhead ISIS-K province as its first emir. Its early membership included a contingent of Pakistani militants known in Afghanistan?s Nangarhar province, many of whom were estranged members of TTP and Lashkar-e Islam, who had fled Pakistan to escape pressure from security forces. The appointment of Khan as IS-K?s first emir and former Taliban commander Abdul Rauf Khadim as his deputy facilitated the group?s rapid growth, utilizing long established recruitment networks in Afghanistan and Pakistan.

**(U) 2015 (June)**

(U) By late June 2015, ISIS-K had consolidated its position in eight of Nangarhar?s districts and likely comprised a fighting force of 3,750 to 4,000 fighters

**(U) 2015 (July)**

(U) Taliban reveal Mullah Omar has been dead for two years. The Taliban broke into two segments almost immediately after his death became public as competition over the selection of the Mullah Omar?s successor intensified.

**(U) 2017 (February)**

(U) US coalition leadership claims Afghan and coalition forces have succeeded in reducing ISIS-K number of fighters by almost half and its territory by two-thirds, while eliminating its top 14 leaders.

**(U) 2017 (April)**

(U) The United States drops its most powerful non-nuclear bomb on suspected Islamic State militants at a cave complex in eastern Nangarhar Province. The weapon, known colloquially as ?the mother of all bombs,? comes as newly elected President Donald J. Trump delegates decision-making authorities to commanders, including the possibility of adding several thousand U.S. troops to the nearly nine thousand already deployed there. The bombing casts a spotlight on the emergence of the Islamic State in Afghanistan. At the same time, the Taliban appears to be as strong as ever, and the U.S. military describes the war as a stalemate. Kabul experiences suicide bombings on a scale never before seen, while the Taliban control or contest more than a third of the country. U.S. Marines are once again dispatched to Helmand Province.

**(U) 2017 (August)**

(U) President Trump says decisions about withdrawal will be based on ?conditions on the ground,? rather than arbitrary timelines. He invites India to play a greater role in rebuilding Afghanistan while castigating Pakistan for harboring insurgents. He also pledges to loosen restrictions on combat even as the United Nations reports an uptick in civilian casualties caused by Afghan and coalition air strikes. A political settlement with the Taliban, Trump says, is far off.

**(U) 2017 (September)**

(U) Key findings in a Special Investigator General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report on ANDSF reconstruction declare the US government was ill-prepared to conduct security sector assistance programs of the size and scope required in Afghanistan. The lack of commonly understood interagency terms, concepts and models undermined the effort to develop ANDSF. Additionally, an early failure to include critical capabilities, such as aviation, intelligence, force management and special operations forces are highlighted. The report covered 2002-2017.

**(U) 2017 (October)**

(U) ISIS-K claims to be 20,000 fighters strong.

**(U) 2018**

(U) The Taliban carry out a series of bold terror attacks in Kabul that kill more than 115 people amid a broader upsurge in violence. The attacks come as the Trump administration implements its Afghanistan plan, deploying troops across rural Afghanistan to advise Afghan brigades and launching air strikes against opium labs to try to decimate the Taliban?s finances. The administration also cuts off security assistance worth billions of dollars to Pakistan for what President Trump called its ?lies and deceit? in harboring Taliban militants. Critics of the National Unity Government say domestic politics?notably a showdown with a provincial governor?have distracted President Ghani from security.

**(U) 2018 (July)**

(U) Imran Khan elected Pakistan?s new Prime Minister on a populist, anti-American platform and with strong Army support, leading to some claims of a ?soft coup?. He has espoused collaborative, yet sometimes contradictory views on Afghanistan and related issues, including free and open borders and trade, pro-Taliban sentiment, merging the FATA with Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa Province, and promises to meet and support the leaders of a local Pashtun movement, the Pashtun Tahafuz Movement.

**(U) 2018 (October)**

(U) Parliamentary and district council elections are conducted, with a second day added due to organizational problems. Despite some violence and delays in the openings of some polling stations, reports showed that there were long lines and high voter turnout at available polling stations, with reporting indicating approximately 4 million Afghans casting their ballot. Over 170 people were killed or wounded in bombings and rocket attacks throughout the first day of voting, with at least 18 people killed and 67 injured in blasts near polling stations in the capital, Kabul. As of December, 2018, final results were still not announced. ISIS-K specifically warns potential voters to avoid participation in Nangarhar province.

**(U) 2018 (November)**

(U) Thousands were reportedly displaced in Ghazni Province when the Taliban and Afghan Forces engaged in heavy fighting. Residents of Ghazni, many of them Hazara, expressed fear of ethnic and sectarian violence as the Taliban advanced into the usually quiet districts of Jaghori and Malistan.The Provincial Department for Refugees stated that also than 1,000 displaced families had sought refuge in Ghazni City while still others fled to nearby Bamyan Province.The spokesman for the governor of Bamyan Province, Abdul Rahman Ahmadi, stated that more than 4,500 internally displaced persons had crossed the provincial border and sought shelter and aid seeking shelter and aid at mosques and schools. Local officials in Ghazni estimated that more than 7,000 people have fled the fighting and around 3,000 homes had been destroyed as of 16 November 2018. In 2017, UNHCR reported 1,837,079 IDPs in Afghanistan.

**(U) 2019 (February)**

(U) Negotiations between the United States and the Taliban in Doha enter their highest level yet, building on momentum that began in late 2018. The talks between U.S. special envoy Zalmay Khalilzad and top Taliban official Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar center on the United States withdrawing its troops from Afghanistan in exchange for the Taliban pledging to block international terrorist groups from operating on Afghan soil. The ramped-up diplomacy follows signals that President Trump plans to pull out seven thousand troops, about half the total U.S. deployment. Khalilzad says the United States will insist that the Taliban agree to participate in an intra-Afghan dialogue on the country?s political structure, as well as a cease-fire. It is unclear whether Trump will condition the troop withdrawal on those terms.

**(U) 2019 (4 March)**

(U) On 4 March, seven new IEC commissioners and five EEC commissioners, plus new heads for the IEC and EEC secretariats were sworn in at the presidential palace. This completely new set of Afghanistan?s most senior election officials came after growing calls by elections observers and political parties for the commissioners in charge of the 2018 parliamentary elections to be dismissed and replaced. They were accused of misconduct and mismanagement and of being unfit to be in charge of the upcoming presidential elections.

**(U) 2019 (6 March)**

(U) While talks continue with a Taliban focus on the universal definition of the word ?terrorism?, GEN Votel, CENTCOM Commander, states before the House Armed Services Committee that ground conditions are not yet set to fully withdraw US forces from Afghanistan, particularly noting the ISIS-K threat and emphasizing the importance of advise-and-assist missions. Afghan leaders reportedly cautioned the chief American negotiator against any agreement with the Taliban on withdrawing troops that would result in Americans losing their leverage prior to making political progress. Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said in an early March speech, ?I am ready to even sacrifice my life for peace but not for a peace that will be a new chapter of carnage?. Meanwhile, thousands of women and young people in Afghanistan as well as Afghans living abroad have been protesting and speaking out against the peace talks, declaring a Taliban return to power will undermine the progress that the country has worked to build since the regime fell nearly two decades ago.

**(U) 2019 (8 March)**

(U) ISIS-K remains capable of battling the Afghan Taliban and Afghan security forces in Kunar, Nangarhar, Ghor, Faryab, and Jowzjan provinces despite pressures against it from the Afghan government, coalition forces, and the Taliban.

**(U) 2019 (10 March)**

(U) President Ashraf Ghani signed a directive calling for a "Consultive Loya Jirga on Peace" to be convened on 29 April. The Jirga will include almost 2,000 delegates from every stratum of Afghan society, with 30 percent of them mandated to be women. The purpose of the Jirga will be to clarify a national position and to set down a policy by which the government can approach the Taliban for peace. Chief Executive Abdullah Abdullah and other prominent Afghan politicians criticized the talks between the US and the Taliban, expressing concerns that any deal under discussion leaves out government of Afghanistan. Afghan women and youth remain concerned that any peace with the Taliban will strip of them of hard-earned rights and subject them, once again, to hardline Islamic governance. The Jirga is set to be led by Umer Daudzai, former Minister of the Interior in the Karzai administration and current head of the High Peace Council.

**(U) 2019 (29 April)**

(U) Planned Consultive Loya Jirga on Peace

**(U) 2019 (20 July)**

(U) Planned Presidential election with probable second round scheduled for 30 September.

**(U) 2019 (21 September)**

(U) Planned simultaneous Provincial Council and District Council elections.