



30 July 2004

### Flashpoints

Kabul (in particular, care should be taken in the vicinity of facilities associated with the election process and ISAF). Also, sites popular among foreign and particularly western personnel for socialising such as restaurants and hotels. The road from Jalalabad to Kabul, Ghazni, Zabul and Kandahar provinces. Also Ghor and Herat.

### Areas of continued concern

The southern provinces bordering Pakistan including Paktika, Nangarhar, Zabul and Kandahar provinces. Also ISAF, United Nations and NGO facilities throughout the country, though the greatest risk is to those located in Pashtun areas.

The roads from Kabul to Kandahar and Herat (both northern and southern routes, as well as checkpoints on routes throughout the country, continue to be a serious security hazard).

There is a countrywide threat to voter registration stations, although those in the Pashtun heartland should be considered at somewhat greater risk to those in the increasingly destabilized North and West.

### Projections

Attacks by Taliban insurgents and al-Qaeda elements are likely to continue to escalate during the registration and polling process, taking place in advance of the presidential elections now scheduled for October. Militants are likely to continue to target government facilities and aid organizations in order to disrupt reconstruction and development efforts. Following events of the last week, it is possible that the decision by Medecins Sans Frontieres to pull out of Afghanistan will be viewed as a victory by anti-government elements, prompting further attacks against NGO workers and aid staffs.

Small-scale attacks and ambushes are likely to continue against vehicles traveling along Afghanistan's main highways, as well as small-scale terrorist strikes against Afghan civilians. Such attacks are increasingly utilizing roadside improvised explosive devices (IEDs) – most recently involving remote detonation devices. Particular care should thus be taken when in transit throughout the country. It is likely that attacks will occur against ISAF forces – the predominant supplier of stability in the capital – ahead of October's election.

### Summary

Militant elements are now attacking isolated Afghan government posts at least twice a week, resulting in a high number of casualties among Afghan soldiers and police officers. Attacks over the last week have also specifically targeted sites and personnel associated with the election process, including the UN body in charge of the poll in Ghazni.

While Islamic and Taliban associated militancy continues countrywide and is set to escalate over the coming months, it should be remembered that acts of violence are not solely attributable to such groups. Factional and tribal conflict is a feature across Afghanistan and can result in small scale engagements and escalations of violence.











On 28 July the international aid agency Medecins Sans Frontieres announced that it was to pull out of Afghanistan because of the killing of five of its staff on 2 June deaths and the failure of the government to investigate the incident to their satisfaction. Chief among their complaints was that the government failed to pursue information in the group that a local warlord had knowledge of the deaths. The organisation has been in Afghanistan for 24 years and has operated through the Soviet invasion, the civil war and the rule of the Taliban. However, since the beginning of 2003, some 30 aid workers have been killed in Afghanistan.

Over the last week the Afghan Electoral Commission announced a preliminary list of presidential candidates to run in elections now scheduled to take place on 9 October. Aside from President Hamid Karzai, who confirmed that he will be running, the only other two national names on the list were Uzbek general Abdul Rashid Dostum and former education minister Yunus Qanuni. Mr Qanuni is likely the most serious challenger to Mr Karzai.

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