

Fighting rages across Afghanistan as US military buildup continues

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Attacks by anti-occupation forces spread across Afghanistan over the weekend, with major armed clashes, bombings and other incidents in at least 10 provinces, including eight that are outside the southern region where the US and NATO forces have launched a major military offensive.

Rather than directly confront the greatly increased US ground forces in provinces like Helmand, the Taliban and other resistance forces are employing typical guerrillas tactics, striking at “soft” targets well away from the main combat zone, in many cases in areas where there has been relatively little insurgent activity.

The bloodiest single incident took place Saturday in Farah province, in western Afghanistan, where dozens were killed in US air strikes after a Taliban ambush killed three American soldiers and seven Afghan army troops. The guerrillas staged a complex assault involving two separate roadside bombs, gunfire and grenade launchers.

US military officials said that the firefight raged for as long as six hours, with repeated air strikes called in to assist the ambushed US-led force. Press accounts cited military claims of 50 dead Taliban fighters and local reports of civilian casualties. This is a regular pattern in the war, as the Pentagon routinely categorizes all those killed by US firepower as “insurgents,” regardless of their actual role in the fighting.

There was another clash in the west in Herat province, with one Afghan policeman and two Taliban killed.

In southern Afghanistan, at least 20 civilians were killed, reportedly by roadside bombs. In Uruzgan province, 14 people in a minivan were killed, while six others died in a similar attack in Kandahar province. In the city of Kandahar, the country’s second largest and the provincial capital, three suicide bombers hit the

office of the national intelligence police in a coordinated but largely unsuccessful attack, killing one officer.

There were incidents in six provinces of eastern Afghanistan, which had been considered a military “success story” for the US forces, at least compared to the south. In Wardak, a roadside bomb killed two American troops. In Kunar, a Taliban ambush killed six private security guards working for a construction company, and wounded ten. In Nangarhar, four policemen died when militants attacked a border checkpoint. In Khost, a rocket attack killed three civilians. In Ghazni, five Afghan army troops were killed by gunfire and mine explosions. And in Paktika, a suicide bomber attacked, but killed only himself.

In the previously quiescent north, there was an extremely bloody incident in Kunduz province that suggests the degree of insurgent infiltration of the local armed forces. A district policeman poisoned eight other officers at a guard post, killed his commander, and then handed over the other seven to the Taliban, who beheaded or shot them and then burned the guard post.

Kunduz was the site of last week’s atrocity when US war planes hit two hijacked gasoline tanker trucks, creating a fireball that killed as many as 150 people in the village of Omar Kheil.

In another incident that gives a glimpse of the popular hatred of the US-NATO occupation, a fight broke out in Kabul, the capital city, when several Afghan National Police officers objected to a US soldier drinking in front of them while they were observing the Ramadan fast. The argument turned into a shootout, in which the US soldier and his interpreter were seriously wounded and one Afghan policeman was killed.

The *Washington Post* noted, “The geographical diversity of the assaults was a fresh indication of the

Taliban's widening reach, which now extends to about 80 percent of the country, according to the International Council on Security and Development (ICOS), a London-based research organization."

The ICOS data, as reported by Reuters, found that there was "substantial" insurgent activity in 97 percent of Afghanistan, and "heavy" activity in 80 percent. Almost half of the country was classified as either "high risk" or under "enemy control." The most significant change from a year ago was the increased guerrilla activity in areas of the north.

The increasingly grim position for the US-backed Afghan puppet regime of President Hamid Karzai has produced a crisis for the Obama administration, which is deliberating how much to increase the US military intervention, under conditions where support for the Afghan war among the American people is collapsing.

Since Obama ordered 17,000 additional troops to Afghanistan early in his presidency, there have been a series of additional, incremental increases that have not been as widely reported. In September alone, for instance, there have been several such additions to the forces available to the US Afghan commander, Gen. Stanley McChrystal.

The *New York Times* reported Thursday that Defense Secretary Robert Gates was preparing to send more US counter-explosive forces to Afghanistan, in a move that would be separate from any request by McChrystal for additional troops.

The *Los Angeles Times* reported September 2 that as many as 14,000 additional combat troops would be deployed in Afghanistan by sending home troops working in support functions and replacing them with "trigger pullers." The support duties would be handed over to private contractors, who now outnumber the actual uniformed soldiers. This would greatly increase the firepower of the US occupation force while allowing the White House to conceal the escalation.

In a statement on Capitol Hill Friday after a visit to Afghanistan, Democrat Carl Levin, chairman of the Senate Armed Services Committee, called for the Obama administration to focus its escalation of the war on the buildup of Afghan troop strength, from 134,000 now to 240,000 by 2012—essentially conceding, with this time frame, that US military forces will be in Afghanistan in huge numbers at least until then.

Levin said that such an increase should be prepared

before any additional US ground combat forces were dispatched. General McChrystal is believed to be requesting as many as 40,000 additional US troops, in a report now being reviewed in the Pentagon and White House, and to be delivered to Congress by September 24.

The Obama administration is requesting more money for Afghanistan-Pakistan operations in its 2010 military budget than for Iraq, the first time that spending for the "Afpak" theater has exceeded that in Iraq.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said Thursday, "I don't think there's a great deal of support for sending more troops to Afghanistan in the country or the Congress." Such warnings are becoming increasingly common from congressional Democrats, not because they oppose further escalation—they have, on the contrary, fervently supported the war in Afghanistan for eight years.

The Democrats are concerned that as antiwar sentiment mounts, those opposed to the US occupation of Afghanistan will draw the correct political conclusion—that both big business parties are irrevocably committed to advancing the interests of US imperialism—and will seek a political alternative.



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