



# Research Report

## Committee of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization

### AGENDA ITEM

The Question of a Continuation and/or strengthening of the NATO  
operation in Afghanistan

Chairing Panel

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# Welcome

Dear Delegates,

It is a pleasure to announce that in course of this UN meeting, NATO and UN strengthen their partnership and have a NATO committee.

Since UN and NATO were founded in 1945 and 1949 those two organizations share a goal of maintaining peace and security all over the world. Through this shared commitment we cooperate on international level to stabilize regions that were fallen in chaos and to get conflicts solved in peaceful discussions. In a world where countries work closer together than ever before to ensure not only trade cooperation but security, NATO needs to expand its work. Not only the 28-member states but also the 198 have to work together to fight international terrorism and other global threats.

One main commitment NATO and UN also share is their willingness to end conflicts which already outburst in violence. And by ending is not meant a ceasefire agreement – this is only the first step to our main goal: finding a peaceful solution to resolve a conflict.

In a time where more and more of those disagreements become smoldering crises, we will concentrate on one of the most instable situations around the world: The Afghanistan crisis. Afghanistan – a cultural wealthy country which got shattered and torn apart in more than one war, civil war and internal conflict. Since the beginning of the war of Afghanistan in 2001 the situation remained instable despite several international attempts to bring peace and prosperity back in the country.

In this committee, we will try to focus on a solution for a peaceful future for Afghanistan. Therefore, we do not only represent the members of NATO but also the delegation of Afghanistan will be represented in this committee. This study guide gives an insight in the complex situation in Afghanistan and should help to understand the different connections and difficulties. Apart from this guide, we encourage everyone to research the topic and its different parties by themselves for example with the attached resources at the end of the guide.

Please read this research report carefully and we look forward to meet you for the committee!

Sincerely,

Ricarda Wertebach



## Introduction

As it was mostly difficult and war-shattered, the past of Afghanistan was always a complicated story of light and darkness, modernization and tradition. The last most known outburst of direct violence was the *war of Afghanistan*, beginning in 7 October 2001. American-led invaded the country and overthrew the terror regime of the Taliban (1992-1996). In the following decade of peace and security enforcement, the ISAF mission for security and active fight against the Taliban gave the responsibility step by step back to the new afghan government and the operation turned to an educational mission. During this period, the Taliban reinforced its power and terrorized the population with violent attacks such as the military attack on Kunduz in March 2017, the bomb attack in June on the German embassy in Kabul with more than 160 casualties and the most recent attack on a military training center on 17 December 2017 with at least 16 dead police officers. NATO came to Afghanistan to “ensure that it would never again be a safe haven for terrorists”, this mission is in question right now. Facing the changing developments and critical voices getting louder NATO is in discussions on how we should change our agenda of the Afghanistan operation.

## Definition of Key Terms

**NATO:** The North Atlantic Treaty Organization is an international government military alliance based on the North Atlantic Treaty. This treaty was signed on 4<sup>th</sup> April 1949 and is also known as the Atlantic Alliance. NATO is a war defensive organization. It is committed to the principle of collective defense. It believes that an attack against one or several members is an attack against all. The first and only *casus foederis*, where troupes of the alliance fight for a attacked member country happened after on September 12, 2001, in response to the September 11 attacks on the United States.

**Taliban:** an Islamic fundamentalist militant group in Afghanistan which lead the government on Afghanistan between 1996 and 2001. After violent attacks against the civil population and multiple human rights violations the group was defined as a terrorist group which is said to have links to other terrorist groups such as Al-Qaeda. After they lost against American troops in November 2001 they regrouped in Afghanistan and grew way stronger in Pakistan. They commit in both countries are violent attacks against military stations but also civilian places such as markets, schools and hospitals.



*ISAF*: The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force took the lead in Afghanistan on 11 August 2003. Mandated by the United Nations, ISAF's primary objective was to enable the Afghan government to provide effective security across the country and develop new Afghan security forces to ensure Afghanistan would never again become a safe haven for terrorists. From 2011, responsibility for security was gradually transitioned to Afghan forces, which took the lead for security operations across the country by summer 2013. The transition process was completed and Afghan forces assumed full security responsibility at the end of 2014, when the ISAF mission was completed.

*RSM*: Resolute Support Mission, the follow-up Operation to ISAF in Afghanistan to provide further training, advice and assistance for the Afghan security forces and institutions. At the NATO Summit in Warsaw, Allied leaders decided to extend the presence of RSM beyond 2017.

*Tribe*: In anthropology, a tribe is defined as a „symbolic social group, based on subgroups, sometimes with political protection. These groups have traditions which are combined through the same language, ancestors, culture and ideology.

*A military troop*: An army unit for a group of soldiers. A troop contains 16 to 50 men.

*Map of Afghanistan*:





After the troop force between 2011 and 2014 got steadily reduced, the afghan government got full security responsibility in 2014.

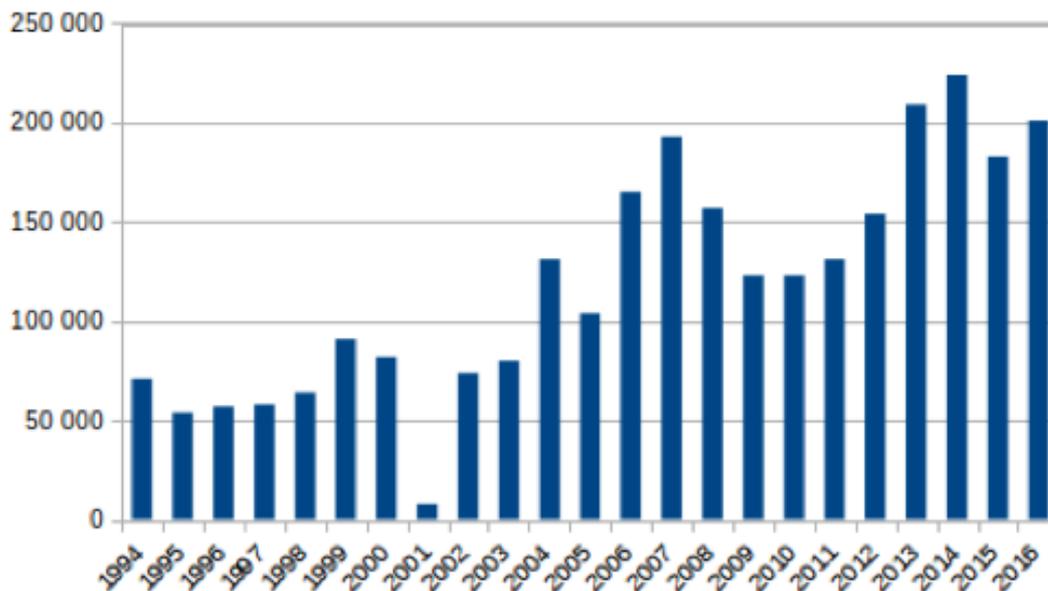
In the same year, the government ratified a new security cooperation with NATO, the RSM. The more defensive structure of RSM and the difficulties the afghan security ministries are facing caused a flamed-up situation of terror and insecurity. The failing or completely missing infrastructure is often the reason why the police and army troops can't expand their protection and powers beyond the borders of the big cities, especially Kabul.

Outside of Kabul, in the rural areas drug cartels are becoming the ruling power. In fact, Afghanistan's illicit drug production, in particular opium, is at an all-time high. The Taliban a getting a majority of their revenue through the opium trade which is seen as a major threat against the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Afghanistan opium poppy cultivation, 1994–2016 (hectares)

As you can see the opium cultivation and trade is extremely high and a major part in the world drug trade. The flourishing opium trade is also an increasing factor in corruption in the government because the trade is promising huge wealth in a small amount of time and effort. There are voices which say that the poppy cultivation is part of the culture and tradition of the afghan people but as sources show, a majority of poppy farms started within the 1990s.

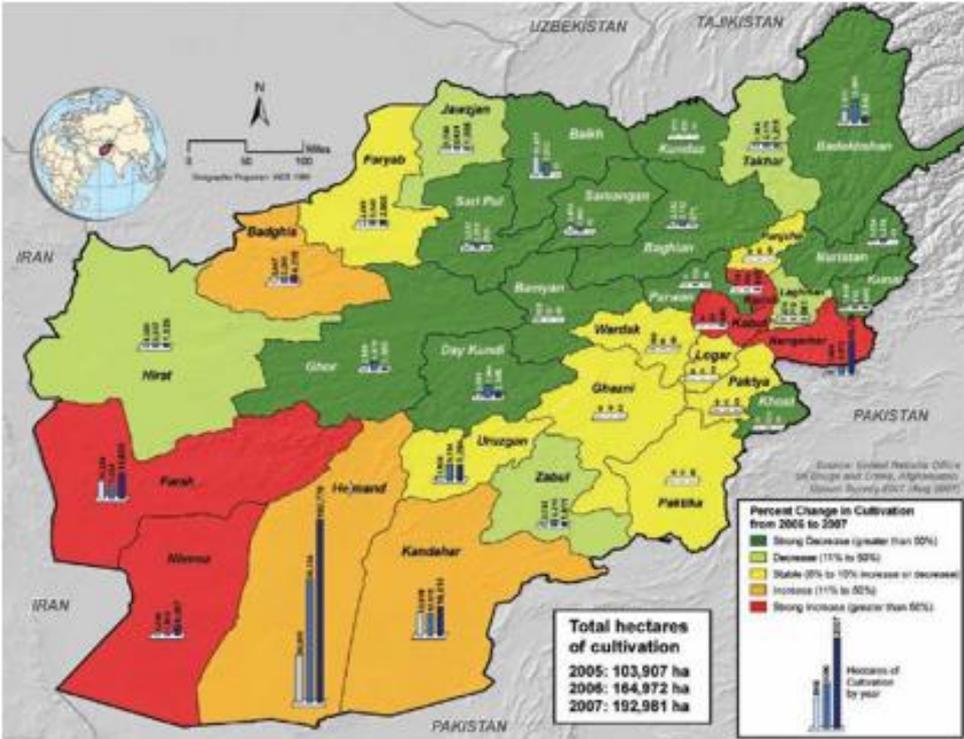
## The Taliban

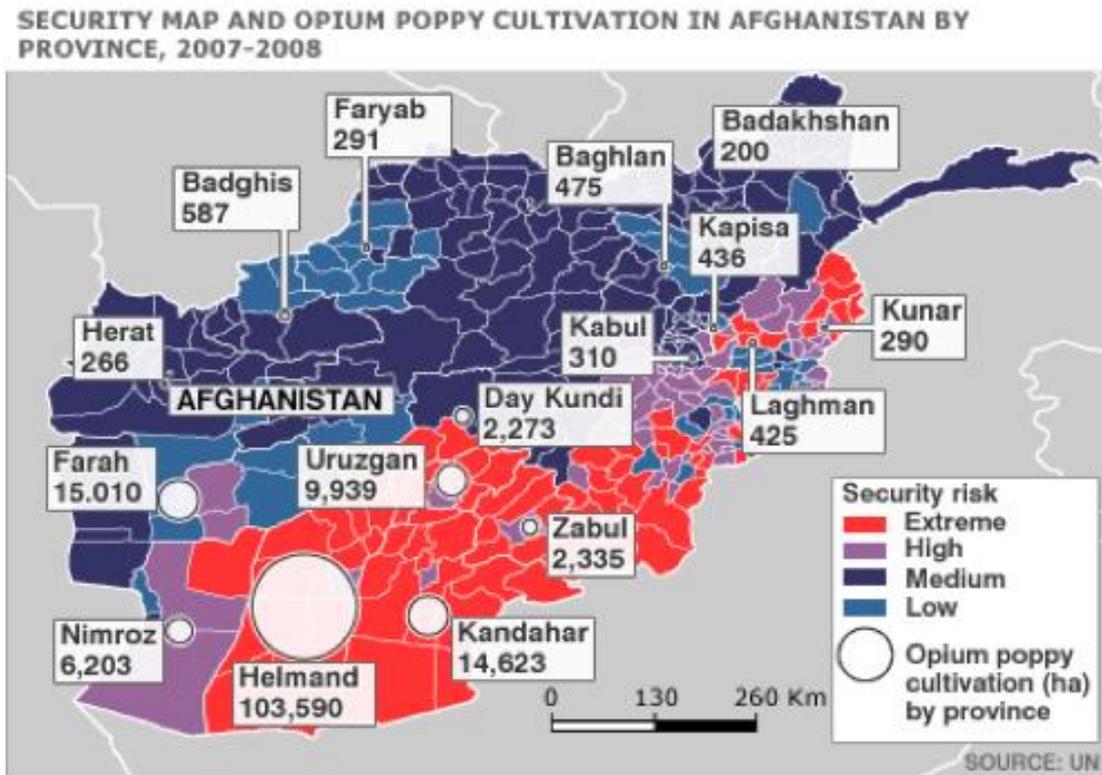


Afghanistan opium poppy cultivation, 1994–2016 (hectares)



With a look at specific map of Afghanistan one can see a close correlation between the Taliban led insurgency in the country and the poppy farming zones.





Map 1: the opium production levels 2005-2006 with the percentage increase and decrease of farming

Map 2: a closer comparison between the security zones and the poppy cultivation

Note: Although those maps are older, they are still up-to date concerning the opium levels and secure/unsecure zones in Afghanistan

The Taliban started as an Islamic fundamentalist group which fought against the soviet occupation in the early 1990s. Founded in hardline religious schools the Taliban promised to restore peace and security and enforce their own extreme version of Sharia, or Islamic law, once in power.

Their regime had a huge impact on the civilian society which had to live under strict rules which affected all life situations: only a certain way of dressing was allowed, music and television was prohibited and girls over the age of 10 were forbidden to go to school. The government itself had brutal punishments for everyone who spoke against it, an opposition was forbidden and the state order itself was chaotic.

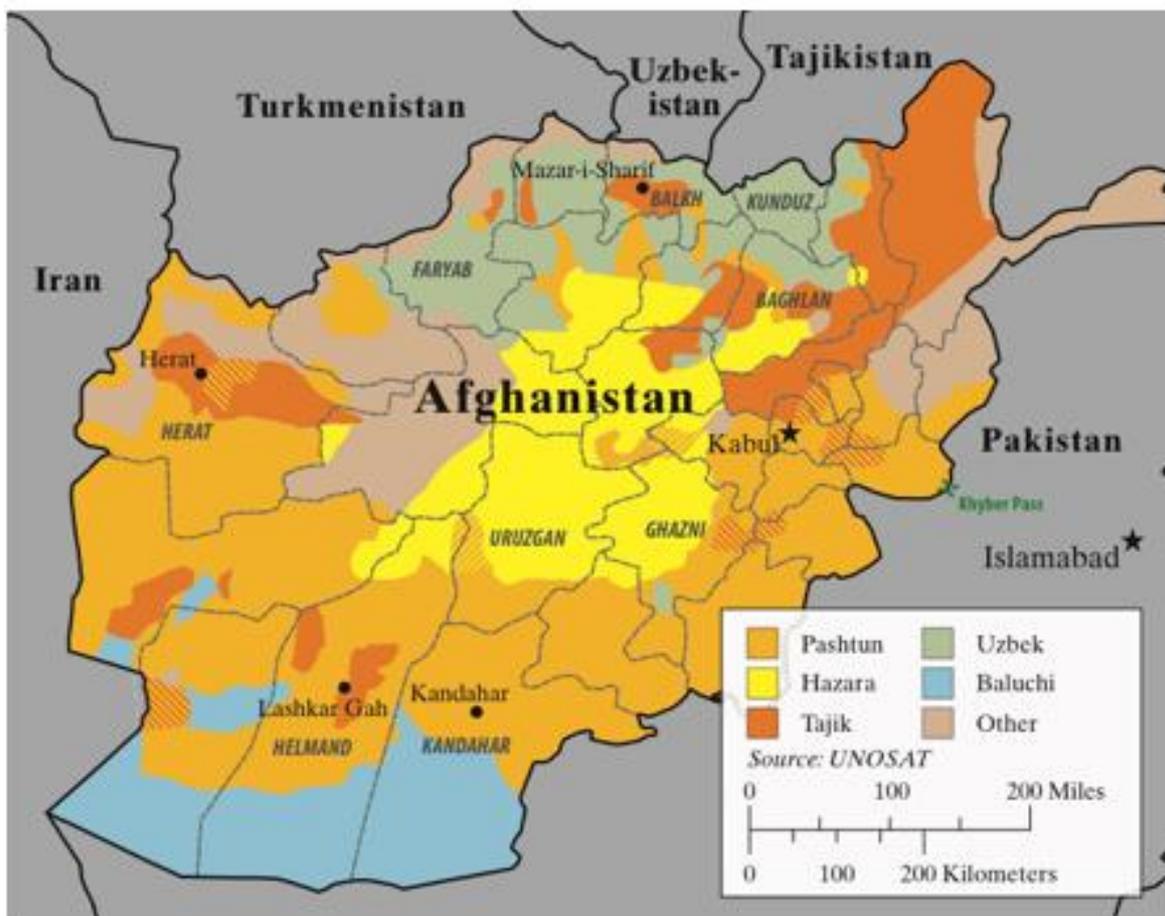
World attention to the Taliban was given after the September 11 attacks. The US accused them of hiding Osama bin Laden, the head behind the terror attacks. The Taliban, which had power over the whole Nation at this point, refused to turn bin Laden over. Following this, the US army invaded Afghanistan and the Taliban were quickly overthrown and fled into the neighbor country Pakistan.



In the following years the Taliban got support by the Pakistani government and regrouped in a stronger way than before. From now on until the present they worked with a mixture of suicide bombers, military operations to regain power (which partly succeeded in 2006) and targeted use of propaganda in the south of Afghanistan.

## The tribes

A reason for the strong support from parts of the civilian population for the Taliban lies in the special population structure of Afghanistan which make some wonder why this is even state by itself. The people are grouped in different tribes which have several subgroups, called clans. Those tribes often have a connection to the same ethnical groups in the neighbor countries Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, Pakistan and Iran.



The biggest ethnical group are the *Pashtun* with their own Pashtun language. The makeup 42% of the population including the capital Kabul. Pashtuns are predominantly Muslim. Islam has a significant influence on the Pashtun culture such as their clothing.

*Tajiks* are believed to have Iranian origins, and are also referred to as Farsi. They are the second largest ethnic group in Afghanistan, making up an estimated 27% of the nation's population.

*Hazaras* occupy the rugged central highlands regions in Afghanistan. They make up close to 10% percent of the Afghanistan population. Hazaras have Mongol heritage and belong to the Shia sect of Islam in a country that is mostly Sunni Muslim. As a result, they are viewed as outsiders.

*Uzbeks* form the largest Turkic group in Afghanistan, and they constitute 9% of the total population in the country. They are Sunni Muslims and occupy the Northern region of Afghanistan. They speak Uzbek, a Turkic language.

The Taliban are a mostly Pashtun movement which forced thousands of Pashtun people in 2001 to flee from the Uzbek-dominated regions because they were accused of being sympathizers of the Taliban. Apart from this the Pashtun are the most influential group in Afghanistan often they are referred as "Afghans". The Taliban is only part of one subgroup. A major part of the Pashtun is opposed them.

There are several conflicts between tribes but also internal conflicts within tribes. Important is that the different ethnic groups have different languages and appearance which leads to exclusion of certain groups and a stronger identification within the tribe than with the state. But especially in the cities, there is a lot of communication happening between the tribes.

There is a substantial amount of intermarriage between the ethnic groups. This intermarriage tends to blur lines of loyalty between different ethnic groups. Ethnic identities fade in importance when Afghans sense that they are confronted with a common enemy who seek to control Afghanistan.



## Historical Background of Afghanistan and Origin of the issue

Since the 19<sup>th</sup> century the area between the empire of Persia and the colonial empires Russia and British India is called “Afghanistan”. In this time, there were no government system established, it was merely a buffer zone between the empires.



The buffer zone between the empires was an embattled area

It was difficult area where all the empires tried to install a governor which worked for their forces. Especially the British tried through the whole century repeatedly to gain the economical and geographical power. After two lost wars in 1842 and 1879 the British stopped their tries and at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century small political movements established and the first rulers, Dost Mohammad Khan and Sher Ali Khan came.

Abdur Rahman, *the Iron Amir*, was the first ruler to unite all country parts under a state control. Due to the still weak position the country had at this time, the Amir had to agree to contracts with British India which forced them to give up some parts a the British-Indian border and fixed the border itself. Another part of this contract was the waiver of a independent foreign policy which made Afghanistan to one of the most isolated countries in this time.

Under Amanullah the country freed itself from the British influence in 1919. Amanullah was a modernizer of the economy and also gave the country a constitution. He was a great



supporter of the western lifestyle which he tried to establish. This bought him the anger of the traditional and religious forces in the country. After 1929, where rebellions happened all around the country and Amanullah, the shah, had to exile.

During the WW2 and the time after, Afghanistan had changing leaders which took back the changes Amanullah made and tried to modernize the country in different ways. After the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in 1964, the situation got more complicated since the Shah in this time did not ratify the system. Political parties remained illegal and radicalized fast in two ways: either Islam-based or communistic.

After situation got more difficult and aggressive, the PDPA, Peoples democratic party of Afghanistan, a communist party, made a coup and established a regime in Afghanistan. The Soviet Union did not see this as a safe solution and occupied the country in winter 1979. Through this Afghanistan became a major area in the cold war, where the Soviet Union ruled with a puppet regime while the US and Saudi Arabia funded the Rebellion Group Mujahidin with Money and Weapons. The Islam became the ideological opposite to the communism, which influenced the population.

After the war was won against the Soviet Union the mujahidin took power in Kabul, which led after for years in 1996 to a civil war, where the Taliban rose and ruled. They got funded by Saudi Arabia. After the terror attacks against US in 2001, the ISAF took power in Kabul in November 2001 and build a new government.

## Current situation

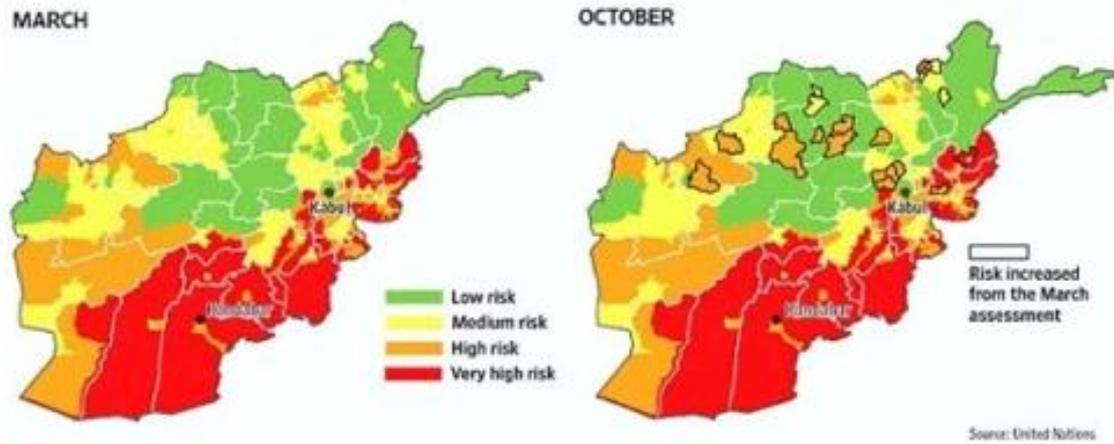
Afghanistan's conflict is fueled by support from within Pakistan for Taliban insurgents, and by difficult governance within Afghanistan, including entrenched patronage systems and corruption, and a weak rule of law, security system and free media.

The withdrawal of international combat troops between 2011 and 2014 left a fragile security environment and a struggling national economy. Since the disputed 2014 presidential election, friction between the two halves of the "National Unity Government" has prevented the government from implementing widely supported reforms, notably against corruption. This has deepened public discontent and questions over the government's legitimacy.

In January 2015, NATO launched a new non-combat Resolute Support Mission (RSM) to train, advise and assist Afghan security forces and institutions. Allied leaders decided at the July 2016 NATO Summit in Warsaw to sustain RSMs presence beyond 2016 and, in November 2017, Allied and partner troop contributors confirmed that RSM will increase from around 13,000 to around 16,000 troops.



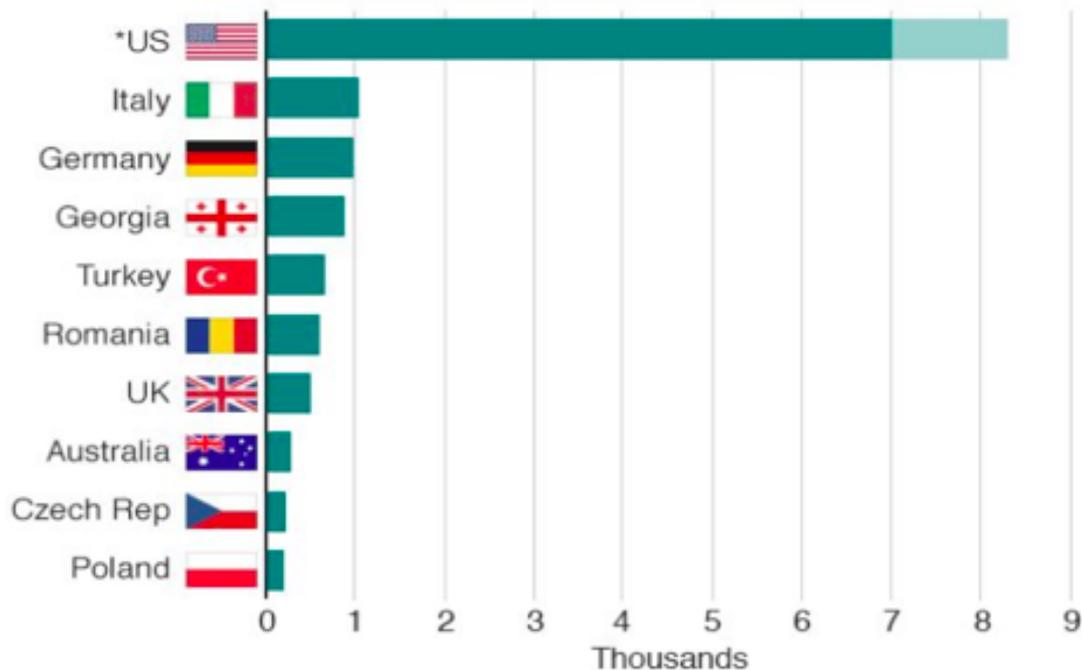
Those 16,000 do not include other support missions or counterterrorism operations against the Taliban, Islamic State militants and other insurgents, therefore is to be expected that the total number of troops is way higher.



This is a map from 2010 which shows increasing risk situation in Afghanistan, especially in the South. The danger zones remain the same in 2017.

## Major countries involved

### Top ten troop contributor nations



\*US 8,300 includes troops not assigned to NATO mission

Source: NATO/SIGAR

BBC

A recent official figure put the total number of troops involved in Resolute Support Mission (RSM) at 13,576 – troops from 39 different countries (Allied and other contributing nations) participate in the RSM in Afghanistan.

### The United States of America

Around 15,000 American soldiers are currently stationed in Afghanistan with the UN-Mandate of RSM, which are assigned to train, educate and support the afghan security forces in questions of technology and strategy. President Donald Trump sent additional 3,800 troops into the country, announcing a change in war strategy for the coming years. The new strategy itself remains ambiguous.

### Afghanistan

The Country is led by the Ashraf Ghani who succeeded as an independent politician against the former president Hamid Karzai. The security is still largely dependent on foreign forces such as NATO. Through conflicts between the main tribes in Afghanistan and religious extremism and ongoing terror attacks the country remains destabilized.

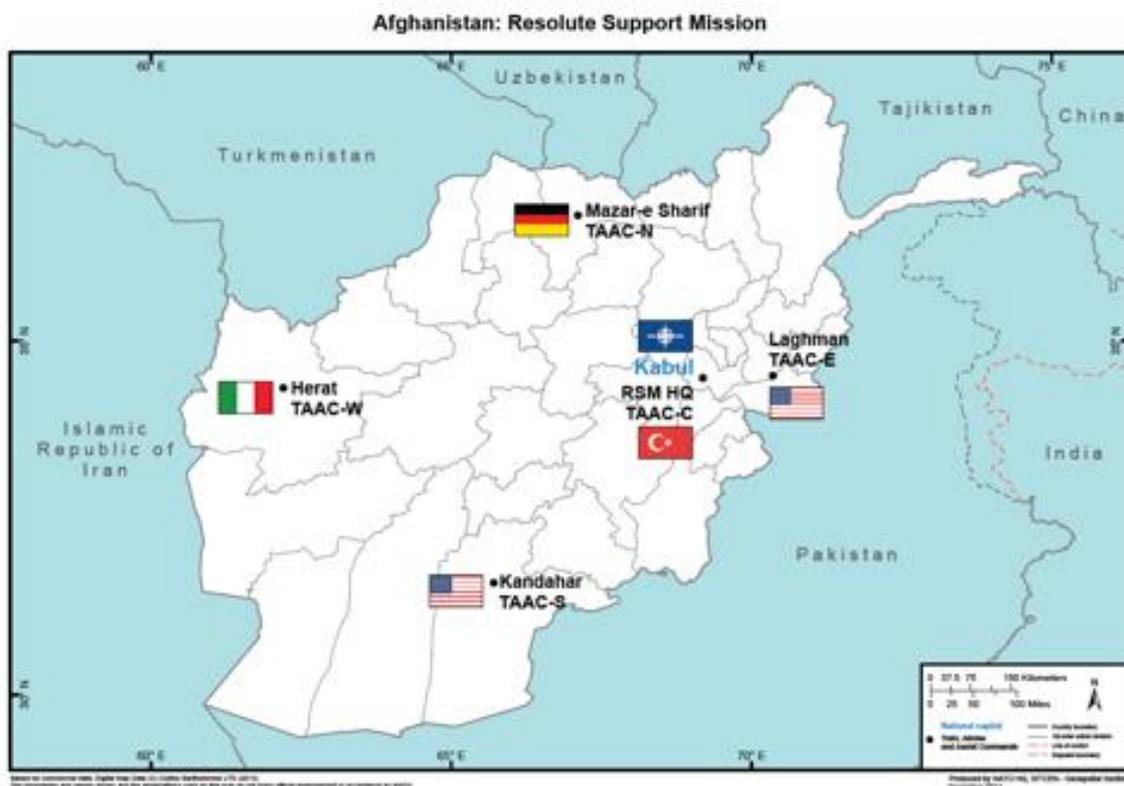


## Possible Solutions

In December 2015, at the foreign ministers' meeting of NATO Allies and their RSM partners, it was agreed to sustain the RSM presence, including in the regions of Afghanistan, during 2016. Six months later, in May 2016, they agreed to sustain the RSM presence beyond 2016. At a meeting of defense ministers in November 2017, RSM nations confirmed that the number of troops deployed would increase from around 13,000 to around 16,000 troops.

The legal framework for RSM is provided by a Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA), which was signed in Kabul on 30 September 2014 by the Afghan President and NATO's Senior Civilian Representative to Afghanistan, and later ratified by the Afghan Parliament on 27 November 2014. The SOFA defines the terms and conditions under which NATO forces will be deployed in Afghanistan as part of Resolute Support, as well as the activities that they are set to carry out under this agreement.

The additional trainers are critical to reaching the stated U.S. and NATO goal of building up the Afghan forces so that they can take control of their own country's security. At the same time, officials want to use the increased military pressure to force Taliban leaders to the peace table.



## Appendix

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