# **OPERATION FREEDOM'S SENTINEL**



# **OFS IN BRIEF**

The 18th quarterly report submitted by the Lead Inspector General for Operation Freedom's Sentinel (OFS) summarizes the quarter's key events and oversight of the two complementary U.S. missions in Afghanistan: counterterrorism operations and building the capacity of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF).

## Taliban Peace Talks Suspended

pp. 14-15, 34-35

- On September 7, President Trump announced that he had canceled ongoing U.S. talks with the Taliban
- Earlier that week, Amb. Khalilzad reported that the United States and the Taliban had reached an **agreement in principle**, under which the U.S. Government would **withdraw more than 5,000 troops**
- Following the suspension of the talks, the U.S. military **increased operations** against the Taliban

# Afghanistan Holds Presidential Election

рр. 35-36

- Afghans went to the polls on September 28 to elect their **next president**
- The results of the election have not yet been announced, but the two leading candidates both declared victory
- The Taliban attacked election activities and facilities, which likely contributed to the **low voter turnout**
- Compared to previous years, observers reported that technical administration of the election improved, including implementation of biometric verification devices

## ISIS-K: A Threat on the Ground and Online

рр. 18-20

- The Defense Intelligence Agency assessed that ISIS-K presents **"an enduring threat"** to U.S. and allied interests in South and Central Asia
- ISIS-K has not directed an attack against the U.S. homeland, but regularly issues propaganda to inspire attacks overseas
- ISIS-K has between 2,000 and 5,000 fighters and continues to recruit disaffected fighters from other violent extremist groups, including Taliban fighters who did not support a peace deal
- Due to **ongoing counterterrorism pressure**, ISIS-K has not been able to expand territorial control in Afghanistan

# Violence and Civilian Casualties Increase

pp. 11-16

- The number of **enemy-initiated attacks** that resulted in at least one casualty **increased by 34 percent** compared to the previous quarter
- USFOR-A said that this increase **reflects a normal increase** in violence during the summer and the **spike in attacks related to the election**
- **Civilian casualties increased** by more than 130 percent compared to last quarter, and 60 percent compared to the same period one year ago, according to Resolute Support data

### U.S. Government Scales Down Presence in Afghanistan

pp. 42-44

- USAID staff levels at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul **have decreased** due to attrition
- The DoD reported that there are **approximately 13,000 U.S. troops in Afghanistan**, a decrease from previous quarters; the number of DoD contractors also decreased.
- Some personnel have been **relocated to other locations** but continue to support OFS

#### New Pay and Personnel System Validates Smaller ANDSF Force Size

рр. 22-23

- The Afghan Personnel and Pay System (APPS) reported a total ANDSF assigned force strength of **253,850 personnel** in July
- This number is **much lower** than numbers reported in previous quarters because APPS relies on biometric data to validate that personnel are actually serving in the ANDSF

# Oversight and Investigations pp. 47-67

- The Lead IG agencies completed 13 audit, evaluation, and inspection reports related to OFS during the quarter
- Reports issued this quarter include an audit of U.S. efforts to implement APPS and an evaluation of training for Afghan Tactical Air Coordinators

# LEAD INSPECTOR GENERAL FOR OVERSEAS CONTINGENCY OPERATIONS