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UN Department of Safety and Security, Afghanistan Security Situation Report, Week 37, 10 - 16 September 2010

JOINT WEEKLY SECURITY ANALYSIS

The week recorded a further decrease in the overall number of incidents with only the WR recording an increase, while the rest of the regions recording decreased or relatively consistent incident levels. This overall decrease is assessed to be a result of Eid celebrations, which continued for the first three days of the week, as well as AGE's focus mainly on the elections and related activities and preparation for the offensive on the Election Day. This was manifested in the dramatic increase recorded in the election-related incidents. Lack of visibility in the SR, particularly in Hilmand is another factor contributing to the low numbers recorded in the region. Kunduz remained volatile in the NER, followed by Badakhshan mainly due to increased demonstrations. In the NR violence, mainly connected to the elections, was spread in most of the provinces. In the WR, Farah was the center of focus with increased IED incidents and Kandahar in the CR with a focus of AGE activity in Kandahar City. Uruzgan Province remained susceptible to AGE activity. The decrease in the SER was visible in the whole regions except for Paktika as a result of increasing attacks against the newly deployed surge troops. Kunar Province was the center of AGE activity with over 80% of all the incidents in the region. In the CR, Logar and Wardak remained the most active districts and together accounted for 70% of all the incidents.

There was a significant increase in the number of demonstrations with 33 demonstrations held during the week. The majority of these were held as a reaction to the announced plans for burning the Quran and were held in almost all the regions. In a number of instances these demonstrations turned violent, including the one in Faizabad and in some cases in Kabul, and although not beyond the capacity of management by the ANSF, resulted in fatalities and injuries.

No direct incident affected the UN and the aid community. This is assessed to be the result of proactive security planning, lower exposure and security mitigation measures in place.

Despite the general downturn and the focus on election related targets, insurgent asymmetric actions against the population remained high. Significant intimidation incidents, although mainly related to the WJ elections, included distribution of night letters and leaflets warning locals not to participate in the elections or otherwise face consequences, threats to election workers to quit their jobs, direct attacks on candidates, warnings to the population on laid IEDs along roadways and illegal CPs. Although the majority appears to be originating from AGE, inter-candidate rivalries have likely contributed to the incidents. Assassinations were geographically widespread with incidents recorded in the NER, NR, SR, SER, ER and CR. At least 23 individuals were assassinated compared to 14 in the previous week. These include a community elder, two civilians related to the IM, three ANP officers and two ANP relatives, one GoA employee and five family members executed by the Taliban for consulting the AIHRC in relation to the divorce of a female family member. The assassination in Balkh Province, Chahar Bolak District of two IEC staff members, who were also teachers in one of the district's schools was widely covered by the local media. Abduction incidents decreased with 14 victims compared to 29 of the previous week. At least four were later killed.

One suicide attack was recorded during the week in the SR, where a suicide attacker with a BBIED on a motorbike detonated against an ANP vehicle in Sangin District of Hilmand Province. Additionally, one suicide vest was seized by the ANSF in the WR. This was below the average of 2010, however, in line with expectations that AGE would keep their resources for the Election Day.

With a dramatic increase, 90 election-related incidents were recorded during the week compared to the weekly average of 14 incidents. These incidents included assassination, abduction and intimidation of

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election workers and inter-candidate incidents also continued. Of particular concern, was the arrest of an IEC staff member in Badghis, who was found in possession of a suicide vest. The Taliban's anti-election rhetoric continued with an interview by a Taliban commander in Kunar¹, and a statement from the Taliban leadership, both reiterating their hostile stance and urging the public to boycott the elections.

RISK ANALYSIS

High levels of terrorist and insurgents threat reporting continue, and spectacular terrorist attacks in major urban centres remain probable. The highest risk to the United Nations in Afghanistan taking into account mitigating measures is exposure to direct suicide and complex suicide attacks in work, residence or travel situations. The second highest risk is targeting by IED of UN compounds or of UN staff working in government premises. Collateral damage as a result of such attacks against other entities remains a significant concern. Abduction of UN staff for political or criminal motives remains a significant risk, in particular in areas where the use of armoured vehicles is not yet widespread and new insurgent groups start operating. Abuse by local power holders is also rated as a high risk. Perceptions of the UN's role in Afghanistan's post electoral process can result in a higher threat profile against the organization.

Significant Incidents after the end of the reporting period

On 18 September, Balkh Province, Chimtal District, Jar Qala, at 0905hrs, AGE attacked a polling center and a truck, which was transporting ballot boxes, and burnt the materials. One ANP was killed, one ANP was injured and two ANP were abducted by AGE along with three IEC staff (DFC Ghulam Ali, Head of a PC, Habibullah and a driver - all three were Pashtu ethnics). *On 19 September, Balkh Province, Chimtal District, Joweshir Village, the dead bodies of the three IEC staff were found and allegedly they had been beheaded. Also the dead bodies of two abducted ANP were found (reportedly not beheaded or throats cut).*

NORTH EASTERN REGION

The security situation remained unstable. Kunduz Province and some districts of Takhar and Baghlan Provinces are unstable while Badakhshan Province is relatively calm despite demonstrations in Faizabad city earlier in the reporting period.

Analysis of the Week's Events

There was a 5% increase with 32 incidents compared to 28 in the last reporting period. Following the end of Eid, there has been a slight increase due to Special Forces forays and IED incidents. Of the total reported, 22 incidents or 69% were AGE related. Kunduz and Badakhshan Provinces recorded 10 incidents each, followed by Baghlan with seven and Takhar with five. The incident numbers in Badakhshan was elevated on account of demonstrations associated with the threatened burning of Korans by a religious leader in the USA.

There were five election related incidents including three incidents of intimidation, an abduction and a confrontation/dispute. A sixth incident in Chahar Dara, Kunduz involving the destruction of a bridge was assessed as indirectly related to the election. However, a temporary bridge has been built by ISAF military engineers.

While there has been no major incident in Kunduz City, events of past weeks and distribution of night letters warning property owners against renting and persons from working for IC have served to sustain a

¹ This interview was published after a statement made by the Governor of Kunar, assuring that the Taliban would not attempt to disrupt the elections in the province.

SIOC – Afghanistan: UNITED NATIONS CONFIDENTIAL

tense situation. IM Special Forces maintained pressure on AGE with a night raid in Chahar Dara that led to the arrest of six persons and an operation supported by an air strike that targeted AGE in Aliabad District who were reportedly preparing for an ambush. The killing of at least eight AGE might prompt reprisal attacks. However, despite the Special Forces successes, land forces operations that were planned from 96 to 24 hours before the election had to be aborted because of unavailability of ANSF raising concern as to whether the AGE have been sufficiently disrupted ahead of E-day.

The security situation in Baghlan remained unstable with AGE retaining the capability to interdict traffic on the main highways linking Pul-i-Khumri to Kunduz and Mazar-i-Sherif with significant presence in Dand-e-Ghori, Dand-e-Shahabuddin, Burka and Old Baghlan. Pul-i-Khumri and Baghlan Jadid Districts continue to be the most unstable with an attack on the convoy of the new CoP for Kunduz Province and destruction of a bridge connecting Dand-e-Shahabuddin and the main Pul-i-Khumri to Kunduz highway. While there was an abduction of a DFC in Dand-e-Ghori area who was later released, the assassination of five family members in Burka District over a planned divorce has served to further intimidate the local population.

In Takhar the situation in northern districts such as Darqad remains tense with an intensification of AGE activity ahead of the election. Voting in some districts like Darqad, Yangi Qala and Khawaja Baha-u-din is likely to be severely affected due to the considerable presence and influence of AGE and the ineffectual ANSF presence in these districts.

In Badakhshan a higher than normal level of incidents was reported as a result of several demonstrations that were originally organized to protest the threatened burning of Korans in the USA but were later manipulated to attack banners and campaign paraphernalia of some candidates. While demonstrations turned violent following the shooting of rock throwing protestors by guards at the PRT, police intervention, arrest of suspected organizers and meetings between representatives of the PRT and elders served to restore order in the city. Though there was speculation that a stand off attack towards the ANP HQ in Shahr-e-Buzurg District was intended for IEC contracted trucks containing election materials this could not be ascertained.

Description of the Week's Significant Events

Attack/Armed Clash

There were 8 armed clashes recorded out of which four were reported from Baghlan, two from Kunduz and two from Takhar. Significantly, in Baghlan–e-Jadid District, Baghlan AGE attacked the convoy of the new CoP for Kunduz while he was traveling for his installation on 13 Sep. On the following day an ANP convoy was attacked in the same district and one vehicle was burnt.

Stand-Off Attack

There were two stand/off attacks in Badakhshan involving RPGs. In Faizabad City three grenades were fired at the PRT Camp without causing damage while in Shahr-e-Buzurg DAC grenades were fired at the ANP HQ without causing injury or damage.

Air Strike

On 16 September an IM air strike and Special Forces operation targeted AGE at an ambush site in Omerkhil Village, Aliabad District, Kunduz. Reportedly, eight AGE were killed and eight others were captured.

IED Detonated/Discovered

There were seven IED related incidents reported including four detonations and three discoveries. Significantly in Taloqan City, Takhar a RCIED was detonated in the vicinity of a WJ candidate's campaign without causing any injury while in Chahar Dara District, Kunduz AGE used an IED to destroy a bridge. During a damage assessment mission the following day an IM vehicle struck an IED. One IM soldier was injured.

Assassination

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There were two assassinations. In Darqad District, Takhar AGE shot and killed a community elder while in Burka District, Baghlan AGE killed five family members and a neighbour of the slain family. Reportedly, the action was sanctioned by a Taliban commander after the head of the family sought consul from the AIHRC in relation to a divorce for his daughter.

Abduction

The abduction of a DFC was reported in Dehana-e-Ghori District, Baghlan on 16 Sep. Reportedly, the DFC was released on 17 Sep.

Crime

One serious crime, murder, was reported in Khanabad DAC, Kunduz.

Arrest

In Darqad District, Takhar, AGE ambushed a group of AGE arresting one of them in the process. In Chahar Dara District, Kunduz IM during a night operation arrested six persons including a former PC member.

Intimidation

Three incidents were reported including the distribution of night letters in Kunduz Province warning against the election, persons renting houses and those working for IC. In a second incident, the son of a WJ candidate in Baghlan fired shots in the air disrupting the campaign of another candidate while in a third incident a grenade was lobbed into the home of a national working for the PRT in Faizabad City, Badakhshan. The detonation of a RCIED close to the campaign of a WJ candidate in Taloqan City, Takhar might also be considered an act of intimidation.

Demonstration

Four demonstrations were held in Badakhshan. What started as a protest against plans by a religious leader in the US to burn Korans escalated into hostile acts when guards at the PRT shot at protestors who were hurling rocks. At least one person was killed and eight others were injured.

Confrontation/Dispute

In Darayem District, Badakhshan, six persons were injured when supporters of two WJ candidates clashed.

NORTHERN REGION

The security situation in the Northern Region remained calm and stable during the week.

Analysis of the Week's Events

The region witnessed minor decrease in the number of security related incidents. 28 incidents were reported compared to 32 incidents on previous week. Out of the reported incidents 23 were AGE related and numerous incidents were related to the upcoming elections.

Seven armed clashes occurred during the week in Faryab, Jawzjan, Balkh and Samangan Provinces. Dawlatabad District of Faryab Province remains a security concern for UN road missions travelling along the ring road. On 10 September at 1600hrs AGE and ANP clashed on the ring road in the mentioned District. Few days later the ANSF/IM conducted a mop up operation with close air support and killed five AGE however there are reports about continuously high AGE presence in Dawlatabad District, especially around Top Khan Qala Village. On the other hand a successful operation was conducted in Kohistan District of Faryab Province on 16 September by ANSF and CPF. As a result of extensive fighting four AGE were killed and 10 arrested, among them the shadow governor of the District. The reporting week witnessed one direct attack on election campaigners in Dawlatabad District of Balkh Province. The insurgents opened fire on the elections candidate's campaign vehicle as a result of which two occupants on board were injured.

SIOC – Afghanistan: UNITED NATIONS CONFIDENTIAL

Five IED related incidents were reported in Faryab and Samangan Provinces, out of them four were detonated and one IED discovered. Most significant of them are the IED detonated incidents in Qaysar District, Faryab Province, where two ANA soldiers were killed and four injured and in Samangan Province, Dara-I-Sufi Payin District, where ANP vehicles were hit by an IED while they were escorting the IEC with ballot materials. However in the second incident no casualties were reported.

Region witnessed one assassination incident, which captured also the attention of the media. In Balkh Province, Chahar Bolak District, two IEC staff members, who were also teachers in one of the schools in the District, were killed by insurgents on 15 September. Reportedly they had earlier received threats to quit their job or otherwise will be killed.

Seven intimidations were recorded in Faryab, Sari Pul, Balkh and Samangan Provinces. AGE continued to intimidate the local population not to take part of the elections and threatened them with severe consequences if they decide to do so. Samangan Province, Dara-I-Sufi Pain District FC of IEC received threatening messages on his mobile phone to quit his job or otherwise he will face severe consequences. Also in the same District, the local villagers did not allow the ANP and IEC to offload the election related materials as their lives had been threatened by AGE if they will participate in the elections.

Various threat warnings have been received by this office about the AGE intention to disrupt the upcoming elections in the region. Reportedly AGE have placed IEDs on various roads in the province and warned the local population about possible attacks on polling centres. Also of concern is the situation in Faryab Province, Ghormach District, where reportedly a tension between two candidates, Haji Lala Jan and Haji Azim, might lead to violence on the Election Day.

In the overall analysis, there is no significant change in the general trend, frequency and pattern of AGE acts of hostility including the target profile. It is highly likely that the region will witness increase in the number of security related incidents due to the elections on 18 September. The UN programme delivery in Qush Tepa, Dara-i-Sufi Payin and Bala, Kishindih, Sayyad, Darzab and the rural areas of Balkh, Chimtāl, Chahar Bolak, the eastern parts of Sholgara Districts of Jawzjan, Sari Pul and Balkh Provinces continue to be hampered due to the active presence of various AGE/IAG networks.

Description of the Week's Significant Events

Attack/Armed Clash

Seven armed clashes were reported in the region.

IED Detonated/Discovered

Four IEDs detonated and one was discovered.

Assassination

One assassination was reported in Balkh Province.

Abduction

One abduction case was reported during the week. AGE abducted five villagers in Chimtāl District, Balkh Province. Also the international road construction worker, who was abducted in Faryab Province during previous reporting period remains in the AGE captivity.

Intimidation

Seven intimidations were reported during the week.

WESTERN REGION

The security situation in WR remained unstable.

Analysis of the Week's Events

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There were 46 incidents recorded compared to 30 during the previous week, representing a 53% increase. The nature and geographic distribution of the events were consistent with previous weeks with an upsurge in election related incidents. A further elevation in election associated incidents with asymmetric attacks against candidates, supporters, IEC workers and the population in general is likely.

Armed attacks remained consistent as compared to last week: four in Badghis Province, one each in Hirat and Farah Provinces. All were initiated by the AGE. Two AGE and one ANA were killed

IED detonations were generally consistent with last week with majority recorded in Farah Province. Eight incidents were reported, five of which occurred in Farah and three in Hirat Province. Three ANSF and ten civilians were wounded when an RCIED rigged on a motorcycle detonated. In another incident, a premature detonation of roadside IED killed four AGE. A number of IED discoveries were also made. The attacks appeared to be a well-planned operation aimed at intimidating the populace from taking part in the elections rather than inflicting injuries.

AGE tactics of intimidation continues to maintain a significant impact on the electoral process. The Taliban threatened to target polling stations and to kill and maim voters. Coupled with this is the threat of abduction to install fear into the populace.

Various threat reports received suggested possible attacks on GoA, ANSF, IM and International Organizations including the UNAMA office in Hirat. The reporting was mainly generic and lacking details. The insurgent's intent and capability to conduct attacks in the region however remains elevated.

The main threats to UN staff are assessed as: direct loss in complex attacks, suicide and IED attacks; collateral damage due to close proximity to IED, suicide attacks and; abduction for political or criminal motives. Advanced mitigation measures, including "White City", have been implemented throughout Western Region for the period of the elections to address the associated threats.

Description of the Week's Significant Events

Attack/Armed Clash

Six incidents were reported. Four in Badghis Province, one each in Hirat and Farah Province, all of which were initiated by the AGE. Two AGE and one ANA were killed.

Stand/Off Attack

One incident recorded in Farah Province, Pusht Rod District, AGE fired four 107 mm rocket, targeting IM/ANSF base. No casualty or damage was reported.

Air Strike

One incident of air strike recorded in Badghis province.

IED Detonated/Discovered

Eight incidents were reported, five of which occurred in Farah and three in Herat Province. Three ANSF and ten civilians were wounded when RCIED rigged on a motorcycle detonated. In other incident of premature detonation of roadside IED, four AGE were killed. Seven incidents were reported; three in Farah and two in Ghor, one in Herat and one in Badghis Province. No arrests were reported.

Mine/UXO Incident

One incident of mine seizure recorded in Ghor province.

Cache

Three incidents were reported in Ghor province.

Abduction

Two incidents were reported. One local business man was abducted in Herat city and another incident in Herat province, Adraskan district unknown armed men stopped passenger and abducted one of the passengers.

SIOC – Afghanistan: UNITED NATIONS CONFIDENTIAL

Crime

Three incidents were reported. Two in Ghor and one in Herat Provinces.

Arrest

Four incidents were reported in Hirat and Ghor Provinces.

Intimidation

Three incidents of intimidation were recorded. Two in Herat (Kushk and Gulran Districts), AGE distributed leaflets warning locals not to take part in the forthcoming Parliamentary Election. One in Badghis Province, Ab kamri District a group of AGE stopped several passenger vehicles looking for individual affiliated with IM/ANSF, INGO's and employees of election.

Demonstration

Two incident of demonstration reported. One in Farah Province and one in Herat Province, both demonstrations were protest against intended burning of holy Quran. One Demonstrator killed and three demonstrators and two ANP injured.

Narcotic Incident

One incident of Narcotic incident recorded in Badghis province.

Confrontation/Dispute

Two Incidents of dispute were recorded.

Information

Two Incident of information reported in Badghis province. An AGE commander with 10 men surrendered to NDS and handed over one RPG, one machinegun and eight AK-47 rifles. In another incident one AGE joined GoA.

Other

Four other incidents reported during reporting week including a report of UN national staff being killed while riding his privately owned motorcycle in Herat. And another report of a UN national staff being arrested and released in Herat, after being involved in a road traffic accident while driving his private vehicle.

SOUTHERN REGION

The security situation in the Southern Region remains volatile. The residual risk to both UN national and international staff is assessed as Very High.

Analysis of the Week's Events

The reporting period saw a decrease in security incidents reported throughout the region for the second successive week. A total of 89 security incidents were reported compared to 107 during the previous week; a 16% decrease. The drop in the number of incidents could be attributed to three factors: post-Eid celebration, under reporting especially from Hilmand Province and AGE using the period for regrouping and replenishment of supplies before the elections offensive. Though the decrease is significant, the pattern remains similar to that seen in the past.

This week, Kandahar Province experienced altogether 41 incidents and was followed by Uruzgan Province where 19 incidents were recorded. Hilmand Province recorded 18 incidents while Zabul and Nimroz Provinces recorded six and five security incidents respectively. In Kandahar Province, Kandahar, Panjwayi and Arghandab Districts were the most active.

There was a decrease in armed clashes throughout the region; 30 attacks as compared to 47 in the previous week. Nevertheless, armed clashes remained the main security incident category in the region.

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Of the 30 armed attacks/clashes reported during the week, 15 occurred in Kandahar Province. The vast majority of this type of incident was centred in districts around Kandahar city. This is caused by the ongoing IM operations in Kandahar Province, specifically in the districts around Kandahar City. IM/ANSF CPs, patrols, convoys and IM contracted logistic convoys remained the primary targets of these attacks; consistent with previous patterns. Stand off attacks like the previous week decreased, from three to one. The number of IED incidents in the region decreased, with the majority occurring in Kandahar Province. Eleven IEDs detonated successfully in Kandahar Province and these devices were mostly directed at IM/ANSF with a number of civilian casualties. The IEDs in Uruzgan Province were mostly unsuccessful; five were discovered and defused in the province during the reporting period. Perhaps one of the most significant incidents that occurred in the region during the week was the suicide attack against an ANP ranger vehicle on 12 September, in the Bazaar area of Sangin District, Hilmand Province. Two ANP officers and two civilians were killed when a suicide bomber riding on a motorcycle rammed and detonated his device against an ANP vehicle.

Assassination, abduction, and intimidation incidents against those perceived to be unsupportive of insurgents activity continued during the week. In several areas, AGE continued in their attempts to disrupt the election process through a variation of intimidation tactics. In addition to their usual tactics of issuance of night letters and assassinations, AGE gathered locals in a number of villages in the region and warned them not to participate in the elections otherwise they will face dire consequences.

The first civil reactions in the region against the planned burning of the Holy Quran by a minority group in the US occurred in Uruzgan Province during the week. Demonstrations in Chora District of Uruzgan on 16 September resulted in violence with four civilians killed and, four ANP officers and four civilians were wounded.

The likelihood of an incident taking place and involving UN staff is very likely with expected impact assessed as critical (i.e. involving death or serious injury). All UN activities must be considered and deemed critical to program delivery before they take place.

Description of the Week's Significant Events

Suicide Attack

One suicide attack was carried out in Sangin District of Hilmand Province.

Attack/Armed Clash

There were 30 reported armed clashes/attacks over the period; a decrease compared to 47 recorded the previous week.

Stand-Off Attack

One stand-off attack was reported during the week; a decrease compared to three recorded the previous week

IED Detonated/Discovered

13 IED detonations were reported during the week. 10 IED discoveries were made. Most defused by EOD teams.

Assassination

Two incidents were recorded during the week; a decrease compared to six reported the previous week.

Intimidation

Two incidents were recorded during the week.

Demonstration

Four demonstrations in Hilmand, Nimroz and Uruzgan Provinces were recorded during the week.

SOUTH EASTERN REGION

The security situation in the South-Eastern Region remained volatile during the reporting period.

Analysis of the Week's Events

Another major decrease has been registered during the reporting period in the general security incident statistics in the SER with a total of 119 security reports received (including six late) as compared to 137 the week before, which constitutes an overall 13 percent drop. Similarly with the last week's patterns, it could be solely attributed to the Eid celebrations and the reported preparations for the announced upcoming elections disruption activities by AGE. Major decreases were noted in the Khost province which accounted for a total of 22 incidents (31 during the week before), the Ghazni province, where 37 incidents occurred (44 the week before) and the Paktia province with 21 incidents reported (24 the week before) while a slight increase has been registered in the Paktika province with a total of 39 incidents reported as compared to 38 during the preceding week.

With 85 percent of the last week's security incidents believed to be AGE initiated (80 the week before), insurgents continue seeming to possess operational initiative, to enjoy a relative freedom of mobility throughout the region, and to keep their logistics lines functionally intact. Consistently with the earlier trends, the AGE tactics remained a variety of complex / armed / standoff / IED attacks targeting IM / ANSF / GoA facilities / supply convoys, road construction companies, local population, and targets of opportunity as well as actions aimed at intimidating local populace – specifically in the context of the AGE-announced intent to disrupt the elections. During the reporting period AGE were more active in the districts of Andar, Ghazni, and Gelan of the Ghazni province, the Khost (Matun) and Tere Zayi districts of the Khost province, the Gardez, Jaji and Sayid Karam districts of the Paktia province as well as the Yousuf Khel, Mata Khan, Khair Khot, and Barmal districts of Paktika.

Same as the week before, during the reporting period, IM/ANSF continued with various operations aimed at disruption of insurgents' kinetic activity and logistics and degrading AGE fighting capabilities with an immediate-term goal to ensure security of the upcoming parliamentary elections. IM/ANSF operational focus was more visible in southern and western Paktia, southern Ghazni as well as central and eastern Khost. An ongoing increase of attacks on IM in Paktika could be explained by the recent deployment of surge troops into the province. During the elections polling sites will be secured exclusively by the ANSF with IM forces in stand-by for rapid response to possible AGE activities with an emphasis on key transportation corridors, identified key terrain districts, major populations centres as well as high to medium risk polling sites.

At least 22 people were killed and 39 were wounded as a result the security incidents reported during last week in the SER (the number casualties is yet to be verified independently).

Description of the Week's Significant Events

Attack/Armed Clash

A total of 29 armed clashes reported (46 last week); the number of armed clashes has decreased by more than 50 percent in the last two weeks.

Stand-Off Attack

A total of 30 incidents recorded (20 during the preceding week).

Air Strike

A total of one air strike reported (compared to five the week before).

IED Detonated/Discovered

A total of 33 incidents reported as compared to 37 the week before, including 17 detonations (19 last week).

Assassination

One such incident reported, when a local resident was shot and killed by AGE on 15 September in Sharana Paktika for his alleged collaboration with IM.

Arrest

At least 15 suspected AGE were arrested as a result of several IM / ANSF search operations.

Abduction

Two such incidents reported (same as the week before).

Intimidation

Out of the five reported incidents, four were upcoming elections-related, when AGE were warning local residents in the Paktya, Ghazni, and Khost provinces not to vote or otherwise to face grave consequences.

Demonstration

Out of the five reported, three were against the announced burning of the Holy Qur'an and one was upcoming elections-related

EASTERN REGION

The security situation in the Eastern Region remained volatile.

Analysis of the Week's Events

The region incurred a 15% decrease in reported incidents, with 65 recorded this week compared to 75 last week. AGE driven activities accounted for 72% of the overall incidents. There were twenty-one armed attacks, of which 81% occurred in Kunar. Attacks equally targeted against ANSF/IM and Government entities. The number of armed attacks decreased by 12% from the previous week while stand-off attacks increased by 25%. Of the 21 armed attacks: 17 occurred in Kunar, 3 in Nangarhar, and 1 in Laghman. It is assessed that on-going IM/ANSF operations and ANSF special election operations are impacting upon changes in AGE tactics from an operational perspective as reports indicated that in some areas, smaller AGE groups are now operating under joint command structures. However, it is assessed that the intensity and frequency of incidents will rise soon, particularly during Election Day and election results announcement period.

The number of IED detonations/discoveries decreased by 45% from last week and such decreased could also be the result of ANSF special election operation since their visibility is dramatically increase during the period. Majority of the IED affected areas during the period were again on main access roadways to DACs which is also the routes commonly utilised by the UN communities in the region upon programme delivery activities. Therefore IED remains a primary concern on the main access and secondary access roads to many districts through out the region.

Five public demonstrations were experienced during the week, out of which four were against the planned burning of holy Koran by a church pastor in the US and one was against the Afghan Independent Election Commission's decision upon the closure of about 80 polling stations in the region. All demonstrations ended peacefully. Tactics employed to discourage local people from taking part in the parliamentary election also recorded during the period as AGE set up numbers of illegal check points in Kunar Province and verbally warned people against taking part in the election.

There was not any incident against any humanitarian programme delivery agency recorded in the region during the period.

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Collateral damage due to the close proximity to IED and suicide attacks remains the highest assessed general risk to UN staff members. Threat of direct loss in suicide and IED attacks is assessed as second and abduction of political or criminal motives is assessed as the third highest risk.

Description of the Week's Significant Events

Attack/Armed Clash

Twenty one incidents were reported.

Stand-Off Attack

Eight incidents were reported.

Crime

Three incidents were reported.

IED Detonated/Discovered

Twelve incidents were reported, four were detonations and eight were discoveries.

Arrest

Five incidents were reported.

Intimidation

Seven incidents were reported.

Demonstration

Five incidents were reported.

CENTRAL REGION

The security situation remained largely unstable and unpredictable. In line with the regional incident pattern, Panjsher and Parwan Provinces continue to be relatively calm as expounded by their incident figures. Kabul in particular, Surobi District, Logar and Wardak Provinces are rated volatile and thus accounted for the bulk of the incidents.

Analysis of the Week's Events

A total of 51 security related incidents were reported this week in comparison with the 59 incidents of the previous reporting period. This in effect, shows a 16% decline in the number of incidents. However Logar and Wardak Provinces combined, accounted for virtually 70% of the region's incidents. As armed clashes and stand-off attacks continued to be the chosen methods of attack by the AGE, the predominance of demonstrations in Kabul City further exacerbated the already fragile political atmosphere. In the lead up to the parliamentary elections, the overall political climate in the region remain charged and the tendency for the period to witness increased levels of violence like elsewhere in the country cannot be ignored as political differences continue to supposedly fracture community cohesion. The proliferation of threat reports continue to suggest Taliban's plans to assert itself as it launches a voter dissuasion campaign that tags everyone affiliated with the elections as both a potential and legitimate target of violence and intimidation.

There were 12 demonstrations staged across the region some of which have turned violent and thus claimed five lives and caused injuries to twelve. Of these nine are linked to the planned desecration of the Qur'an announced by a church in the US but later abandoned. The planned desecration of the Qur'an being the all-purpose context of these demonstrations appears to mask the true political undertone of some of the protests. This is reflective of the fact that the protests went ahead despite the abandonment of the planned desecration of the Qur'an by the organizers coupled with the chanting of anti-Karzai slogans that went along with many demonstrations. These protests in all probability epitomized the existence of an undercurrent of political resentment exploited at a time when the parliamentary election

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which the AGE consistently threatens to disrupt approached. Similarly three ant-election demonstrations were staged in Wardak Province and the unconfirmed report of the burning of three IM contracted logistic trucks and the subsequent abduction of the three drivers in one such protest. More election-related protests should be expected in the coming days particularly after the declaration of results which may likely be accompanied with sporadic violence in diverse provinces within the region.

AGE assassination and abduction campaign continue in the region unabated. An employee of the provincial government was shot dead in Logar and another in Wardak in addition to the assassination of three ANP personnel abducted in separate incidents in Wardak. The gunshot riddled corpses of the abducted ANP personnel were found the next day.

A significant reduction in the number of IED discoveries and detonations was witnessed during the period under review while conversely demonstrations, stand-off attacks and armed clashes continued at consistent levels. The period before and during the parliamentary election, in line with earlier assessments, may see an upsurge in violence by insurgents in an apparent attempt to discredit the electoral process by dissuading voters from participation.

The situation in the region in general is likely to remain unpredictable during the coming weeks with consistent levels of insurgent activities in the form of stand-off attacks and an entrenched pattern of voter intimidation, assassination and abduction of election staff, candidates and supporters. Kabul city is expected to witness increased enhancement of security measures with strict checks at entry points accompanied with proactive operations against the AGE before and during the period of polling.

Description of the Week's Significant Events

Attack/Armed Clash

There were 12 reported armed clashes/attacks during the week. All attacks were AGE initiated attacks against ANSF and the IM. A total of four AGE were killed, one ANP killed, three others injured and two AGE arrested.

Stand-Off Attack

A total of six stand-off attacks are in record during the period. Wardak has seen two IM Bases attacked with rockets in Jalrez and Saydabad Districts. Jalrez DAC was again attacked with rocket fire. Two rockets impacted near an IM Base in Bagram District of Parwan and in Deh Sabz District of Kabul Province, a rocket impacted in Dashti Baba area. These attacks resulted in neither deaths nor injuries.

Air Strike

In Badam Village of Nirkh District in Wardak Province, three suspected AGE were reportedly killed in an IM air strike.

IED Detonated/Discovered

There were two incidents of IED detonation. One ANA was injured in one in Musayi District of Kabul Province and ten suspects arrested. One PSC personnel was injured when their vehicle was struck in Saydabad District of Wardak. There were five reports of IED discoveries. All the devices were defused by EOD teams.

Assassination

Four incidents of assassination. One in Charkh District of Logar Province where a government employee was shot and killed. Two incidents in Chaki Wardak in which a local employee of a radio and TV network in the Provincial Centre was shot and killed and an ANP Commander abducted with two of his relatives was later killed. In Maydan Shahr District of Wardak, an ANP personnel's bullet riddled corpse was found following his abduction.

Abduction

One incidents of abduction reported over the week. In Sheikhabad area of Saydabad District of Wardak, three private vehicles were carjacked and the occupants abducted by AGE.

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Crime

An unknown perpetrator hauled a hand grenade into the office of a parliamentary candidate in Yakatoot area, PD9 of Kabul City.

Arrest

There were four incidents of arrest. A total of 11 AGE were arrested and ANSF/IM joint team discovered an AK-47, one pistol, three hand grenades, assorted ammunition and a military style uniform in one such arrest.

Demonstration

There were 12 demonstrations during the week. Nine were in relation to the planned desecration of the Qur'an by a church in the US that was abandoned and a total of five demonstrators died and 12 wounded. Three anti-election demonstrations were staged Wardak one of which led to the burning of three IM contracted logistics truck and the abduction of the three drivers by protesters.

Narcotic Incident

In Puli Mattak area of Chaharikar DAC, Parwan Province, ANP discovered about 150 kg of hashish during a search operation.

Cache

In Wardak Province, ANSF reportedly discovered approx. 38 already prepositioned rockets.

CENTRAL HIGHLANDS REGION

The security situation in Central Highlands Region remained calm during the reporting period. Seven incidents were recorded compared to four for the previous week, a slight increase.

Analysis of the Week's Events

Bamyan Province recorded four security incidents, and only one is AGE related. The OCCP instructed the coal mine to close down during election period because of information received from credible source, suggesting that there are allegedly 15 insurgents dissimulated among the workers who may carry out some attacks against security forces. In Bamyan city, a demonstration against USA was staged over the issue of the burning of the Holy Koran. A petition was handed over to UNAMA accordingly. Some threat letters were distributed against candidates allegedly linked to communist.

In Daikundi, the incident of Kijran between IM and ANSF raises some concerns on the confidence between the two forces and the security implication for the up coming election. One crime was recorded and some night threatening letters were distributed against one parliament candidate.

Despite the calm, there are still some security concerns for Shikary Valley of Kahmard and Shibar Districts for Bamyan and Kajran District for Daikundi.

No major change in security related incident is expected for the next reporting period.

Description of the Week's Significant Events

Attack/Armed Clash

The reason for a shooting incident between ANSF and IM in Daykundi Province, Kajran District, in the proximity of the Kichaie Mamoor CP is still unclear. As a result, one IM soldier was killed and one IM and one ANSF soldier were injured.

Crime

In Daykundi Province, Khadir District, Obagag pass a group of five unknown armed men stopped six local trucks robbing the drivers cash and valuables.

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Intimidation

In Bamyan Province, Panjab District, an unknown religious circle (Association of Religious Schools Students in Central Highlands) distributed and posted hundreds of night letters against certain candidates who allegedly are linked to communist regime, leftist group or being warlords. The letter addressed the voters, as part of their religious obligation, not to vote for those candidates.

In Daykundi Province, Nili District Centre, bazaar area night letters were distributed clandestinely against one parliament member and a candidate by unknown people.

Demonstration

A peaceful demonstration, called by the local religious leaders, to protest against the planned Quran burning ceremony in the US took place in Bamyan Centre and reached the UNAMA Office in Bamyan. Approximately 400-500 people marched from the mosque to the UNAMA Office and continued to NZ PRT IM base. A petition was delivered to the ASC.

END OF REPORT

EM/CP