



# TRITON Intelligence Report

## Iranian Support for the Afghan Taliban

### Key Points

1. 10.5 tonnes of weapons from Iran seized in past 12 months
2. Afghan officials claim 60% of weapons are directly from the Iranian government
3. Reports of Afghan insurgents undergoing training in Iran

In March 2010 Channel 4 News was shown a large consignment of weapons, reportedly destined for Afghan insurgents, which had been intercepted on the Iranian border in Herat province. The weapons seized included landmines, explosives, mortar rounds, RPG rounds and grenades as well as possible IED main charges in cooking pots and jerry cans. Some of the mines had Persian serial numbers. Afghan government records show that 10.5 tonnes of weapons from Iran were intercepted in Herat province during the previous 12 months and Afghanistan claims that 60% of the weaponry came directly from the Iranian government.



A selection of the weapons displayed to the media in Herat province

**HMS COMMENT:** Seizures of Iranian manufactured weapons have been reported before, although usually in smaller quantities. Some reported finds have included EFPs although there is no mention of EFPs in the current reporting. **COMMENT ENDS**



Persian text on a landmine

The programme also included footage of a Taliban commander who was interviewed in Kondozi province. Introducing himself as 'Commander Noori', he claimed that the Iranian border has become very important to the insurgency as a conduit for weapons, due to the increasing pressure that militants face on the Pakistan border. The commander claimed that militants carry weapons across the border and also employ 'professional smugglers' to bring in shipments.

**HMS COMMENT:** The commander's mention of 'professional smugglers' probably points to the ongoing cooperation between militants and drug traffickers in the region. In the past it has not been clear if weapons from Iran had been acquired and used by local insurgent groups in the west. It appears that the border with Iran is becoming more important to the wider insurgency. **COMMENT ENDS**

Other media reporting in March 2010 claimed that insurgents had received training in Iran before returning to fight in Afghanistan. Taliban commanders claimed that militants were smuggled into the city of Zahedan, Iran, and then driven for around an hour to desert training camps. Militants were reportedly paid by Iranian officials to attend for three months over the winter. The number of militants who had undergone training in Iran was given as 'hundreds'. The training, given by plainclothes instructors, was reportedly split into three sections:

- Month one: attacking convoys and withdrawing before coalition forces could respond
- Month two: placing multiple IEDs in single sites 'in sequence' to cause the maximum number of casualties
- Month three: storming bases and checkpoints

**HMS COMMENT:** The emplacing of multiple IEDs at single sites targeting coalition forces has been seen most commonly in Helmand province, suggesting that some militants trained in Iran could be operating there. Winter is the logical time for militants to undergo training as the bad weather heralds the end of the traditional fighting season in Afghanistan. The unconventional nature of the training implies that the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps may have been involved in instructing the course, as elements of the Guard are known to train in asymmetric warfare and reportedly have recent experience of working with Shia militants from Iraq.

**COMMENT ENDS**

Taliban commanders again claimed that security force pressure in Pakistan has made training there more difficult, increasing the popularity of training in Iran.

**HMS COMMENT:** This is not the first time that Iran has been accused of training Afghan militants. In 2007 an Afghan police commander claimed that around 45 militants had undergone training in Iran. If the figures given by Taliban commanders are accurate it appears the number now receiving training has risen significantly.

In keeping with previous assessments, if elements of the Iranian government are involved in supporting the Taliban it is unlikely that they are attempting to alter the strategic balance in Afghanistan. Shia Iran, a natural enemy of the hard-line Sunni Taliban, is more likely attempting to maintain the status quo of Afghan security and ensure that the coalition does not gain the upper hand, although this reporting suggests that Iran is providing more support to the Taliban than information previously available in open sources suggested. This support may increase as security force pressure continues to be exerted on the traditional Pakistani training areas. **COMMENT ENDS**



## Report Data

<b>Title</b>	<b>Iranian Support for the Afghan Taliban</b>	
<b>Type</b>	<b>TRITON Intelligence Report</b>	
<b>Information Cut-Off Date</b>	<b>29 March 2010</b>	
<b>Reference</b>	<b>HMS-Mar10-TIR-03</b>	
<b>TRITON Incident Reference</b>	<b>N/A</b>	
<b>Issue Date</b>	<b>30 March 2010</b>	
<b>Author</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>29 March</b>
<b>Editor</b>	<b>VW</b>	<b>30 March</b>

## Disclaimer

- (a) This report is based on our interpretation of journalistic and other reports of events produced by third parties. Elements of the information used by us to compile this report:
- (i) have been obtained from a single source, or limited sources, and are therefore uncorroborated; or
  - (ii) are limited by, or subject to, government control, propaganda, poor reportage, subjective interpretation or misinterpretation; and in such circumstances although we will have used all reasonable endeavours to interpret the information in a fair, balanced and accurate manner we cannot unequivocally assure you that the content of this report and our interpretations of events set out herein, are fair, balanced and accurate in all respects.
- (b) Graphs, statistics or analyses in this report which refer to earlier incidents may change as re-assessment and cross-checking can result in a change to the way an earlier incident is interpreted. Consequently, graphs and statistics are recalculated for each issue of the report.
- (c) If you intend to rely on any of our interpretations or conclusions reached in this report and/or intend to take steps or develop operational responses in reliance thereon, we advise that you obtain, possibly from classified sources, corroborative and up to date intelligence to confirm the content and assessments within this report.
- (d) We shall not be liable for any direct, indirect or consequential loss or damage (whether for loss of profit, loss of business, depletion of goodwill or otherwise), costs, expenses or other claims for consequential compensation whatsoever which arise as a result of your reliance on the content of this report to the extent that the same occurs by reason of the factors outlined at (a) above.

### Attributions

Where it has not been possible to locate the original copyright holder of photographic images and other non-HMS matter we tender our apologies to any owner whose rights may have been unwittingly infringed. Please contact [Triton@hazmansol.com](mailto:Triton@hazmansol.com) with any queries relating to the content of this report.

©HMS Ltd, 2010. All rights reserved. Not for distribution beyond HMS clients. Onward transmission except where explicitly authorized could result in legal action. We refer readers to the disclaimer on the last page of this report. HMS Ltd, PO Box 3204, Swindon, SN6 8WU.



+44 (0) 1793 786350  
+44 (0) 1793 786351  
[info@hazmansol.com](mailto:info@hazmansol.com)  
[Triton@hmsna.com](mailto:Triton@hmsna.com)

[www.hms-online.org](http://www.hms-online.org)