



TRITON Intelligence Report

Iranian Support for the Afghan Taliban

Key Points

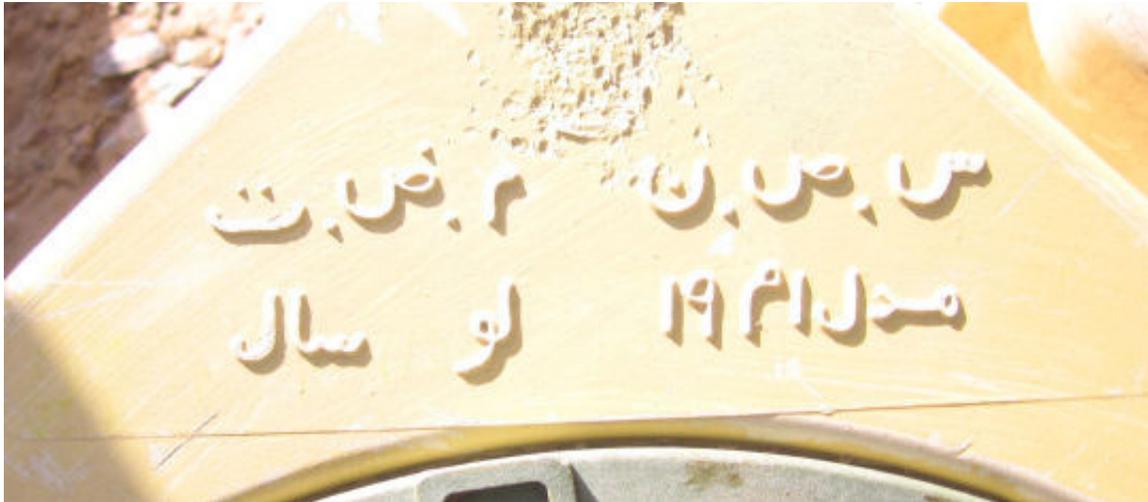
1. 10.5 tonnes of weapons from Iran seized in past 12 months
2. Afghan officials claim 60% of weapons are directly from the Iranian government
3. Reports of Afghan insurgents undergoing training in Iran

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 Konduz 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

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