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Overview

Executive Summary

Security Recommendations: "NATO Plus"

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Full Report

In September 2006, Senlis Afghanistan released a security assessment report detailing the return of the Taliban to Afghanistan, pointing to the increasing hold that the movement has on southern provinces.

Some 14 months later, the security situation has reached crisis proportions. The Taliban has proven itself to be a truly resurgent force. **Its ability to establish a presence throughout the country is now proven beyond doubt; research undertaken by Senlis Afghanistan indicates that 54 per cent of Afghanistan's landmass hosts a permanent Taliban presence, primarily in southern Afghanistan, and is subject to frequent hostile activity by the insurgency.**

The insurgency now controls vast swaths of unchallenged territory including rural areas, some district centres, and important road arteries. The Taliban are the de facto governing authority in significant portions of territory in the south, and are starting to control parts of the local economy and key infrastructure such as roads and energy supply. **The insurgency also exercises a significant amount of psychological control, gaining more and more political legitimacy in the minds of the Afghan people who have a long history of shifting alliances and regime change.**

The depressing conclusion is that, despite the vast injections of international capital flowing into the country, and a universal desire to 'succeed' in Afghanistan, the state is once again in serious danger of falling into the hands of the Taliban. Where implemented, international development and reconstruction efforts have been underfunded and failed to have a significant impact on local communities' living conditions, or improve attitudes towards the Afghan Government and the international community.

The current insurgency, divided into a large poverty-driven 'grassroots' component and a concentrated group of hardcore militant Islamists, is gaining momentum, further complicating the reconstruction and development process and effectively sabotaging NATO-ISAF's stabilisation mission in the country.

Of particular concern is the apparent import of tactics perfected in Iraq. The emboldened Taliban insurgency is employing such asymmetric warfare tactics as suicide bombings and roadside bombs, causing numerous casualties both among the civilian population and the international and national security forces.

Increased lawlessness and lack of government control in the border areas with Pakistan are directly and indirectly fuelling the insurgency through the flow of new recruits, a stable financial and operational support base and ideological influence inspired by Al-Qaeda.

