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Afghanistan: Current Issues and U.S. Policy Concerns

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Summary

Even before the U.S. military campaign against the Taliban movement began on October 7, 2001, Afghanistan had been mired in conflict for about 22 years, including the Soviet occupation during 1979-1989. The orthodox Islamic movement called the Taliban ruled most of Afghanistan during 1996 until its collapse in November - December 2001. During that time, it was opposed primarily by the Northern Alliance, a coalition of minority ethnic groups. Following the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in the United States, the Taliban became almost completely isolated internationally for its hosting of terrorist leader Osama bin Ladin and his Al Qaeda organization, the prime suspect in those attacks. The U.S. military campaign against the Taliban, coupled with U.S. support for the Northern Alliance, enabled opposition groups to gain control of all of Afghanistan by early December.

The collapse of the Taliban has enabled the United States to send in special forces to southern and eastern Afghanistan to search for Taliban and Al Qaeda leaders, including bin Ladin himself. Citizens in areas now under opposition control, although wary of the opposition groups, are also enjoying new personal freedoms that were forbidden under the Taliban. With the Taliban defeated, the United States and its coalition partners are distributing additional humanitarian aid through newly opened routes, and are beginning to plan a major reconstruction effort.

Although the Northern Alliance has emerged as the dominant force in the country, controlling about 70% of Afghanistan, the United States, Pakistan, other countries, and the United Nations urged the Alliance to negotiate with Pashtun representatives, including those of the former King Mohammad Zahir Shah, to form a broad-based government. On December 5, 2001, major Afghan factions, meeting under U.N. auspices in Bonn, signed an agreement to form an interim government that will run Afghanistan for at least the next 6 months. The interim government will be chaired by a Pashtun leader, Hamid Karzai, but the Northern Alliance will hold 17 out of the 30 cabinet positions, including the three key posts responsible for foreign policy, defense, and internal security.

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Background to Recent Developments

Afghanistan became unstable in the 1970s as its Communist Party and its Islamic parties grew in strength and in opposition to one another, polarizing the political system. A Communist coup in 1978 overthrew the military regime of Mohammad Daoud, who had overthrown his cousin, King Zahir Shah, in 1973. Zahir Shah, the only surviving son of King Nadir Shah, had ruled Afghanistan since 1933. His rule followed that of King Amanullah (1921-1929), who was considered a modernizer and who presided over a government in which all ethnic minorities participated.

After taking power in 1978 upon the overthrow of Daoud, the Communists, first under Amin Taraki and then under Hafizullah Amin (who overthrew Taraki in 1979) attempted to impose radical socialist change on a traditional society, spurring recruitment and backing for Islamic parties opposed to Communist ideology. The Soviet Union sent troops into Afghanistan on December 27, 1979 to prevent a takeover by the Islamic-oriented militias that later became known as “mujahedin”¹ (Islamic fighters) and thereby keep Afghanistan pro-Soviet. Upon their invasion, the Soviets ousted Hafizullah Amin and installed Babrak Karmal as Afghan president.

After the Soviets occupied Afghanistan, the U.S.-backed mujahedin fought them fiercely, and Soviet occupation forces were never able to pacify all areas of the country. The Soviets occupied major cities, but the outlying mountainous regions remained largely under mujahedin control. The mujahedin benefitted by hiding and storing weaponry in a large network of natural and manmade tunnels and caves throughout Afghanistan. The Soviet Union’s losses mounted, and domestic opinion shifted against the war. In 1986, perhaps in an effort to signal some flexibility on a possible political settlement, the Soviets replaced Babrak Karmal with the more pliable former director of Afghan intelligence (Khad), Najibullah Ahmedzai (who went by the name Najibullah or, on some occasions, the abbreviated Najib).

On April 14, 1988, the Soviet Union, led by reformist leader Mikhail Gorbachev, agreed to a U.N.-brokered accord (the Geneva Accords) requiring it to withdraw. The Soviet Union completed the withdrawal on February 15, 1989, leaving in place a weak Communist government facing a determined U.S. backed mujahedin. A warming of superpower relations moved the United States and Soviet Union to try for a political settlement to the internal conflict. From late 1989, the United States pressed the Soviet Union to agree to a mutual cutoff of military aid to the combatants. The failed August 1991 coup in the Soviet Union reduced Moscow’s capability for

¹The term refers to an Islamic guerrilla; literally “one who fights in the cause of Islam.”

and interest in supporting communist regimes in the Third World, leading Moscow to agree with Washington on September 13, 1991, to a joint cutoff of military aid to the Afghan combatants.

The State Department has said that a total of about \$3 billion in economic and covert military assistance was provided by the U.S. to Afghanistan from 1980 until the end of the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan in 1989. Press reports and independent experts believe the covert aid program grew from about \$20 million per year in FY1980 to about \$300 million per year during fiscal years 1986 - 1990. Even before the 1991 U.S.-Soviet agreement on Afghanistan, the Soviet withdrawal had decreased the strategic and political value of Afghanistan and made the Administration and Congress less forthcoming with funding. For FY1991, Congress reportedly cut covert aid appropriations to the mujahedin from \$300 million the previous year to \$250 million, with half the aid withheld until the second half of the fiscal year. Although the intelligence authorization bill was not signed until late 1991, Congress abided by the aid figures contained in the bill.²

With Soviet backing withdrawn, on March 18, 1992, Afghan President Najibullah publicly agreed to step down once an interim government was formed. His announcement set off a wave of regime defections, primarily by Uzbek and Tajik ethnic militias that had previously been allied with the Kabul government, including that of Uzbek commander Abdul Rashid Dostam (see below).

Joining with the defectors, prominent mujahedin commander Ahmad Shah Masud (of the Islamic Society, a largely Tajik party headed by Burhannudin Rabbani) sent his fighters into Kabul, paving the way for the installation of a mujahedin regime on April 18, 1992. Masud, nicknamed "Lion of the Panjshir," had earned a reputation as a brilliant strategist by successfully fighting the Soviet occupation forces in his power base in the Panjshir Valley of northeastern Afghanistan. Two days earlier, as the mujahedin approached Kabul, Najibullah failed in an attempt to flee Afghanistan. He, his brother, and a few aides remained at a U.N. facility in Kabul until the day in September 1996 that the Taliban movement seized control of the city – Taliban fighters entered the U.N. compound, captured Najibullah and his brother, and hanged them.

Population:	25.8 million
Ethnic Groups:	Pashtun 38%; Tajik 25%; Uzbek 6%; Hazara 19%; others 12%
Religions:	Sunni Muslim 84%; Shiite Muslim 15%; other 1%
Per Capita Income:	\$280/yr (World Bank figure)
External Debt:	\$5.5 billion (1996 est.)
Major Exports:	fruits, nuts, carpets
Major Imports:	food, petroleum
Source: CIA World Factbook, 2000.	

² See "Country Fact Sheet: Afghanistan," in *U.S. Department of State Dispatch*. Volume 5, No. 23, June 6, 1994. Page 377.

The victory over Najibullah brought the mujahedin parties to power in Afghanistan but also exposed the serious differences among them. Under an agreement among all the major mujahedin parties, Rabbani became President in June 1992, with the understanding that he would leave office in December 1994. His refusal to step down at the end of that time period—on the grounds that political authority would disintegrate in the absence of a clear successor—led many of the other parties to accuse him of attempting to monopolize power. His government faced daily shelling from another mujahedin commander, Gulbuddin Hikmatyar, who was nominally the Prime Minister. Hikmatyar, a radical Islamic fundamentalist who headed a faction of Hizb-e-Islami (Islamic Party), was later ousted by the Taliban from his powerbase around Jalalabad—despite similar ideologies and Pashtun ethnicity - and he later fled to Iran. Two more years of civil war among the mujahedin resulted, destroying much of Kabul and creating popular support for the Taliban. In addition, the dominant Pashtun ethnic group accused the Rabbani government of failing to represent all of Afghanistan's ethnic groups, and many Pashtuns allied with the Taliban.

Table 1. Major Factions in Afghanistan

Party/Commander	Leader	Ideology/ Ethnicity	Areas of Control
Taliban	Mullah (Islamic cleric) Muhammad Umar	ultra-orthodox Islamic, Pashtun	Pockets of fighters around Qandahar and parts of northern Afghanistan
Northern Alliance/Islamic Society (dominant party in the Northern Alliance)	Burhannudin Rabbani (political leader), Muhammad Fahim (military leader)	moderate Islamic, Tajik	Most of northern and western Afghanistan, including Kabul
Forces of Ismail Khan (part of Northern Alliance)	Ismail Khan	Tajik	Herat Province and environs
Eastern Shura (loosely allied with Northern Alliance)	Hajji Abdul Qadir	moderate Islamic, Pashtun	Jalalabad and environs
National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan (part of Northern Alliance)	Abdul Rashid Dostam	socialist, Uzbek	Mazar Sharif and environs
Independent Pashtun Commanders	Hamid Karzai and other tribal leaders	mostly orthodox Islamic, Pashtun,	southern Afghanistan, including Qandahar
Hizb-e-Wahdat (part of Northern Alliance)	Abd al-Karim Khalili	Shiite, Hazara tribes	Bamiyan province

The Rise of The Taliban

The Taliban movement was formed in 1993-1994 by Afghan Islamic clerics and students, many of them former mujahedin who had moved into the western areas of Pakistan to study in Islamic seminaries (“madrassas”). They are mostly ultra-orthodox Sunni Muslims who practice a form of Islam, “Wahhabism” similar to that practiced in Saudi Arabia. The Taliban are overwhelmingly ethnic Pashtuns (Pathans) from rural areas of Afghanistan. Pashtuns constitute a plurality in Afghanistan, accounting for about 38% of Afghanistan’s population of about 26 million. Taliban leaders viewed the Rabbani government as corrupt and responsible for continued civil war in Afghanistan and the deterioration of security in the major cities. With the help of defections by sympathetic mujahedin fighters, the movement seized control of the southeastern city of Qandahar in November 1994 and continued to gather strength. The Taliban’s early successes encouraged further defections and, by February 1995, it reached the gates of Kabul, after which an 18-month stalemate around the capital ensued. In September 1995, the Taliban captured Herat province, on the border with Iran, and expelled the pro-Iranian governor of the province, Ismail Khan. In September 1996, a string of Taliban victories east of Kabul led Rabbani/Masud’s outer defenses to crumble, and the government withdrew to the Panjshir Valley north of Kabul with most of its heavy weapons intact. The Taliban took control of Kabul on September 27, 1996.

The Taliban lost much of its international support as its policies unfolded.³ It imposed strict adherence to Islamic customs in areas it controls, and used harsh punishments, including executions, on transgressors. The Taliban regime established a Ministry for the Promotion of Virtue and the Suppression of Vice, a force of police officers to enforce its laws and moral rules.⁴ It banned television, popular music, and dancing, and required that male beards remain untrimmed. Immediately after capturing Kabul, the Taliban curbed freedoms for women there, including their ability to work outside the home (except in health care) and it closed schools for girls.

Mullah Muhammad Umar/Taliban Leaders. During the war against the Soviet Union, Taliban founder Mullah Muhammad Umar fought in the Hizb-e-Islam (Islamic Party) mujahedin party led by Yunis Khalis. During Taliban rule, Mullah Umar held the title of Head of State and Commander of the Faithful. He lost an eye during the anti-Soviet war, rarely appeared in public even before U.S. airstrikes began, and did not take an active role in the day-to-day affairs of governing. However, in times of crisis or to discuss pressing issues, he summoned Taliban leaders to meet with him in Qandahar. Considered a hardliner within the Taliban regime, Mullah Umar forged a close personal bond with bin Ladin and was adamantly opposed to handing him over to another country to face justice. Born near Qandahar, Umar is about 49 years old. His ten year old son, as well as his stepfather, reportedly

³See U.S. Department of State, Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - 2000. Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, February 2001. Available online through the State Department’s web site at [<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2000/sa>].

⁴Testimony of Zalmay Khalilzad, Director of RAND’s Strategy and Doctrine Program, before the Subcommittee on Near East and South Asia of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations. October 22, 1997.

died at the hands of U.S. airstrikes in early October. As of December 12, 2001, Umar was last reported to have fled Qandahar city and possibly been injured in the course of the Taliban surrender of that city on December 9.

Coalescence of the Northern Alliance

The rise of the Taliban movement caused other power centers to make common cause with ousted President Rabbani and his military chief, Ahmad Shah Masud. The individual groups allied in a "Northern Alliance" sometimes called the "United Front," headed by Rabbani and his party, the Islamic Society. The Islamic Society itself is composed mostly of Tajiks, which constitute about 25% of the Afghan population. Islamic Society adherents are also located in Persian-speaking western Afghanistan near the Iranian border. These fighters in the west are generally loyal to the charismatic former Herat governor Ismail Khan, who regained his former stronghold after the Taliban collapse of mid-November.

One power center that is part of the Northern Alliance is Uzbek militia force (the National Islamic Movement of Afghanistan) of General Abdul Rashid Dostam. Uzbeks constitute about 6% of the population. Dostam's break with Najibullah in early 1992 helped pave the way for the overthrow of the Communist regime. Prior to the August 1998 capture of his bases in Mazar-e-Sharif and Shebergan, Dostam commanded about 25,000 troops and significant amounts of armor and combat aircraft. However, infighting within his faction left him unable to hold off Taliban forces, and, until the Taliban collapse of mid-November, he controlled only small areas of northern Afghanistan near the border with Uzbekistan. In November, he, in concert with a Tajik commander Atta Mohammad and a Shiite Hazara commander Mohammad Mohaqqiq, recaptured Mazar-e-Sharif from the Taliban.

Shiite Muslim parties, generally less active against the Soviet occupation than were the Sunni parties, also are loosely allied with Rabbani. In June 1992, Iranian-backed Hizb-e-Wahdat (Unity Party, an alliance of eight Hazara tribe Shiite Muslim groups), agreed to join the Rabbani regime in exchange for a share of power. Its exact armed strength is unknown. Hizb-e-Wahdat receives some material support from Iran. On September 13, 1998, Taliban forces captured the Hazara Shiite stronghold of Bamiyan city, capital of Bamiyan province, raising fears in Iran and elsewhere that Taliban forces would massacre Shiite civilians. This contributed to the movement of Iran and the Taliban militia to the brink of armed conflict that month. Since then, Hizb-e-Wahdat forces occasionally recaptured Bamiyan city, most recently in February 2001, but were unable to hold it. They recaptured Bamiyan during the Taliban collapse of mid-November.

Another mujahedin party leader Abd-i-Rab Rasul Sayyaf, heads a faction called the Islamic Union for the Liberation of Afghanistan. Sayyaf lived many years in and is politically close to Saudi Arabia, which shares his puritanical interpretation of Sunni Islam. This interpretation is also shared by the Taliban, which partly explains why many of Sayyaf's fighters defect to the Taliban movement. Sayyaf himself remained allied with the Northern Alliance and has placed his remaining forces at Alliance disposal.

The political rivalries among opposition groups long hindered their ability to shake the Taliban's grip on power, even with the assistance of air strikes. Prior to the beginning of the U.S. strikes, the opposition steadily lost ground, even in areas outside Taliban's Pashtun ethnic base, to the point that the Taliban controlled at least 75% of the country and almost all major provincial capitals.

The Northern Alliance suffered a major setback on September 9, 2001, when Ahmad Shah Masud, the undisputed and charismatic military leader of the alliance, was assassinated by suicide bombers at his headquarters. His successor is his intelligence chief, Muhammad Fahim, who is a veteran commander but is said to lack the overarching authority of Masud. However, Fahim's prestige was enhanced by the Alliance's defeat of the Taliban in the U.S.-backed military campaign. Alliance forces control about 70% of Afghanistan, including Kabul, which they captured on November 12, 2001. Other senior political officers in the Alliance include Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, who is its Foreign Minister, and Yunus Qanuni, who is Interior Minister. All three – Fahim, Abdullah, and Qanuni – will assume those positions in the interim government that takes office on December 22, 2001.

The War and Its Political Aftermath

As noted above, many of the Northern Alliance commanders have regained their former strongholds, and Rabbani has returned to Kabul as a caretaker. Groups of Pashtun commanders are in control of cities and provinces east and south of Kabul, and Taliban remnants continue to hold out outside of Qandahar and in pockets in northern Afghanistan. As the war against remaining Al Qaida guerrillas and the Taliban continues, a longstanding U.N. effort to form a broad-based Afghan government accelerated and appears to have borne some fruit.

For the past 8 years, the United States worked primarily through the United Nations to end the Afghan civil conflict because the international body is viewed as a credible mediator by all sides. It was the forum used for ending the Soviet occupation. Since the fall of Najibullah, a succession of U.N. mediators – former Tunisian Foreign Minister Mahmoud Mestiri, (March 1994-July 1996); German diplomat Norbert Holl (July 1996-December 1997); and Algeria's former Foreign Minister Lakhdar Brahimi (August 1997-October 1999) – have sought to arrange a ceasefire, and ultimately a peaceful transition to a broad-based government. The proposed process for arranging a transition incorporated many ideas advanced by former King Zahir Shah and outside experts, in which a permanent government is to be chosen through a traditional Afghan selection process, the *loya jirga*, a grand assembly of notable Afghans.

These U.N. efforts, at times, appeared to make significant progress, but ceasefires and other agreements between the warring factions have always broken down over conflicting demands. Brahimi suspended his activities in frustration in October 1999, and another U.N. mediator, Spanish diplomat Fransesc Vendrell, was appointed.

The September 11 attacks and the start of U.S. military action against the Taliban injected new urgency into the search for a government that might replace the

Taliban. In late September, Brahimi was brought back as the U.N. point person to help arrange an alternative government to the Taliban; Vendrell became his deputy. The State Department appointed Policy Planning Director Richard Haass to be the U.S. liaison with Brahimi and to assist in the search for an alternative regime that might hasten the demise of the Taliban and keep order in the event the Taliban collapses. A U.S. envoy to the Northern Alliance, Ambassador James Dobbins, was appointed in early November 2001. On November 14, 2001, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1378, calling for a “central” U.N. role in establishing a transitional administration and inviting member states to send peacekeeping forces to promote stability and secure the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

The “Six Plus Two” and Geneva Contact Groups. Reflecting the common concerns about Afghan-inspired regional instability, the “Six Plus Two” contact group (the United States, Russia, and the six states bordering Afghanistan – Iran, China, Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan), has been meeting under since early 1997 to discuss ways of bringing peace to Afghanistan. The process was conducted in coordination with U.N. peace efforts for Afghanistan. The Six Plus Two process was inaugurated after several informal meetings of some of the key outside parties in which the United States and others agreed not to provide weapons to the warring factions. (In June 1996, the Administration formally imposed a ban on U.S. sales of arms to all factions in Afghanistan, a policy already in force informally.⁵)

In 2000, possibly because of the lack of progress in the Six Plus Two process, another contact group began meeting in Geneva, and with more frequency than the Six Plus Two. The Geneva grouping includes Italy, Germany, Iran, and the United States. Another Afghan-related grouping multilateral mediating grouping consists of some Islamic countries operating under the an ad-hoc “Committee on Afghanistan under the auspices of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC). The countries in that ad-hoc committee include Pakistan, Iran, Guinea, and Tunisia.

King Zahir Shah and the Loya Jirga Processes. The United States also supported initiatives coming from parties inside Afghanistan. During 1997, Afghans not linked to any of the warring factions began a new peace initiative called the Intra Afghan Dialogue. This grouping, consisting of former mujahedin commanders and clan leaders, held meetings during 1997 and 1998 in Bonn, Frankfurt, Istanbul, and Ankara. Another group based on the participation of former King Zahir Shah, was centered in Rome, where the former King is based (“Rome Grouping”). A third grouping, calling itself the “Cyprus Process,” consists of former Afghan officials and other Afghan exiles generally sympathetic to Iran.

Many of the hopes for a post-Taliban government at first appeared to center on the former King. In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Members of Congress and U.S. and U.N. officials visited him in Rome in the course of discussing a new Afghan government. A 2-day (October 25-26, 2001) meeting of more than 700 Afghan tribal elders in Peshawar, Pakistan (“Peshawar Grouping”) issued a concluding statement calling for the return of the former King. However, even

⁵*Federal Register*, Volume 61, No. 125, June 27, 1996. Page 33313.

though the gathering was supportive of the former King, neither the King's representatives nor those of the Northern Alliance actually attended the gathering because of their suspicions that the meeting was orchestrated by Pakistan for its own ends.

Bonn Conference. As the U.S. war against the Taliban and Al Qaida continued, delegates of the various groupings discussed above gathered in Bonn, Germany, at the invitation of Brahimi and the United Nations. The Taliban was not represented. On December 5, 2001, the factions signed an agreement to form a 30-member interim administration, to govern until March 2002. At that time, a *loya jirga*, to be opened by the former King, would choose a new government to run Afghanistan for the next 2 years until a new constitution is drafted and elections held.

A slim majority of the 30 positions in the new cabinet went to the Northern Alliance, with this block holding the key posts of Defense (Mohammad Fahim), Foreign Affairs (Dr. Abdullah Abdullah), and Interior (Yunus Qanuni). However, Rabbani agreed to step aside under pressure from several neighboring governments and rival factions, and the post of provisional prime minister went to Pashtun tribal leader Hamid Karzai.

Karzai, leader of the powerful Popolzai tribe of Pashtuns, had entered Afghanistan in October 2001 to organize resistance to the Taliban, and he was supported in that effort by U.S. special forces. He has relatives in and close ties to the United States. It is not clear whether the former King or his relatives will play a role in a more permanent Afghan government.

The Bonn conferees also agreed to invite an international peace keeping force to maintain security at least in Kabul. The exact composition and mission of the force has not yet been determined. The conference's conclusions were endorsed by U.N. Security Council Resolution 1385 (December 6, 2001). Some Afghan factions complained initially that their ethnic or party groupings were not sufficiently represented in the interim cabinet, but most have since pledged to cooperate with it. The United States is in the process of reopening its embassy in Kabul, closed since the Soviet withdrawal in 1989.

Regional Context ⁶

Even before September 11, the Taliban's policies made several of Afghanistan's neighbors increasingly concerned about threats to their own security interests emanating from that country. All of these governments have endorsed the Bonn agreement and most, apparently including Pakistan, have expressed a sense of relief that the Taliban regime has been defeated. Some experts believe that future stability in Afghanistan will depend on the ability of the United States and other governments to prevent Afghanistan's neighbors from attempting to manipulate Afghanistan's factions and its political structure to their advantage.

⁶For further information, see CRS Report RS20411, *Afghanistan: Connections to Islamic Movements in Central and South Asia and Southern Russia*. December 7, 1999, by Kenneth Katzman.

Pakistan⁷

Pakistan, which hosted almost 2 million Afghan refugees before U.S. air strikes began and now hosts tens of thousands more, was the most public defender of the Taliban movement and was one of only three countries (Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are the others) to formally recognize it as the legitimate government. Pakistan has always sought an Afghan central government strong enough to prevent calls for unity between ethnic Pashtuns in Afghanistan and Pakistan, while at the same time sufficiently friendly and pliable to give Pakistan strategic depth against rival India. In the wake of the Soviet pullout, Pakistan was also troubled by continued political infighting in Afghanistan that was enabling drug trafficking to flourish and to which Afghan refugees did not want to return. Pakistan saw Afghanistan as essential to opening up trade relations and energy routes with the Muslim states of the former Soviet Union and believed the Taliban movement had the potential to fulfill these goals.

The government of General Pervez Musharraf, who took power in an October 1999 coup – a coup inspired in part by events in Kashmir – previously resisted U.S. pressure to forcefully intercede with the Taliban leadership to achieve bin Ladin's extradition. Pakistan's links to the Taliban were a major focus of a visit to Pakistan by Undersecretary of State Thomas Pickering in May 2000, although Pakistan made no commitments to help the United States on bin Ladin. U.N. Security Council Resolution 1333, of December 19, 2000, was partly an effort by the United States and Russia to drive a wedge between the Taliban and Pakistan and to persuade Pakistan to cease military advice and aid to the Taliban. Although Pakistan did not cease military assistance, it tried to abide by some provisions of the resolution. Pakistan did order the Taliban to cut the staff at its embassy in Pakistan.⁸ Prior to the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, Pakistan had said it would cooperate with a follow-on U.N. Security Council Resolution (1363 of July 30, 2001) that provided for U.N. border monitors to ensure that no neighboring state was providing military equipment or advice to the Taliban.

Pakistan's pre-September 11 steps toward cooperation with the United States reflected increasing wariness that the Taliban movement was radicalizing existing Islamic movements inside Pakistan. Pakistan also feared that its position on the Taliban was propelling the United States into a closer relationship with Pakistan's arch-rival, India. Some Islamic movements in Pakistan were seeking to emulate the Taliban, according to press reports and Pakistani terrorist groups, such as the Harkat al-Mujahedin (HUM),⁹ are allied with Al Qaida, according to the State Department's report on international terrorism for 2000 ("Patterns of Global Terrorism, 2000"). HUM and other Pakistani Islamist groups are seeking to challenge India's control over its portion of Kashmir and, according to some observers, could drag Pakistan

⁷For further discussion, see Rashid, Ahmed. "The Taliban: Exporting Extremism." *Foreign Affairs*, November - December 1999.

⁸Constable, Pamela. New Sanctions Strain Taliban-Pakistan Ties. *Washington Post*, January 19, 2001.

⁹The State Department has designated HUM as a foreign terrorist organization.

into a war with India over Kashmir. HUM leaders have signed some of Al Qaida's anti-U.S. pronouncements and some HUM fighters were killed in the August 20, 1998 U.S. missile strikes on bin Ladin camps in Afghanistan, according to *Patterns of Global Terrorism: 2000*.

These considerations, coupled with U.S. pressure as well as offers of economic benefit, prompted Pakistan to cooperate with the U.S. response to the September 11 attacks. Pakistan has provided the United States with requested access to Pakistani airspace, ports, airfields. The U.S. military presence in Pakistan placed the government under increased political threat from pro-Taliban Islamist groups in Pakistan that sympathize with the Taliban and bin Ladin, although the collapse of the Taliban appears to have alleviated that pressure. In return for Pakistan's cooperation, the Administration, in some cases with new congressional authority enacted after September 11, has waived most of the U.S. sanctions on Pakistan and has begun providing foreign aid that will total about \$1 billion, according to U.S. announcements.¹⁰

At the same time, Pakistan has sought to protect its interests by fashioning a strong Pashtun-based component for a post-Taliban government. Pakistan is wary that a post-Taliban government dominated by the Northern Alliance, which is backed by India, would amount to Indian encirclement of Pakistan. To counter that perceived threat, Pakistan was instrumental in ensuring that Northern Alliance leader Rabbani would not be chairman of the interim government. Pakistan also succeeded in building a role for the former King in selecting a permanent government, although the former King's role appears to be limited.

Iran

Iran's key national interests in Afghanistan are to exert influence over western Afghanistan, which Iran borders, and to protect the Shiite minority. Iran strongly supports the Northern Alliance and its Tajik (Persian-speaking) leaders. Rabbani's Islamic Society party has traditionally been strong in western Afghanistan as well as in its stronghold in the Panjshir Valley, which borders Tajikistan. Since Taliban forces ousted a pro-Rabbani governor, Ismail Khan, from Herat (the western province that borders Iran) in September 1995, Iran has seen the Taliban movement as a threat to all its interests in Afghanistan. Iran has provided fuel, funds, and ammunition to the Northern Alliance¹¹ and hosted fighters loyal to Ismail Khan. Khan had been captured by the Taliban in 1998 but escaped and fled to Iran in March 2000 and has now recaptured Herat.

Iran is said to be deeply relieved that the Taliban has fallen. In September 1998, Iranian and Taliban forces nearly came into direct conflict when Iran discovered that nine of its diplomats were killed in the course of Taliban's offensive in northern Afghanistan. Iran massed forces at the border and threatened military action. Taliban

¹⁰For more information on U.S. sanctions on Pakistan, see CRS Report RS20995, *India and Pakistan: Current U.S. Economic Sanctions*. Dianne E. Rennack.

¹¹Steele, Jonathon, "America Includes Iran In Talks On Ending War In Afghanistan." *Washington Times*, December 15, 1997. A14.

rebuffed Iran's demands to extradite to Iran those responsible for the killing of the Iranian diplomats, but it returned their bodies to Iran and sought direct talks with Iran, leading to a cooling of the crisis.

The United States and Iran have long had common positions on Afghanistan, despite deep U.S.-Iran differences on other issues. U.S. officials have long acknowledged working with Tehran, under the auspices of the Six Plus Two contact group and Geneva group. Secretary of State Powell shook hands with Iran's Foreign Minister Kamal Kharrazi on November 12 during a Six Plus Two meeting on prospects for a new government in Afghanistan.

U.S. and Iranian common interests on Afghanistan might explain why Iran has generally expressed support for the U.S. effort to forge a global coalition against terrorism, although it has publicly opposed U.S. military action against Afghanistan. Iran has confirmed that it has offered search and rescue assistance in Afghanistan should the United States need it, and it has also agreed to allow U.S. humanitarian aid to the Afghan people to transit Iran. However, the United States and Iran are too far apart in general for tacit cooperation on Afghanistan to lead to a dramatic breakthrough in U.S.-Iran relations. Some Iranian leaders have been harshly critical of U.S. military action against the Taliban; in late September Supreme Leader Ali Khamene'i compared that action to the September 11 terrorist attacks themselves.

About 1.5 million Afghan refugees are still in Iran; most of these have been permitted to integrate into Iranian society.¹² In mid-1994, Iran reportedly began forcing Afghan refugees to leave Iran and return home, although Iran denies it has forcibly repatriated any Afghans and some repatriation reportedly is voluntary. After the September 11 terrorist attacks, Iran closed its border with Afghanistan primarily to prevent a flood of new refugees into Iran.

Russia

A number of considerations might explain why Russia has supported U.S. efforts to build an international coalition against the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks and the states that support them. Russia's main objective in Afghanistan has been to prevent the further strengthening of Islamic or nationalist movements in the Central Asian states or Islamic enclaves in Russia itself, including Chechnya. For Russian leaders, instability in Afghanistan also reminds the Russian public that the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan failed to pacify or stabilize that country.

Russia's fear became acute following an August 1999 incursion into Russia's Dagestan region by Islamic guerrillas from neighboring Chechnya. Some reports link at least one faction of the guerrillas to bin Laden.¹³ This faction is led by a Chechen of Arab origin who is referred to by the name "Hattab" (full name is Ibn al-Khattab). In January 2000, the Taliban became the only government in the world to recognize

¹²Crossette, Barbara, "U.S. and Iran Cooperating on Ways to End the Afghan War." *New York Times*, December 15, 1997.

¹³Whittell, Giles. "Bin Laden Link To Dagestan Rebel Fightback." *London Times*, September 6, 1999.

Chechnya's independence, and some Chechen fighters integrated into Taliban forces were captured or killed during the October - November 2001 war.

The U.S. and Russian positions on Afghanistan became coincident well before the September 11 attacks.¹⁴ Even before the October-November war, Russia was supporting the Northern Alliance with some military equipment and technical assistance.¹⁵ U.S.-Russian cooperation led to the passage of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1267 on October 15, 1999. That resolution, adopted in response to the Taliban's harboring of bin Ladin, banned commercial flights by the Afghan national airline and directed U.N. member states to freeze Taliban assets abroad (see section on *Sanctions*, below). When the Taliban repeatedly refused to turn over bin Ladin, the two co-sponsored a follow-on – Security Council Resolution 1333 – that banned arms sales and military advice to the Taliban, among other provisions, but did not ban such aid to the Northern Alliance or other opposition factions. Russia is opposed to allowing any Taliban members to become part of a post-Taliban government.

On the other hand, the United States has not blindly supported Russia's apparent attempts to place a large share of the blame for the rebellion in Chechnya on the Taliban and Al Qaida. The Clinton Administration did not endorse Russian threats, issued by President Vladimir Putin in May 2000, to conduct airstrikes against training camps in Afghanistan that Russia alleges are for Chechen rebels. President Bush has been highly critical of Russian tactics in Chechnya, although that position has softened substantially after September 11, apparently in exchange for Russia's support for the U.S. anti-terrorism effort. Some outside experts believe that Russia exaggerated the threat emanating from Afghanistan in an effort to persuade the Central Asian states to rebuild closer defense ties to Moscow.

Central Asian States¹⁶

Former Communist elites still in power in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, and Kyrgyzstan have grown increasingly concerned that Central Asian radical Islamic movements are receiving safe haven in Afghanistan. In 1996, several of them banded together with Russia and China into a regional grouping now called the Shanghai Cooperation Organization to discuss the threat emanating from Afghanistan's Taliban regime. The organization now groups China, Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, and Kyrgyzstan. Of the Central Asian states that border Afghanistan, two of them – Uzbekistan and Tajikistan – had seen themselves as particularly vulnerable to militants harbored by the Taliban. Uzbekistan saw its ally, Abdul Rashid Dostam, the Uzbek commander in northern Afghanistan, lose most of his influence in 1998, although he has now regained power in Mazar-e-Sharif. Prior to the U.S. war on the Taliban and Al Qaida, Uzbek officials had previously said that Dostam was an ineffective

¹⁴Constable, Pamela. "Russia, U.S. Converge on Warnings to Taliban." *Washington Post*, June 4, 2000.

¹⁵Risen, James. "Russians Are Back in Afghanistan, Aiding Rebels." *New York Times*, July 27, 1998.

¹⁶For further information, see CRS Report RL30294. *Central Asia's Security: Issues and Implications for U.S. Interests*. December 7, 1999.

commander and that Uzbekistan's support would not have allowed his militia to overturn Taliban control of the north.¹⁷

Uzbekistan has long asserted that the group Islamic Movement of Uzbekistan (IMU), allegedly responsible for four simultaneous February 1999 bombings in Tashkent that nearly killed President Islam Karimov, is linked to Al Qaida.¹⁸ One of its leaders, Juma Namangani, reportedly was killed while commanding Taliban/Al Qaeda forces in the battle for Mazar-e-Sharif in November 2001, although Uzbekistan is demanding proof that he has died. Uzbekistan's fears of continuing Afghan instability contributed to its decision in 1999 to engage the Taliban diplomatically and to host a July 1999 meeting of the Six Plus Two grouping in which representatives of the warring Afghan factions participated. Uzbekistan has been highly supportive of the United States in the wake of the September 11 attacks and has placed military facilities at U.S. disposal for use in the combat against the Taliban and Al Qaeda. About 1,000 U.S. troops from the 10th Mountain Division, as well as U.S. aircraft, are reportedly based there. Now that the Taliban no longer control the other side of the Uzbekistan-Afghanistan border, Uzbekistan, on December 9, 2001, reopened the Soviet-built "Friendship Bridge" over the Amu Darya river in order to facilitate the flow of aid into Uzbekistan.

Over the past few years, Tajikistan has feared that its buffer with Afghanistan would disappear if the Taliban defeated the Northern Alliance, whose territorial base borders Tajikistan. Some of the IMU members based in Afghanistan, including Namangani, fought alongside the Islamic opposition United Tajik Opposition (UTO) during the 1994-1997 civil war in that country. On May 24, 2000, a U.N. Special Representative to Tajikistan appeared to support Tajikistan's concerns by saying that continued instability in Afghanistan threatened a fragile 3-year old peace process for Tajikistan. Tajikistan, heavily influenced by Russia, whose 25,000 troops guards the border with Afghanistan, initially sent mixed signals on the question of whether it would give the United States the use of military facilities in Tajikistan. However, on September 26, 2001, Moscow officially endorsed the use by the United States of military facilities in Tajikistan, paving the way for Tajikistan to open facilities for U.S. use. In early November, following a visit by Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld, Tajikistan agreed to allow the U.S. the use of three air bases in that country.

Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan do not directly border Afghanistan. However, IMU guerrillas have transited Kyrgyzstan during past incursions into Uzbekistan.¹⁹ Kazakhstan had begun to diplomatically engage the Taliban over the past year, but it publicly supported the U.S. war effort against the Taliban. In early December 2001, Kyrgyzstan offered to host some U.S. warplanes at least temporarily.

Of the Central Asian states that border Afghanistan, only Turkmenistan was not alarmed at Taliban gains and chose to seek close relations with the Taliban leadership.

¹⁷CRS conversations with Uzbek government officials in Tashkent. April 1999.

¹⁸The IMU was named a foreign terrorist organization by the State Department in September 2000.

¹⁹*Patterns of Global Terrorism: 1999*, pp. 14, 92.

An alternate interpretation is that Turkmenistan viewed engagement with the Taliban as a more effective means of preventing spillover of radical Islamic activity from Afghanistan. Turkmenistan played a key role in brokering reconciliation talks between the warring factions in early 1999, talks that were perceived as attempting to persuade the Northern Alliance to accede to Taliban domination of Afghanistan. Turkmenistan's leadership also saw Taliban control as bringing the peace and stability that would permit construction of a natural gas pipeline from Turkmenistan through Afghanistan. That pipeline would help Turkmenistan bring its large gas reserves to world markets. However, the September 11 events stoked Turkmenistan's fears of the Taliban and its Al Qaida guests and the country is supporting the U.S. anti-terrorism effort. There are no indications the United States has requested basing rights in Turkmenistan.

China

China has a small border with a sliver of Afghanistan known as the "Wakhan corridor" (see map) and had become increasingly concerned about the potential for the Al Qaida to promote Islamic fundamentalism among Muslims (Uighurs) in northwestern China. A number of Uighurs fought in Taliban and Al Qaida ranks in the U.S.-led war. China has expressed its concern through active membership in a regional grouping called the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, which stepped up its security coordination activities over the past two years in response to increasing Islamic activism in Central Asia and the perceived Taliban threat. In December 2000, sensing China's increasing concern about Taliban policies, a Chinese official delegation met with Mullah Umar at the Taliban's invitation.

Although it has been concerned about the threat from the Taliban and bin Ladin, China did not immediately support U.S. military action against the Taliban. Many experts believe this is because China, as a result of strategic considerations, was wary of a U.S. military buildup on its doorstep. China is an ally with Pakistan, in part to balance out India, which China sees as a rival. Pakistani cooperation with the United States appears to have allayed China's opposition to U.S. military action, and President Bush praised China's cooperation with the anti-terrorism effort during his visit to China in October 2001.

Saudi Arabia

During the Soviet occupation, Saudi Arabia channeled hundreds of millions of dollars to the Afghan resistance, and particularly to hardline Sunni Muslim fundamentalist resistance leaders. Saudi Arabia, which itself practices the strict Wahhabi brand of Islam practiced by the Taliban, was one of three countries to formally recognize the Taliban government. (The others are Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates.) The Taliban initially served Saudi Arabia as a potential counter to Iran, with which Saudi Arabia has been at odds since Iran's 1979 revolution. However, Iranian-Saudi relations have improved significantly since 1997, and balancing Iranian power has ebbed as a factor motivating Saudi policy toward Afghanistan. Instead, drawing on its intelligence ties to Afghanistan during the anti-Soviet war, Saudi Arabia has worked in parallel with the United States to try to persuade Taliban leaders to suppress anti-Saudi activities by Osama bin Ladin. Some

press reports indicate that, in late 1998, Saudi and Taliban leaders discussed, but did not agree on, a plan for a panel of Saudi and Afghan Islamic scholars to decide bin Ladin's fate. In March 2000 and again in May 2000, the Saudi-based Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) sponsored indirect peace talks in Saudi Arabia between the warring factions. However, the two sides reached only minor agreements to exchange prisoners, according to press reports.

Saudi Arabia has offered the United States full cooperation with any effort to bring the perpetrators of the September 11 attacks to justice. Along with the UAE, Saudi Arabia broke diplomatic relations with the Taliban in late September. It has quietly permitted the United States to use a Saudi base for command of U.S. air operations over Afghanistan, although it has not allowed U.S. aircraft to launch strikes on Afghanistan from Saudi bases. The Saudi position has generally been to allow the United States the use of its facilities as long as doing so is not publicly requested or highly publicized.

U.S. Policy Issues

U.S. policy objectives in Afghanistan have long been multifaceted, although in recent years U.S. goals had largely narrowed to ending the presence of the leadership of the Al Qaida leadership and infrastructure there. Since the Soviet withdrawal, returning peace and stability to Afghanistan has been a U.S. goal, pursued with varying degrees of intensity. Other goals have included an end to discrimination against women and girls, the eradication of narcotics production, and alleviating severe humanitarian difficulties.

The United States attributed most of these concerns to Taliban rule, although drug production flourished under Rabbani's 1992-1996 government. U.S. relations with the Taliban progressively deteriorated over the 5 years that the Taliban were in power in Kabul. The United States had withheld recognition of Taliban as the legitimate government of Afghanistan and formally recognized no faction as the government, although it has had a dialogue with all the different factions, including the Taliban. The United Nations, based on the lack of broad international recognition of Taliban, continued to allow representatives of the former Rabbani government to occupy Afghanistan's seat at the United Nations. The United States closed its embassy in Kabul in January 1989, and the State Department ordered the Afghan embassy in Washington, D.C. closed in August 1997 because of a power struggle within the embassy between Rabbani and Taliban supporters.

The Bush Administration initially continued the previous Administration's policy of maintaining a dialogue with the Taliban. During the Clinton Administration, Assistant Secretary of State for South Asian Affairs Karl Inderfurth and other U.S. officials met periodically with Taliban officials. In April 1998, then Ambassador Bill Richardson met with Taliban officials and the opposition during his visit to Afghanistan, in an effort to demonstrate presidential commitment to peace in Afghanistan and to discuss bin Ladin (see below). In compliance with U.N. Security Council Resolution 1333, in February 2001 the State Department ordered the closing of a Taliban representative office in New York. The Taliban complied with the

directive, but its representative, Abdul Hakim Mujahid, continued to operate informally. In March 2001, Bush Administration officials received a Taliban envoy, Rahmatullah Hashemi, to discuss bilateral issues. Three State Department officers visited Afghanistan in April 2001, the first U.S. visit since the August 1998 bombings of Afghan camps, although the visit was primarily to assess humanitarian needs and not to conduct U.S.-Taliban relations.

As did the executive branch, Congress had become increasingly critical of the Taliban, even before the September 11 attacks. Congress' views have generally been expressed in non-binding legislation. A sense of the Senate resolution (S.Res. 275) that resolving the Afghan civil war should be a top U.S. priority passed that chamber by unanimous consent on September 24, 1996. H.Con.Res. 218, which was similar to this resolution, passed the House on April 28, 1998. In the 107th Congress, H.Con.Res. 26 was introduced on February 8, 2001. The resolution expresses the sense of Congress that the United States should seek to prevent the Taliban from obtaining Afghanistan's U.N. seat and should not recognize any government in Afghanistan that does not restore women's rights. Despite the criticism, some Members engaged in direct talks with the Taliban.

Since September 11, legislative proposals on Afghanistan appear to have become even more adversarial toward the Taliban. One bill, H.R. 3088, states that it should be the policy of the United States to remove the Taliban from power and authorizes a drawdown of up to \$300 million worth of U.S. military supplies and services for the anti-Taliban opposition. The bill, as well as another bill (H.R. 2998, introduced October 2, 2001), would establish a "Radio Free Afghanistan" broadcasting service under RFE/RL and fund it with \$14 million for FY2002 and FY2003, collectively. That bill was passed by the House on November 7, 2001, by a vote of 405-2.

Harboring of Osama Bin Ladin/Radical Islamic Fundamentalists

Even before the September 11, 2001 attacks, the Taliban's refusal to yield bin Ladin to the United States (or a U.S. ally) for trial – and its protection of radical Islamic movements more broadly – had become the overriding bilateral agenda item in U.S. policy toward Afghanistan.²⁰ Osama bin Ladin, who has been indicted in the United States for past acts of terrorism against the United States, reportedly remains in Afghanistan, attempting to avoid U.S. air strikes and special forces possibly by hiding in caves or tunnels, according to press reports. A key financier and recruiter of Arab volunteers for the war against the Soviet occupation, he returned to Afghanistan after being expelled from Sudan in June 1996, where he financed training camps for terrorists operating throughout the Islamic world. U.S. military officials believe that the Taliban collapse has greatly improved the chances of finding bin Ladin who, as of December 12, 2001, was believed by fighters of the Eastern Shura to be hiding in the mountainous Tora Bora area south of Jalalabad.

²⁰ For more information on bin Ladin and his Al Qaeda organization, see CRS Report RL31119, *Terrorism: Near Eastern Groups and State Sponsors, 2001, September 10, 2001*. See also CRS Report RS20411, *Afghanistan: Connections to Islamic Movements in Central and South Asia and Southern Russia*.

Over the past few years, the United States has placed progressively more pressure on the Taliban to extradite bin Ladin, adding sanctions, military action, and the threat of further punishments to ongoing diplomatic efforts.

- During his April 1998 visit, Ambassador Richardson asked Taliban to hand bin Ladin over to U.S. authorities, but he was rebuffed.
- On August 20, 1998, the United States fired cruise missiles at alleged bin Ladin-controlled terrorist training camps in retaliation for the August 7, 1998 bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania.
- On July 4, 1999, because of the Taliban's hosting of bin Ladin, President Clinton issued Executive Order 13129, imposing a ban on U.S. trade with Taliban-controlled portions of Afghanistan and blocking Taliban assets in U.S. financial institutions. The Taliban was not designated as a terrorist group, nor was Afghanistan named a state sponsor of terrorism. On August 10, 1999, the Clinton Administration determined that Ariana Airlines represents Taliban-controlled property, thereby preventing Americans from using the airline and triggering the blocking of about \$500,000 in Ariana assets identified in the United States. As of January 2001, \$254 million in Taliban-controlled assets in U.S. financial institutions had been discovered and blocked.
- On October 15, 1999, with Russian support, the United States achieved adoption of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1267, the first U.N. resolution sanctioning the Taliban regime. The resolution bans flights outside Afghanistan by Ariana airlines and directed U.N. member states to freeze Taliban assets. According to U.S. officials, the resolution succeeded in grounding virtually all external flights by Ariana, although, aside from the United States, very few other governments blocked Taliban assets. The resolution was in response to the Taliban's refusal to hand bin Ladin over to justice, and it threatened further sanctions if it did not do so.

On December 19, 2000, again by combining diplomatic forces with Russia, the United States achieved adoption of U.N. Security Council Resolution 1333, a follow-on to Resolution 1267, imposing even stricter sanctions against the Taliban. The major additional provisions of the Resolution include the following:

- a worldwide prohibition against the provision of arms or military advice to the Taliban, and a requirement (directed against Pakistan) that all countries withdraw any military advisers that are helping the Taliban;
- a call for all countries that recognize the Taliban to reduce the size of Taliban representative missions in their countries; and for all other countries to close completely all Taliban offices and Ariana Afghan airline offices and ban all nonhumanitarian assistance flights into or out of Taliban-controlled Afghanistan;
- a requirement that all countries freeze any bin Ladin/Al Qaeda assets that can be identified;

- a prohibition on any supply to areas under Taliban control of the chemical acetic anhydride, which is used to produce heroin; and
- a ban on foreign travel by all Taliban officials at or above the rank of Deputy Minister, except for the purposes of participation in peace negotiations, compliance with the resolution or 1267, or humanitarian reasons, including religious obligations.

On July 30, 2001, the U.N. Security Council adopted an implementing Resolution 1363. The resolution provided for the stationing of monitors in Pakistan, to ensure that no weapons or military advice is being provided by the Taliban. Pakistan's pledge to cooperate with the U.S. response to the September 11, 2001 attacks led to the virtual end of Pakistan's supply of arms and military advice to the Taliban.

Other options to dissuade the Taliban from harboring radical Islamic movements have been suggested for several years. One option, supported in the past by some Members of Congress and endorsed in a June 7, 2000 report by the bipartisan National Commission on Terrorism, has been to place Afghanistan on the U.S. list of state sponsors of terrorism. However, the Clinton and Bush Administrations opposed doing so on the grounds that the move would have implied U.S. recognition of Taliban as the legitimate Afghan government.

Human Rights/Treatment of Women

The groups that have assumed power from the Taliban are widely considered far less repressive of women than was the Taliban, although some of the factions now ruling the country have been accused of other major human rights abuses in the past. Taliban human rights practices, and especially its treatment of women, received U.S. and international condemnation. Seeking to enforce its brand of puritan Islam, the Taliban subjected women to limitations on social participation, working, and education. Women were forced to wear a head-to-toe veil in public, and they could not ride in vehicles unless accompanied by a male relative. Following the Taliban collapse, women in Kabul are said to be reverting to the less restrictive behavior practiced before the Taliban fled. Two women will hold positions in the new interim cabinet to take office on December 22, 2001.

At various times in the past, the Taliban's treatment of women had forced many United Nations and other aid organizations, including the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), UNICEF, Save the Children, and Oxfam, to cut back or cease operations, either in protest or for lack of available (female) staff.²¹ In September 1999, a U.N. investigator on women's rights in Afghanistan, Radhika Coomaraswamy, called for international pressure on Taliban to abolish its Department to Propagate Virtue and Prevent Vice, which was considered the Taliban's main instrument for depriving women of their rights. The headquarters of that agency in Qandahar has been destroyed by U.S. bombardment, according to press accounts.

²¹Cooper, Kenneth, "Kabul Women Under Virtual House Arrest." *Washington Post*, October 7, 1996. A1.

On the other hand, U.N. human rights rapporteur for Afghanistan Kamal Hossain in his recent reports and the U.S. human rights report for 2000 noted increasing flexibility on this issue on the part of the Taliban.

Even before the war, there was significant U.S. and U.N. pressure on the Taliban regime to moderate its treatment of women. Several U.N. Security Council resolutions, including 1193 (August 28, 1998), and 1214 (December 8, 1998), urge the Taliban to end discrimination against women. During a November 1997 visit to Pakistan, then Secretary of State Madeleine Albright attacked Taliban policies as despicable and intolerable. U.S. women's rights groups like Feminist Majority and the National Organization for Women (NOW) mobilized to stop the Clinton Administration from recognizing the Taliban government unless it alters its treatment of women. Former First Lady and now Senator Hillary Clinton and several Hollywood celebrities, particularly Mavis Leno (wife of late-night comedian Jay Leno) have spoken out strongly against Taliban policies toward women and girls. On May 5, 1999, the Senate passed S.Res.68, a resolution calling on the President not to recognize any Afghan government that refuses to end discrimination against women. On November 27, 2001, the House unanimously adopted S.1573, the Afghan Women and Children Relief Act, which had earlier passed the Senate. The law (signed December 12, 2001) calls for the use of supplemental funding (appropriated by P.L. 107-38) to fund educational and health programs for Afghan women and children.

In August 2001, the Taliban arrested 8 workers for a German relief agency, including two Americans, Dana Curry and Heather Mercer, on charges of preaching Christianity to Afghans. Their trial had begun, although it proceeded sporadically after the start of the U.S. military action. Before the bombing, the Taliban allowed the two American women's parents, as well as U.S. consular officials based in Pakistan, to visit the two women in Kabul. The workers were freed in the chaos surrounding the Taliban collapse and spirited out of Afghanistan by U.S. special forces on November 14.

Destruction of Buddha Statues. The Taliban's critics pointed to its March 2001 destruction of two large Buddha statues, dating to the 7th century, as evidence of the Taliban's excesses. The Taliban claimed it ordered the destruction of the statues, which it considered un-Islamic, after representatives of the United Nations Economic, Social, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) offered to fund preservation of the statues. The Taliban said this offer angered it on the grounds that UNESCO was offering money for cultural preservation at a time when Afghans lacked sufficient food. Others believe the move was a reaction to new U.N. sanctions imposed in December 2000 (see below). The destruction provoked widespread condemnation, even among other Islamic states, including Pakistan.

Hindu Badges. In May 2001, the Taliban said it was considering requiring non-Muslims to wear identity labels on their clothing to distinguish them from Muslims. The Taliban explained the move as an effort to prevent non-Muslims from being harassed by Taliban security forces for not attending Muslim prayer, which is compulsory for Muslims. The announcement received worldwide condemnation. Responding to the criticism, the Taliban subsequently said that the leaders of the Hindu community in Afghanistan would be consulted before the order was

implemented. There are believed to be only two Jews left in Afghanistan, so the move was not viewed as being directed against Jews, even though the policy evoked memories of the treatment of Jews in Nazi Germany. Although largely irrelevant now that the Taliban has collapsed, a final decision was pending before the Taliban's Council of Ministers, according to U.N. Secretary General Annan's report on Afghanistan of August 17, 2001.

On the other hand, many say that the Taliban brought order and peace to the areas it captured by disarming independent militiamen. By imposing central authority and cracking down on banditry, it opened some roads to free commerce leading to a greater availability of food in many areas under its control. Press accounts say that the streets were safer, fewer people carried guns, and there were very few murders during Taliban rule.²² Others add that Taliban rule approximated the traditional practice of Islam found in those parts of Afghanistan dominated by Pashtuns and did not represent a radical departure for Afghanistan.

Counternarcotics

Since late 2000, international observers have been reporting substantial progress in curbing drug production and trafficking in Afghanistan as the Taliban appeared to be enforcing its July 2000 ban on poppy cultivation. The Northern Alliance did not issue a similar ban in areas it controlled. In February 2001, U.N. International Drug Control Program (UNDCP) officials said that surveys showed a dramatic drop in poppy cultivation in the areas surveyed.²³ In April 2001, following the release of this information, the Bush Administration sent two U.S. drug officials to participate in a UNDCP mission to assess how to help farmers who have abandoned poppy growing. Responding to the Taliban cooperation on this issue, the United States began funding a UNDCP program to assist former poppy cultivators in Afghanistan. The United States contributed \$1.5 million to that crop substitution program in FY2001. The Bonn agreement mentions the need for a post-Taliban Afghanistan government to prevent Afghanistan's re-emergence as a haven for drug cultivation.

The new information came after several years of frustration. The U.S. annual report on narcotics for 2000, which covered the period January-December 2000, repeated previous criticism of the Taliban's failure to curb poppy cultivation. In March 2001, Afghanistan was again listed by the United States, as it has been every year since 1987, as a state that is uncooperative with U.S. efforts to eliminate drug trafficking or has failed to take sufficient steps on its own to curb trafficking.

Retrieval of U.S. Stingers

Beginning in late 1985 and following an internal debate, the Reagan Administration provided "hundreds" of man-portable "Stinger" anti-aircraft missiles

²²Schork, Kurt, "Taleban Admits To Problem Of Image, Not Substance." Reuters, November 25, 1997.

²³Crossette, Barbara. "Taliban Seem to Be Making Good on Opium Ban, U.N. Says." *New York Times*, February 7, 2001.

to the mujahedin for use against Soviet combat helicopters and aircraft. Prior to the U.S.-led war against the Taliban and Al Qaida, common estimates among experts suggested that 200-300 Stingers remained at large in Afghanistan out of about 1,000 provided during the war against the Soviet Union.²⁴ U.S. pilots reported that the Taliban fired some Stingers at U.S. aircraft during the war, but they recorded no hits. It is not known how many Stingers might still remain, but any remaining Stingers are likely controlled by Afghans now allied to the United States and would presumably pose less of a threat.

In the aftermath of the Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan, the United States had tried to retrieve the at-large Stingers.²⁵ The United States feared that the missiles could fall into the hands of terrorist groups for possible use against civilian airliners. Iran bought 16 of the missiles in 1987 and fired one against U.S. helicopters. India claimed that it was a Stinger, supplied to Islamic rebels in Kashmir probably by sympathizers in Afghanistan, that shot down an Indian helicopter over Kashmir in May 1999.²⁶

The practical difficulties of retrieving the weapons had caused this issue to fade from the U.S. agenda for Afghanistan. In 1992, the United States reportedly spent about \$10 million to buy the Stingers back, at a premium, from individual mujahedin commanders. The *New York Times* reported on July 24, 1993, that the buy back effort failed because the United States was competing with other buyers, including Iran and North Korea, and that the CIA would spend about \$55 million in FY1994 in a renewed Stinger buy-back effort. On March 7, 1994, the *Washington Post* reported that the CIA had recovered only a fraction of the at-large Stingers. Many observers speculate that the CIA program retrieved perhaps 50 or 100 Stingers. According to Defense Intelligence Agency testimony in 1996,²⁷ an unspecified number of man-portable surface-to-air missiles (Stingers) remain in Afghanistan.²⁸ There have been no recent reports of any U.S. efforts to recover remaining Stingers.

Landmine Eradication

Landmines laid during the Soviet occupation constitute one of the principal dangers to the Afghan people. The United Nations estimates that 5 -7 million mines remain scattered throughout the country, although some estimates by outside organizations are significantly lower. An estimated 400,000 Afghans have been killed or wounded by landmines. U.N. teams have succeeded in destroying one million mines and are now focusing on de-mining priority-use, residential and commercial property, including land surrounding Kabul. As shown in the U.S. aid table for

²⁴Saleem, Farrukh. Where Are the Missing Stinger Missiles? Pakistan, *Friday Times*. August 17-23, 2001.

²⁵Gertz, Bill. Stinger Bite Feared in CIA. *Washington Times*, October 9, 2000.

²⁶“U.S.-Made Stinger Missiles – Mobile and Lethal.” *Reuters*, May 28, 1999.

²⁷John Moore, before the House International Relations Committee. May 9, 1996.

²⁸Common estimates in a variety of press reports suggest that 200-300 Stingers may remain at large in Afghanistan.

FY1999-FY2002, the United States Humanitarian Demining Program provides about \$3 million per year for Afghanistan demining activities. Most of the funds go to the HALO Trust, a British organization, and the U.N. Mine Action Program for Afghanistan.

Alleviating Human Suffering/Reconstruction

Afghanistan faces major humanitarian problems, some of which have deteriorated further since Taliban came to power. In addition to 3.6 million Afghan refugees,²⁹ another 500,000 Afghans were displaced internally even before U.S. military action began, according to Secretary General Annan's April 19, 2001 report. Many of the displaced persons had fled the effects of a major drought that have affected the 85% of the population that directly depends on agriculture. Of the internally displaced persons, about 140,000 went to Herat, site of the February 2001 death of 150 Afghans who were exposed to freezing weather. The conflicts in Afghanistan, including the war against the Soviet Union, have reportedly left about 2 million dead, 700,000 widows and orphans and about one million Afghan children who were born and raised in refugee camps outside Afghanistan. Some refugees are now members of a third generation to live outside Afghanistan, although many are beginning to return now that the Taliban has fallen from power in Kabul, and repatriation is expected to accelerate in spring 2002.

Since the U.S. military action began, the humanitarian situation has become more acute. By some accounts, as many as 70% of the 500,000 residents of Qandahar fled the city on some nights of U.S. bombing, although many filtered are now filtering back now that the Taliban have surrendered that city. As part of its military operations, the United States has air-dropped food rations to help alleviate suffering. In light of the Taliban collapse, aid routes via Uzbekistan and Pakistan have now opened or reopened. Women who were impeded from working with relief organizations during Taliban rule are now resuming their work with these agencies.

The United Nations continues to coordinate humanitarian relief efforts through the U.N. High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and UNOCHA. UNHCR supervises Afghan refugee camps in Pakistan and Afghan repatriation.

U.S. Aid. To address humanitarian concerns, the United States became the largest single provider of assistance to the Afghan people, even before the crisis triggered by the September 11 attacks. However, there has been no USAID mission for Afghanistan since the end of FY1994, and U.S. aid is provided through various channels, mostly U.N. agencies and NGO's. In 1985, the United States began a cross-border aid program for Afghanistan, through which aid was distributed in Afghanistan, via U.S. aid workers in Pakistan. However, citing budgetary constraints and the difficulty of administering a cross-border program, that program closed at the end of FY1994, and no cross-border aid money has been requested since then.

²⁹There are about 1.4 million Afghan refugees in Iran; 1.2 million in Pakistan; 20,000 in Russia; 17,000 in India, and 9,000 in the Central Asian states.

U.S. aid to the Afghan people in FY2001 greatly exceeded that provided in FY2000 or FY1999. **Table 2** breaks down FY1999-FY2001 aid by program. According to the USAID fact sheet issued September 27, 2001, the United States provided about \$183 million in assistance to the Afghan people in FY2001. For a history of U.S. aid to Afghanistan (FY1978-FY1998), see **Table 3**.

On October 4, 2001, President Bush announced that aid to the Afghan people would total about \$320 million for FY2002. This will include food, blankets, medicine, and shelter for Afghan refugees in states bordering Afghanistan and the people inside Afghanistan. The amounts provided thus far in FY2002 are listed in the table.

The United States has also indicated it will provide substantial reconstruction assistance for a post-Taliban Afghanistan. Common estimates of reconstruction needs run up to about \$10 billion. The Senate version of the FY2002 foreign aid appropriation (H.R. 2506) contains a sense of the Senate provision that the U.S. should contribute long-term reconstruction and development assistance to the people of Afghanistan, although no dollar figures are mentioned. A separate bill (H.R. 3427) would authorize at least \$875 million in FY2002-FY2005 for Afghan rehabilitation and reconstruction, and additional funds for related purposes.

Table 2. U.S. Aid to Afghanistan in FY1999-FY2002
(\$ in millions)

	FY1999	FY2000	FY2001	FY2002 (as of 12/7)
Demining Program	\$2.615	\$3.0	\$2.8	
U.S.Department of Agriculture (DOA) and USAID Food For Peace, via World Food Program(WFP)	\$42.0 worth of wheat (100,000 metric tons) under DOA's "416(b)" program.	\$68.875 for 165,000 metric tons. Of this, 60,000 tons were for May 2000 drought relief.	\$131.0 (300,000 metric tons under P.L.480, Title II, and 416(b)	\$40.55 (Food for Peace)
WFP and the Aga Khan Foundation	\$2.6 for Afghan refugees inside Afghanistan	\$14.0 for the same purpose		
State/Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration (PRM) via UNHCR and ICRC	\$16.95 for Afghan refugees in Pakistan and Iran, and to assist their repatriation	\$14.03 for the same purposes	\$22.03 for similar purposes	\$32.26
State Department/ Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance (OFDA)	\$7.0 to various NGO's to aid Afghans inside Afghanistan	\$6.68 for drought relief and health, water, and sanitation programs for Afghans	\$18.934 for similar programs	\$59.32
Afghanistan Emergency Trust	—	\$0.5 in response to a May 2000 U.N. appeal to help Afghan drought victims		
Aid to Afghan Refugees in Pakistan (through various NGO's)	\$5.44, of which \$2.789 went to health and training for Afghan women and girls in Pakistan	\$6.169, of which \$3.82 went to similar purposes	\$5.31 for similar purposes	
U.N. Drug Control Program			\$1.50	
USAID (democracy and governance)			\$0.45 for Afghan women in Pakistan	
Dept. of Defense				\$47.9 (aidrop of 2 million rations)
Center for Disease Control			\$0.57 polio eradication	
Totals	\$76.6	\$113.2	\$182.6	\$180.05

Promoting Long-Term Economic Development

In an effort to find a long-term solution to Afghanistan's acute humanitarian problems, the United States has, when feasible, tried to promote major development projects as a means of improving Afghan living standards and political stability over the long term. During 1996-98, the Administration supported proposed natural gas and oil pipelines through western Afghanistan as an incentive for the warring factions to cooperate. One proposal by a consortium led by Los Angeles-based Unocal Corporation³⁰ was for a Central Asia Oil Pipeline (CAOP) that would originate at the Turkmenistan-Uzbekistan border and extend through the western region of Afghanistan to Pakistan. A \$2.5 billion Central Asia Gas Pipeline (CentGas) would originate in southern Turkmenistan and pass through Afghanistan to Pakistan, with possible extensions into India.

However, the deterioration in U.S.-Taliban relations since 1998 largely ended hopes for the pipeline projects while the Taliban was in power. Immediately after the August 20, 1998 U.S. strikes on bin Ladin's bases in Afghanistan, Unocal suspended all its Afghan pipeline-related activities, including a U.S.-based training program for Afghans who were expected to work on the project. With few prospects of improved U.S. relations with Taliban, Unocal withdrew from its consortium in December 1998. Saudi Delta Oil was made interim project leader, although Delta lacks the financing and technology to make the consortium viable. The rival consortium led by Bidas of Argentina reportedly continues to try to win approval for its proposal to undertake the project, although virtually no new developments on this project have been announced over the past few years. Many experts believe this project might be revived if a stable, internationally-recognized government takes hold in Afghanistan.

³⁰Other participants in the Unocal consortium include: Delta of Saudi Arabia, Hyundai of South Korea, Crescent Steel of Pakistan, Itochu Corporation and INPEX of Japan, and the government of Turkmenistan. Some accounts say Russia's Gazprom would probably receive a stake in the project. Moscow Nezavisimaya Gazeta, October 30, 1997. Page 3.

Table 3. U.S. Assistance to Afghanistan FY1978-1998
(\$ in millions)

Fiscal Year	Devel. Assist.	Econ. Supp. (ESF)	P.L. 480 (Title I and II)	Military	Other (Incl. regional refugee aid)	Total
1978	4.989	–	5.742	.269	.789	11.789
1979	3.074	–	7.195	–	.347	10.616
1980	–	(Soviet invasion - December 1979)			–	–
1981	–	–	–	–	–	–
1982	–	–	–	–	–	–
1983	–	–	–	–	–	–
1984	–	–	–	–	–	–
1985	3.369	–	–	–	–	3.369
1986	–	–	8.9	–	–	8.9
1987	17.8	12.1	2.6	–	–	32.5
1988	22.5	22.5	29.9	–	–	74.9
1989	22.5	22.5	32.6	–	–	77.6
1990	35.0	35.0	18.1	–	–	88.1
1991	30.0	30.0	20.1	–	–	80.1
1992	25.0	25.0	31.4	–	–	81.4
1993	10.0	10.0	18.0	–	30.2	68.2
1994	3.4	2.0	9.0	–	27.9	42.3
1995	1.8	–	12.4	–	31.6	45.8
1996	–	–	16.1	–	26.4	42.5
1997	–	–	18.0	–	31.9**	49.9
1998	–	–	3.6	–	49.14***	52.74

Source: U.S. Department of State.

** Includes \$3 million for demining and \$1.2 million for counternarcotics.

*** Includes \$3.3 million in projects targeted for Afghan women and girls, \$7 million in earthquake relief aid, 100,000 tons of 416B wheat worth about \$15 million, \$2 million for demining, and \$1.54 for counternarcotics.

U.S. and International Sanctions

According to U.S. diplomats, shoring up a post-Taliban government of Afghanistan will likely require adjustments to U.S. and U.N. sanctions imposed on Afghanistan. Many of these sanctions were imposed during Taliban rule, including a new set of U.S. sanctions imposed in July 1999 and U.N. sanctions imposed in October 1999. Some believe the sanctions give the United States leverage that can help bring stable peace to Afghanistan. As currently constituted, these sanctions prevent the Afghan government from receiving U.S. aid and trade preferences in the form of Most Favored Nation status or benefits awarded under the Generalized System of Preferences. U.S. trade with Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan has been banned since July 1999, although this sanction appears to no longer be operative now that the Taliban has disintegrated. Sanctions in place include the following:

- On May 2, 1980, Afghanistan was deleted from the list of designated beneficiary countries under the U.S. GSP, denying Afghanistan's exports duty free treatment, by Executive Order 12204 (45 F.R. 20740). This was done under the authority of Section 504 of the Trade Act of 1974, as amended [P.L. 93-618; 19 U.S.C. 2464].
- On June 3, 1980, as part of the sanctions against the Soviet Union for the invasion of Afghanistan, the United States imposed controls on exports to Afghanistan of agricultural products, oil and gas exploration and production equipment, and phosphates. This was implemented at 15 CFR Part 373 et seq (45 F.R. 37415) under the authority of Sections 5 and 6 of the Export Administration Act of 1979 [P.L. 96-72; 50 U.S.C. app. 2404, app. 2405]. On April 24, 1981, these sanctions were modified to terminate controls on U.S. exports to Afghanistan of agricultural products and phosphates.
- In mid-1992, the Bush Administration determined that Afghanistan no longer had a "Soviet-controlled government." This opened Afghanistan to the use of U.S. funds made available for the U.S. share of U.N. organizations that provide assistance to Afghanistan.
- On October 7, 1992, President Bush issued Presidential Determination 93-3 that Afghanistan is no longer a Marxist-Leninist country. The designation as such a country had prohibited Afghanistan from receiving Export-Import Bank guarantees, insurance, or credits for purchases under Sec. 8 of the 1986 Export-Import Bank Act, which amended Section 2(b)(2) of the Export-Import Bank Act of 1945 (P.L. 79-173, 12 U.S.C. 635). However, President Bush's determination was not implemented before he left office. The Clinton Administration is said to be unlikely to implement the determination because of the continuing instability in Afghanistan.
- President Bush's October 7, 1992 determination (93-3) also found that assistance to Afghanistan under Section 620D of the Foreign Assistance Act is in the national interest of the United States because of the change of regime in Afghanistan. The presidential determination, had it been implemented in regulations, would have waived restrictions on assistance to Afghanistan

provided for in the Act, as amended [P.L. 87-195; 22 U.S.C. 2374]; as added by Section 505 of the International Development Cooperation Act of 1979 [P.L. 96-53]. These provisions prohibit foreign assistance to Afghanistan until it apologizes for the death of U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan Adolph Dubs, who was kidnapped in Kabul in 1979 and killed when Afghan police stormed the hideout where he was held, unless the President determines that such assistance is in the national interest because of changed circumstances in Afghanistan.

- President Bush's October 7, 1992 determination, had it been implemented, would have restored nondiscriminatory trade treatment (most favored nation status, MFN) to the products of Afghanistan. In the spring of 1996, as part of increased efforts to try to help Afghanistan, the Clinton Administration began considering restoring MFN to Afghanistan. However, some executive bodies, particularly the National Security Council, appeared to oppose Afghan MFN on the grounds that restoration of MFN would put the United States in the unwanted position of publicly siding with individual factions in power at the time. Section 552 of the Foreign Assistance Appropriations for FY1986 [P.L. 99-190], which appeared in the FY1986 Continuing Resolution, authorized the President to deny any U.S. credits or most-favored-nation (MFN) tariff status for Afghanistan. On February 18, 1986, President Reagan had issued Presidential Proclamation 5437, suspending (MFN) tariff status for Afghanistan (51 F.R. 4287).
- On March 31, 1993, President Clinton waived restrictions provided for in Section 481 (h) of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, as amended [P.L. 87-195]; as amended and restated by Section 2005(a) of the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986 [P.L. 99-570]. The waiver was renewed in 1994 but it has not been renewed since then. Mandatory sanctions include aid cuts and suspensions, the casting of negative U.S. votes for multilateral development bank loans, and a non-allocation of a U.S. sugar quota. Discretionary sanctions included denial of Generalized System of Preferences (GSP); additional duties on country exports to the United States; and curtailment of air transportation with the United States. The 1993 and 1994 waivers were on the grounds that aiding Afghanistan was in the U.S. national interest. The waiver, when it was in effect, would have opened Afghanistan to bilateral assistance and Ex-Im Bank credits if there were no other sanctions barring such assistance.
- On June 14, 1996, Afghanistan was formally added to the list of countries prohibited from receiving exports or licenses for exports of U.S. defense articles and services. This amended the International Traffic in Arms Regulations (22 CFR Part 121 et seq.) under the authority of Section 38 of the Arms Export Control Act, as amended (P.L. 90-629; 22 U.S.C. 2778) by adding Afghanistan at Section 126.1 of 22 CFR Part 126.
- In a ruling largely redundant with the one above, on May 15, 1997, the State Department designated Afghanistan under the Antiterrorism and Effective Death Penalty Act of 1996 (P.L. 104-132), as a state that is not cooperating with U.S. anti-terrorism efforts. The designation, made primarily because of Taliban's harboring of bin Ladin, makes Afghanistan ineligible to receive U.S.

exports of items on the U.S. Munitions List. The designation was repeated every year since 1997 and is likely to continue to be repeated until Taliban expels or extradites bin Ladin.

- On July 4, 1999, the President declared a national emergency with respect to Taliban because of its hosting of bin Ladin, and issued Executive order 13129 that imposed sanctions. The sanctions include the blocking of Taliban assets and property in the United States, and a ban on U.S. trade with Taliban-controlled areas of Afghanistan. On August 10, 1999, the Administration determined that Ariana Afghan Airlines was a Taliban entity. That determination triggered a blocking of Ariana assets (about \$500,000) in the United States and a ban on U.S. citizens' flying on the airline. Now that the Taliban controls virtually no territory, the practical effects of the trade ban apparently will end.
- On October 15, 1999, the U.N. Security Council adopted Resolution 1267. See section on the harboring of bin Ladin for the sanctions imposed under this resolution.
- As noted above, U.N. Security Council Resolution 1333 of December 19, 2000, imposed a number of new sanctions against the Taliban. For the provisions, see the section on the harboring of bin Ladin.

Map of Afghanistan



Map adapted by CRS from Magellan Geographix.