President Biden Announces Withdrawal Plans

Upon taking office, the Biden Administration announced a review of U.S. policy in Afghanistan.

In April, the President announced that the final withdrawal would begin in May and be completed by September 11, 2021.

President Biden said diplomatic and humanitarian work and support for the ANDSF and Afghan government will continue after the withdrawal.

The February 2020 U.S.-Taliban agreement committed to the removal of all U.S. and coalition military forces, non-diplomatic civilian personnel, security contractors, and support personnel by May 2021.

Taliban Intensifies Attacks, Maintains Ties to al-Qaeda

Insurgents initiated 37% more attacks this quarter than during the same period last year.

The Taliban avoided targeting U.S. and coalition forces and have not killed any U.S. troops in more than a year.

The Taliban is likely preparing for large-scale offensives against provincial centers and ANDSF installations.

Increased Taliban control of highways isolated ANDSF troops and limited their ability to resupply.

The Taliban continued to maintain strong ties with al-Qaeda.

Dozens of Afghan Civil Society Leaders Killed by Unidentified Attackers

In at least 40 shooting and bombing incidents, prominent Afghan civilians were targeted and killed. U.S. and Afghan officials accused the Taliban of using these attacks to destabilize Afghan communities.

“It is clear that the Taliban have not upheld what they said they would do and reduce the violence.”

–General Richard Clarke, Commander, USSOCOM

Afghan Peace Talks Make No Substantial Progress

Peace talks between the Afghan Islamic Republic negotiating team and Taliban resumed following a pause in January.

Increased violence across the country made the Afghan government suspicious of the Taliban’s willingness to negotiate for peace.

The Taliban continued to demand prisoner releases and sanctions relief before moving forward.

The two sides have not agreed to an agenda for the peace talks more than 8 months after the talks began.

President Ghani rejected proposals for a power-sharing transitional government with the Taliban.

Increased Violence Limits Access for Aid Workers

Access impediments in January increased nearly 300% over the same period in 2020.

The Taliban ordered its local leaders to prohibit community development councils and block COVID-19 relief efforts.

Taliban threats of violence and imposition of bribes resulted in USAID implementers suspending or restricting operations.

Oversight and Investigations

A DoD OIG audit found the DoD did not seek full reimbursement for air transportation provided to coalition partners in Afghanistan.

A USAID performance audit found that USAID needed to implement a risk management process as it reduces staff and programs in Afghanistan.