

From: (b)(6) CIV SIGAR CCR (USA)

Sent: Tuesday, January 26, 2021 4:11 PM

To: (b)(6) CIV OSD OUSD POLICY (USA) (b)(6) (b)(6)
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Cc: (b)(6) CIV SIGAR PUBLICATIONS (USA) (b)(6) (b)(6)
(b)(6) CIV (USA) (b)(6)

Subject: Embargoed SIGAR January 2021 Quarterly Report to the U.S. Congress

Importance: High

Good Afternoon,

On Saturday, January 30, 2021, the Office of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) will publicly release the attached 50th Quarterly Report to the United States Congress. Please inform the Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, the USAID Administrator, and other appropriate officials about this report.

This report is embargoed from public release until 11:59 p.m. [EST] on Saturday, January 30, 2021 **11:59 p.m. [EST] on Sunday, January 31, 2021**, at which time it will be available to the public on SIGAR's website at <https://www.sigar.mil/>.

Please contact me if you have questions. Thank you.

V/R,

(b)(6)



OSD000605-21/CMD001199-21

Project Coordinator

SIGAR Research & Analysis Directorate

Teleworking from Alexandria, VA

Phone: (b)(6)

Email: (b)(6)

From: (b) (6)
To: Kirby, John F SES (USA)
Cc: (b) (6)
Subject: FYSA // 14-Nation Statement on TB Violence
Date: Monday, February 1, 2021 2:26:33 PM

Sir,

FYSA following this morning's AFG deep dive, and pertaining to our follow-on discussion on violence level metrics, mentioning the 14-nation statement below can help emphasize our condemnatory messaging towards Taliban violence levels without contradicting USFOR-A's "slightly lower" levels of enemy-initiated attacks reported in the SIGAR report released SAT.

It's kind of a big deal to have all 14 members from across the US, EU and NATO come together on this statement pinning targeted killings, media intimidation and infrastructure destruction on the Taliban.

USFOR-A / RS requested we amplify as able. Recommend having something along the lines of the following tee'd up if asked to comment on Taliban violence levels without going the risky 'up or down' route.

"Just yesterday you saw a powerful joint statement from 14 nations condemn the Taliban's abhorrent adherence to the continued use of assassinations, kidnappings and infrastructure destruction. The voice of the international community is clear: the Taliban must decrease the violence and destruction impacting the people of Afghanistan and the Afghan peace process."

**** FULL STATEMENT ****

Statement on continuation of assassination, kidnappings and destruction of vital infrastructure EU in Afghanistan
31 Jan 21

The EU Delegation and the diplomatic missions of Australia, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Afghanistan, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden, the United Kingdom, and the United States strongly condemn the continuation of assassinations, kidnappings, and destruction of vital infrastructure - all which directly harm the Afghan people. The violence is targeted at civil society, judicial, media, religious, medical and civilian government representatives who are essential to a peaceful and prosperous Afghanistan.

The Taliban bears responsibility of the majority of this targeted violence, and its attacks undermine state institutions and contribute to an insecure environment in which terrorist and criminal groups are able to freely operate. We call on the Government of Afghanistan to more actively and transparently investigate these attacks to ensure that those who instigate and carry out violence against the population are identified and brought to justice.

The international community has invested heavily in energy, food security, water resources, and road infrastructure for the benefit of the Afghan people. We condemn the on-going destruction of vital infrastructure, including digging up roads, destroying cell towers, and blowing up energy stations by the Taliban. These actions serve no purpose besides hurting the Afghan people who – largely due to decades of conflict -suffer from food insecurity and significant economic and development challenges, further exacerbated by the ongoing pandemic.

The Taliban must understand that their violent, destructive actions outrage the world and must cease if peace is to come to Afghanistan. We are standing side by side with those who are committed to bringing about an end to the conflict through an inclusive political settlement that ensures this country remains sovereign, united and democratic, at peace with itself and its neighbors, and preserving the human rights, development and economic achievements made over the past 19 years. We continue to be steadfast in our resolve to assist the people of Afghanistan in achieving peace, justice, and development. We expect the Taliban to demonstrate its support for the people of Afghanistan by ending the violence, stopping the destruction of vital infrastructure, and committing to a sustainable peace, for the benefit of all Afghans.

https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/afghanistan/92350/statement-continuation-assassinations-kidnappings-and-destruction-vital-infrastructure_en

<https://twitter.com/EUinAfghanistan/status/1355744792882380800>

v/r

(b) (6)

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Public Affairs Operations
Afghanistan, Middle East & Central Asia

(b) (6)

[Redacted signature block]

From: (b) (6)
To: Kirby, John F SES (USA)
Cc: (b) (6)
Subject: Re: FYSA // 14-Nation Statement on TB Violence
Date: Monday, February 1, 2021 9:04:21 PM

All onboard Sir. Talking with NSC specifically at 1100 TUE regarding way forward into AFG COAs sync and NATO DefMin.

v/r

(b) (6)

Office of the Secretary of Defense
Public Affairs Operations
Pentagon, (b) (6)

(b) (6)

*Typos courtesy of iPhone

From: "Kirby, John F SES (USA)" (b) (6)
Date: Monday, February 1, 2021 at 8:37:25 PM
To: (b) (6)
Cc: (b) (6)
Subject: Re: FYSA // 14-Nation Statement on TB Violence

Good flag. How will mentioning it play with interagency ?

From: (b) (6)
Date: Monday, February 1, 2021 at 2:26:32 PM
To: "Kirby, John F SES (USA)" (b) (6)
Cc: (b) (6)

(b) (6)

Subject: FYSA // 14-Nation Statement on TB Violence

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https://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/afghanistan/92350/statement-continuation-assassinations-kidnappings-and-destruction-vital-infrastructure_en

<https://twitter.com/EUinAfghanistan/status/1355744792882380800>

v/r

(b) (6)

Office of the Secretary of Defense

Public Affairs Operations

Afghanistan, Middle East & Central Asia

Pentagon, (b) (6)

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

From: [Fenton, Bryan LTG SD](#)
To: [Kirby, John F SES \(USA\)](#); [Magsamen, Kelly E SES \(USA\)](#)
Subject: Re: FYSA: "Watchdog: Airstrikes Increase in Afghanistan Despite Drawdown, Taliban Agreement" (Air Force Magazine)
Date: Monday, February 1, 2021 9:47:31 PM

Thanks John...

and we have to ensure folks understand that all air strikes are not US ... AFG Air Force/ Special Ops Aviation have gotten pretty good/ being used a lot.

And 2nd point ... US air strikes are usually in defense of ANSDF elements under Taliban attack...

GENs Miller and McKenzie can explain better than I did... but I at least wanted to get the thoughts out there.

Bryan

Sent from Mobile Device

From: "Kirby, John F SES (USA)" (b) (6)
Date: Monday, February 1, 2021 at 8:04:33 PM
To: "Magsamen, Kelly SES SD" (b) (6) "Fenton, Bryan LTG SD" (b) (6)
Subject: Fwd: FYSA: "Watchdog: Airstrikes Increase in Afghanistan Despite Drawdown, Taliban Agreement" (Air Force Magazine"

Might be worth flagging this for SD.

In addition to the spike in airstrikes, germane to the larger Afghanistan context, the issue over releasing strike data is one worth exploring.

I have my own views, of course. But it is increasingly becoming an issue in the public space.

K

From: (b) (6)
Date: Monday, February 1, 2021 at 6:04:28 PM
To: "Kirby, John F SES (USA)" (b) (6)

(b) (6) (b) (6)
CAPT SD" (b) (6) Col SD"
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LtCol USMC MCI-NCR (USA)" (b) (6)
(b) (6) COL USARMY JS OCJCS (USA)"
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LTC SD" (b) (6) "Flaherty, Sarah M CDR USN JS
DOM (USA) (b) (6) (b) (6)
(b) (6) Lt Col USAF JS DOM (USA)" (b) (6)
(b) (6)
Cc: (b) (6)

Subject: FYSA: "Watchdog: Airstrikes Increase in Afghanistan Despite Drawdown, Taliban Agreement" (Air Force Magazine)

NOTE: Full text of SIGAR report is available at this link - <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2021-01-30qr.pdf>

Watchdog: Airstrikes Increase in Afghanistan Despite Drawdown, Taliban Agreement
Air Force Magazine | Brian W. Everstine

U.S. airstrikes are increasing in Afghanistan as the Taliban continues its attacks, despite ongoing peace negotiations and the drawdown of American forces in the country, a watchdog report finds.

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, in its quarterly report to Congress released Feb. 1, said American strikes in the country rose for the second straight quarter, even though U.S. aircraft are no longer conducting offensive strikes and are only doing defensive operations in support of Afghan forces. Under the February 2020 agreement with the Taliban, American aircraft would not seek out the Taliban for strikes and would only protect partner forces.

Air Forces Central Command last year stopped publicly reporting the total number of airstrikes, and specific numbers are not available.

Although almost exactly a year ago the United States entered, with some fanfare, into a withdrawal agreement with the Taliban, peace talks between the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan and the Taliban have so far yielded few substantive results, the report states.

There has been no cease-fire agreement and high levels of insurgent

and extremist violence continued in Afghanistan this quarter despite repeated pleas from senior U.S. and international officials to reduce violence in an effort to advance the peace process.

SIGAR states in its report that Taliban activity has increasingly focused on attacks in Kabul city, including targeted assassinations, and intensified steps to target government forces in Helmand and Kandahar Provinces. Enemy-initiated attacks in the October-December time period were slightly lower than the prior three months, but still higher than the same time last year.

The violence comes as the U.S. was withdrawing down to about 2,500 total forces in mid-January the lowest level since 2001. Although U.S. officials have said the reduction in force size is still enough to accomplish the key training missions and counter terror operations, the Pentagon in the SIGAR report admitted some atrophy.

The Department of Defense acknowledges that the latest force level introduces some limitations on force capacity and on the train, advice, and assist mission, the report states. However, [U.S. Forces-Afghanistan] insisted this quarter that its ability to execute and/or oversee costly and necessary taxpayer-funded contracts to train and sustain the [Afghan National Self Defense Forces], and to provide them hundreds of millions of dollars worth of equipment and direct-assistance funds has thus far not been adversely affected by the reduction of force levels.

While the Pentagon still wants to abide by the May timeline to remove all forces from Afghanistan, the ongoing levels of Taliban violence is likely to delay full withdrawal. Defense Department spokesman John Kirby said Jan. 28 that, "We obviously are still committed to ending this war, but we want to end it responsibly. It's difficult to see how we get there from right where we are now."

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Office of the Assistant to the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs
Media Analysis (Gryphon Technologies)

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