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## **Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan**

*This report to Congress is submitted consistent with Section 1230 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181). It includes a description of the comprehensive strategy of the United States for security and stability in Afghanistan. This report is the second in a series of reports required every 180 days through fiscal year 2010 and has been prepared in coordination with the Secretary of State, the Director of National Intelligence, the Attorney General, the Administrator of the Drug Enforcement Administration, the Administrator of the United States Agency for International Development, and the Secretary of Agriculture. This assessment complements other reports and information about Afghanistan provided to the Congress; however, it is not intended as a single source of all information about the combined efforts or the future strategy of the United States, its Coalition Partners, or Afghanistan. The information contained in this report is current as of August 29, 2008.*

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## Executive Summary<sup>1</sup>

Against a backdrop of reinstated safe havens in Pakistan for al-Qaida, and increasing violence, the U.S. continues to work with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) and our international partners towards building an Afghanistan that is 1) never again a safe haven for terrorists and is a reliable, stable ally in the War on Terror; 2) moderate and democratic, with a thriving private sector economy; 3) capable of governing its territory and borders; and 4) respectful of the rights of all its citizens. The U.S. continues to pursue a comprehensive counterinsurgency (COIN) campaign which utilizes the military, government, and economic expertise of the U.S. and the international community to diminish insurgent capacity, maintain security, and build the infrastructure and human capital necessary to achieve the Afghanistan envisioned in the strategic goals listed above. The current COIN strategy is often referred to as “clear, hold, and build.”

## Security

The security situation in Afghanistan has deteriorated in several areas of the country since the last report. The spring and summer of 2008 saw the highest levels of violence since the U.S. and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) began their involvement in Afghanistan. Violence is concentrated in the south of the country (the historic heartland of the Taliban) and the east of the country, the area most vulnerable to cross-border activity from neighboring Pakistan. The Taliban regrouped after its fall from power and has coalesced into a resilient and evolving insurgency. The insurgents are challenging the control of the GIROA in areas of the south and the east, and increasingly in the west. Between January and December 10 2008, 132 U.S. personnel died as the result of hostile action, up from 82 in 2007. In 2007, 199 international personnel were killed. Between January and October of 2008 insurgent action resulted in the deaths of 265 coalition forces. Insurgent violence increased in the spring and summer of 2008 by 40 percent, most visibly in the form of asymmetric attacks as Afghan and international forces’ pressure forced the insurgents to shift the majority of their effort to targeting police and civilians, resulting in an increasing sense of personal insecurity among the populace. According to ISAF, insurgent-initiated attacks increased 33 percent for the whole of 2008. The 2008 ISAF and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) military campaign has caused setbacks to the Afghan insurgency, including leadership losses and the loss of some key safe havens in Afghanistan. Despite these setbacks, the insurgency has maintained and in some areas increased the scope and pace of its terrorist attacks and bombings. The

### Security: Significant Events June 2008-September 2008

- **July:** France sends a battalion to RC-East.
- **August 28:** Afghan National Security Forces Take command of security Kabul.
- **August:** UNODC reports a 19 percent decrease in poppy production.
- **September 10:** Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board Approved expansion of the Afghan National Army to 134,000 soldiers.

<sup>1</sup> This second submission of the *Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan* principally covers the period between April and September of 2008. Whenever possible, more current information has been included. The April-August “fighting season” typically includes the year’s highest levels of insurgent activity; an increase in reconstruction and development and governance extension efforts; and the opium harvest and subsequent trafficking operations.

