

Human and Budgetary Costs to Date of the U.S. War in Afghanistan

Region: Asia, USA

Theme: Intelligence, Militarization and

WMD

In-depth Report: AFGHANISTAN

	Total FY2001-FY2021*
Defense Department Overseas Contingency Operations (OCO) (War) Budget	\$933
State Department OCO (War) Budget	59
Defense Department Base Budget War-Related Increases	443
Veterans Care for Afghan War Vets	296
Estimated Interest on War Borrowing	530
TOTAL in Billions of Current Dollars	\$2,261
	*Rounded to nearest billion

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ESTIMATED DIRECT WAR DEATHS IN AFGHANISTAN AND PAKISTAN (OCTOBER 2001-APRIL 2021) ²			
	Afghanistan	Pakistan	Total
US Military ³	2,442 ⁴	— ⁵	2,442
US DOD Civilian ⁶	6		6
US Contractors ⁷	3,846	90	3,936
National Military and Police ⁸	66,000-69,000 ⁹	9,314 ¹⁰	75,314-78,314
Other Allied Troops ¹¹	1,144	—	1,144
Civilians	47,245 ¹²	24,099 ¹³	71,344
Opposition Fighters	51,191 ¹⁴	33,000 ¹⁵	84,191
Journalists and Media Workers ¹⁶	72	64	136
Humanitarian Aid Workers ¹⁷	444	105	549
TOTAL	171,336-174,336	66,714	238,050-241,050
TOTAL ROUNDED	171,000-174,000	67,000	238,000-241,000

*

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Neta C. Crawford is co-director of the Costs of War Project and Professor and Chair of Political Science at Boston University. Crawford is the sole author of the budgetary component of this research.

Catherine Lutz is co-author of the estimate of war deaths. She is co-director of Costs of War Thomas J. Watson, Jr. Family Professor Emerita of Anthropology and International Studies, Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, Brown University.

Notes

2 This chart tallies estimated direct deaths caused by war violence. It does not include indirect deaths, namely those caused by loss of access to food, water, and/or infrastructure, and war-related disease, etc. The numbers included here are approximations based on the reporting of several original data sources. Most, though not all, original data sources are updated through 2020 or early 2021; dates are noted in the foot notes. Some original data sources are incomplete, inconsistent and/or data is inaccessible. Thus, for the most part, these data are estimated. The totals are rounded to indicate that there is a degree uncertainty in these counts.

3 Department of Defense Casualty Report, <https://dod.defense.gov/news/Casualty-Status/>. Through April 2021.

4 In Operations Enduring Freedom and Freedom's Sentinel.

5 Included in Afghanistan figures.

6 Department of Defense Casualty Report <https://dod.defense.gov/news/Casualty-Status/>.

Figures include deaths in other operational locations.

7 Estimate based on United States Department of Labor (DOL) (2019). Defense Base Act Case Summary by Nation. Retrieved from: <https://www.dol.gov/owcp/dlhwcdbaallnation.htm> (data through March 31, 2020).

The figure given here is an estimate of total contractor deaths based on DOL numbers, namely the additional number of unreported contractor deaths by comparing the percentage of foreign contractors working for the US military in the warzone with the much lower percentage of foreign contractors among the reported contractor dead. The multiplier reflecting this disparity is 2.15 times the DOL number. DOL data for contractor deaths: Afghanistan, 1,789; Pakistan, 42.

8 Includes National Military Forces and National and Local Police Forces.

9 There is uncertainty about the number of Afghan National Police and military deaths. This estimate is based on several sources. In September 2013, US General Joseph Dunford said that more than 100 Afghan Security Forces were being killed a week. Harrison, Emma Graham (2013, Sept. 2), "Afghan Forces Suffering Too Many Casualties Says Top NATO Commander," The Guardian, retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/02/afghan-forces>.

In March 2014, The New York Times reported 13,729 Afghan National Security and Police deaths from 2001 to 2014. Nordland, Rod (2014, March 3), "War Deaths Top 13,000 in Afghan Security Forces," The New York Times, retrieved from https://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/04/world/asia/afghan-cabinet-releases-data-on-deaths-of-security-personnel.html?partner=rss&emc=rss&smid=tw-nytimes&_r=0.

In January 2017, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reported 6,785 Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANSDF) killed from January 1, 2016 to November 12, 2016, a rate of about 147 per week.: <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/2017-01-30qr.pdf>.

In September 2018, Afghan President Ashraf Ghani said 28,529 Afghan security forces had been killed since 2015. Fahim Abed and Rod Nordland, "Afghan War Casualty Report: Nov. 9-15" The New York Times, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/15/magazine/afghan-war-casualty-report.html?module=inline>.

In January 2019, President Ashraf Ghani said that there have been 45,000 security personnel killed since he took office in September 2014. See BBC (2019, January 25), "Afghanistan's Ghani says 45,000 Security Personnel Killed Since 2014," BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-47005558>.

Assuming that 100 Afghan ANSDF were killed each week from April through August 2014, this adds an additional 2,000 deaths. The New York Times reported 3,395 Afghan security force deaths for the period January 1, 2019 to October 31, 2019. Fahim Abed, "Afghan War Casualty Report," The New York Times for each week from January 1 to October 31, 2019. US Forces in Afghanistan began to classify these numbers in 2017 after previously releasing them. See Thomas Gibbons-Neff (2017, October 30), "Afghan War Data, Once Public, is Censored in U.S. Military Report," The New York Times, retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/30/world/asia/afghanistan-war-redacted-report.html>, and

Rod Nordland (2018, September 21), "The Death Toll for Afghan Forces is Secret. Here's Why," The New York Times, retrieved from <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/09/21/world/asia/afghanistan-security-casualties-taliban.html>.

In December 2017, the DOD reported that the “number of ANDSF casualties suffered while conducting local patrols and checkpoint operations was similar to that of 2016,” while “the number of casualties in planned operations has decreased over the same period.” See Department of Defense, “Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan”: <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/1225-Report-Dec-2017.pdf>.

See Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), “Quarterly Report April 30, 2018”: <https://www.sigar.mil/quarterlyreports/index.aspx?SSR=6>.

Also for trends see, Livingston, I.S., and M. O’Hanlon (2017), Afghanistan Index, Figure 1.15, p. 12. Brookings, retrieved from <https://www.brookings.edu/afghanistan-index/>.

See also Crawford, Neta C (2015, May 22), “War Related Death, Injury and Displacement in Afghanistan and Pakistan 2001-2014”, Costs of War, retrieved from <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2015/War%20Related%20Casualties%20Afghanistan%20and%20Pakistan%202001-2014%20FIN.pdf>

10 Through June 2019. From Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) Annual Pakistan Security Reports. Retrieved from <http://pakpips.com/> through 2020.

Also see the South Asia Terrorism Portal, <https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm>.

11 Retrieved from iCasualties, <http://icasualties.org/>. Data through April 2021.

12 For 2001-2007, see Crawford, Neta C. (2015, May 22). “War Related Death, Injury and Displacement in Afghanistan and Pakistan 2001-2014,” Costs of War, retrieved from <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2015/War%20Related%20Casualties%20Afghanistan%20and%20Pakistan%202001-2014%20FIN.pdf>;

for 2008-2020, see the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) annual Reports on the Protection of Civilians in Armed Conflict, retrieved from <https://unama.unmissions.org/protection-of-civilians-reports>.

These civilian death numbers include the recorded direct violent deaths. Additional direct violent deaths may not have been recorded and significant numbers of indirect deaths due to displacement or destruction of infrastructure have not been included.

13 Through 2020. Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) annual Pakistan Security Reports. Retrieved from <http://pakpips.com/>.

This data is mostly consistent with South Asia Terrorism Portal, “Fatalities in Terrorist Violence in Pakistan 2003-2018,” retrieved from www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm.

The counts of the dead (and wounded) are complicated not only by the difficulty of access to war zones for investigators, but also because some actors have incentives to either exaggerate or to minimize the number of civilians killed, or to identify civilians as militants.

14 Neither the US or NATO have released figures on the exact number of anti-government insurgents killed. From July 1 through November 5, 2019, Afghan National Defense Forces reported killing 10,259

militants/insurgents/terrorists and reported killing 10,091 from 6 November to 13 April 2021. They did not report any data for the period of May through August 2020. <https://mod.gov.af/en/press-release>.

See also Crawford, Neta C. (2015, May 22). "War Related Death, Injury and Displacement in Afghanistan and Pakistan 2001-2014," Costs of War, retrieved from <https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2015/War%20Related%20Casualties%20Afghanistan%20and%20Pakistan%202001-2014%20FIN.pdf>.

15 Through 2020. See Pak Institute for Peace Studies (PIPS) annual Pakistan Security Reports. Retrieved from <http://pakpips.com/>.

Also see South Asia Terrorism Portal, <https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/countries/pakistan/database/casualties.htm>.

16 Journalist and media worker deaths for war years through 2020. See Committee to Protect Journalists, retrieved from https://cpj.org/data/killed/?status=Killed&motiveConfirmed%5B%5D=Confirmed&type%5B%5D=Journalist&start_year=1992&end_year=2018&group_by=year (Journalist Motive Confirmed and Media Workers Motive Confirmed and Unconfirmed).

17 Afghan national and international aid workers killed through March 2021 <https://aidworkersecurity.org/incidents/search?start=2001&detail=1&country=AF>

Featured image: Members of the U.S. Air Force Honor Guard transfer Capt. David A. Wisniewski's casket to a caisson while HH-60G Pave Hawk helicopters fly overhead during his funeral at Arlington National Cemetery in Arlington, Va., Aug. 23, 2010. Wisniewski died July 2, 2010, from injuries suffered during a helicopter crash in Afghanistan. (Credit: SSgt Gina Chiaverotti-Paige/Public Domain)

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