

Afghanistan and Iraq in a decade

August 25, 2011

By **The U.S. Army Center of Military History**



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The U.S. Army Center of Military History provided Soldiers magazine with a compilation of data, illustrating some of the key events that have occurred in Afghanistan and Iraq over the past 10 years. This compilation is not meant to be all-inclusive. It lists a sampling of events and figures which are meant to illustrate some of the efforts taken in last decade. The data is from open source materials, which may be found listed at the end of each section. All data was compiled by the U.S. Army Center of Military History.

*Figures are through May 31, 2011. Data is from the Defense Manpower Data Center.

**Boots on the ground data, where listed, is from "Troop Levels in the Afghan and Iraq Wars, FY2001-FY2012: Cost and Other Potential Issues" by Amy Belasco.

AFGHANISTAN

2001

Sept. 9--Ahmad Shah Masood, a legendary guerilla fighter and leader of the primary opposition to the Taliban, is assassinated--the assassins posed as journalists. The event exposes the Taliban's protection of Osama bin Laden, and serves to strengthen Taliban unity against the West.

Sept. 11--Al-Qaida hijackers commandeered four passenger planes from U.S. airports. Three of the planes are flown into the Pentagon in Washington and the World Trade Center towers in New York City. The buildings, symbols of U.S. economic and global influence, become icons of the war on terrorism. The fourth plane crashes into a Pennsylvania field after passengers storm the cockpit, refusing to allow the terrorists to crash into another target. The devastation in New York and Washington becomes the catalyst for the war on terrorism.

October--Osama bin Laden has been identified as being responsible for orchestrating the Sept. 11 attacks in the United States. After its leaders refuse to turn over Osama bin Laden, Operation Enduring Freedom is launched, with U.S. and British forces launching air strikes into Taliban-controlled Afghanistan. Australia, Germany and France commit to military assistance.

November--Coalition forces march into Kabul days after seizing the northern city of Mazar-e Sharif.

Boots on the ground: 2,000; 11 total U.S. deaths in Afghanistan for the year*

2002

May--The UN Security Council extends International Security Force-Afghanistan until December 2002. The coalition force is a NATO-led contingent established to provide stability and security within Afghanistan.

July--Afghan Vice President Haji Abdul Qadir is assassinated in Kabul.

September--Afghan President Hamid Karzai survives an assassination attempt in Kandahar.

49 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2003

August--NATO assumes control of security in Kabul, marking the first time in its history it has assumed control of a city outside of Europe.

Boots on the ground: 4,100; 45 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2004

January--A Loya Jirga (grand assembly) adopts a new constitution. The act provides for a stronger presidency.

March--Afghanistan negotiates a deal to receive \$8.2 billion in aid over three years. Abuses of prisoners at the Bagram Detention Center are publicized. The resulting loss of confidence and trust in U.S. forces creates public dissension at home and in Afghanistan.

October/November--With high voter turnout and peaceful polling, Hamid Karzai wins the Afghanistan presidential election with 55 percent of the vote.

Boots on the ground: 9,800; 52 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2005

September--Afghanistan's first parliamentary and provincial elections are held. This marks the first time in more than 30 years for such voting.

December--The newly elected Afghan parliament conducts its first session.

Boots on the ground: 18,700; 98 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2006

February--International donors meeting in London pledge more than \$10 billion in reconstruction aid through 2010.

May/June--Violent anti-U.S. protests erupt after a U.S. military vehicle crashes into several people, killing them. Scores of Afghans are killed in battles between Taliban fighters and Afghan/coalition forces.

July--NATO troops assume the lead on military operations conducted in southern Afghanistan. Fierce fighting erupts in Taliban strongholds as the Afghan government tries to extend its influence.

October--NATO assumes full security responsibility for Afghanistan.

December--The U.S. Air Force airdrops 3.5 million pounds of materiel to locations throughout the country.

Boots on the ground: 20,300; 98 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2007

March--Pakistan claims to have captured Mullah Obaidullah Akhund, reportedly the third most senior member of the Taliban Leadership Council. Heavy fighting commences on Helmand Province as NATO and Afghan forces launch the largest operation to date in the south. The Shinwar massacre occurs.

May--Mullah Dadullah, the Taliban's most senior military commander, is killed in battles with U.S. and Afghan forces. Afghan and Pakistani troops clash in a series of border incidents, marking the worst violence in decades.

July--The Taliban kidnaps a group of South Korean Christians. Two are murdered, with the remaining hostages freed over several weeks.

August--UN reports indicate that opium production has soared to record highs.

December--Afghan officials accuse two senior European Union and UN envoys of making contact with the Taliban. The pair is expelled from the country. 8.12 million pounds of materiel is airdropped over the year, supporting operations within the region.

Boots on the ground: 26,000; 117 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2008

February--Prince Harry is pulled out of Afghanistan after his location is revealed. He had served for 10 weeks in Helmand Province.

June--The Taliban orchestrates enormous jailbreaks, releasing 800-plus insurgents. The British defense secretary announces UK troop numbers will exceed 8,000 in the spring of 2009, its highest total to date.

July--A suicide bomber attacks the Indian Embassy in Kabul, killing 50 people. Karzai blames Pakistani Intelligence, who deny participation.

September--President George W. Bush authorizes an additional 4,500 troops for operations in Afghanistan.

October--Germany expands Afghanistan troop presence from 1,000 to 4,500.

November--Taliban leaders reject peace talks with Karzai, refusing to negotiate until foreign troops leave.

December--Karzai and Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari agree to joint operations to fight militants in the Afghan/Pakistan border regions. 16.57 million pounds of materiel is airdropped to various locations in support of operations in 2008.

Boots on the ground: 27,000; 155 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2009

February--Up to 20 NATO countries pledge to increase military and other commitments after the U.S. announces plans to add 17,000 additional troops.

March--President Barack Obama reveals a new strategy for 4,000 more troops to train Afghan army and police forces.

May--General Stanley McChrystal replaces Gen. David McKiernan. The largest drug seizure ever in Helmand Province nets 60 insurgents and more than 100 tons of drugs.

August--Presidential elections are held, but tainted by Taliban attacks at polling centers, low turnout and accusations of fraud.

November--After Abdullah Abdullah withdraws from the election, Karzai wins with 55 percent of the votes and is sworn in for a second term.

December--Obama boosts U.S. troop strength to 100,000. Seven CIA agents are killed in an al-Qaida suicide attack in Khost. In 2009, 32.26 million pounds of materiel is airdropped to personnel conducting operations in austere locations.

311 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2010

January--Parliament rejects three-fourths of Karzai's 24 cabinet nominations.

February--Operations in Helmand Province take place to establish government control in the south of that area.

July--Wikileaks releases thousands of classified U.S. military documents related to Afghanistan. Karzai's timetable for security control by 2014 is endorsed. General David Petraeus assumes command of U.S. and NATO International Security Assistance forces. There are 65 U.S. casualties in July. This marks the highest single month of casualties during the war in Afghanistan.

August--30,000 additional U.S. troops arrive in country. The Pentagon releases a statement expecting increased casualties.

November--NATO agrees to hand over control of security to Afghan forces by the end of 2014.

December--Airmen supporting deployed airdrop operations in Afghanistan airdrop a record 60.4 million pounds of cargo to austere locations throughout the country.

499 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2011

January--U.S. forces suffer 25 casualties, the lowest monthly total since April 2010. Karzai visits Russia to discuss cooperation.

March/April--A cache sweep intended to disrupt a Taliban spring offensive in southeast Afghanistan results in the deaths of 130 insurgents and six U.S. Soldiers.

May--Osama bin Laden is killed in Abbottabad, Pakistan, by U.S. Special Forces. His body is buried at sea.

June 6--The White House issues a statement that the U.S. will soon reduce troop levels by 15,000. Petraeus is confirmed as the new CIA chief. Marine Gen. John Allen will be his replacement as commander of the NATO International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces Afghanistan.

155 total U.S. deaths for the year*

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IRAQ

2001

September--Following attacks on the twin towers and the Pentagon, President George W. Bush declares a "war on terror," citing Iraq as a significant player in an "axis of evil." Evidence suggests that one of the attackers was at a Salman Pak training facility in Iraq, and that he had contact with an Iraqi official in the Czech Republic; the meeting is later verified. Iraqi defectors claim that Mohammed Atta was trained to fly a Boeing 707 at Salman Pak.

Sept. 20--Saddam Hussein and Osama bin Laden are potentially tied as having a fruitful marriage of convenience. British and U.S. planes bomb missile batteries in southern Iraq. Iraq denies connection with the Sept. 11 attacks.

2002

January--Bush addresses a UN special session and refers to Iraq, Iran and North Korea as an "axis of evil." He states the regimes "pose a growing danger."

March--UN Secretary General Kofi Annan is unable to influence Iraqi representatives to allow UN weapons inspectors to return.

September--Bush calls for unilateral action against Iraq. Iraq announces it will allow inspectors to return, but recants the offer, specifying no new U.S. sanctions as a condition of acceptance.

November--UN Security Council Resolution 1441 calls for Iraq to cooperate with UN inspection teams.

2003

January--Hans Blix and the International Atomic Energy Commission submit reports on Iraq weapons of mass destruction.

March--Arab summit calls for Iraq to disarm, without calling for regime change. The U.S. bombs Baghdad.

April--U.S. troops seize control of Baghdad.

May--Bush announces that the Iraq War is over.

July--Hussein's sons, Uday and Qusay, are killed in a gun battle with U.S. forces.

August--Evidence suggests that intelligence estimates were increased to indicate Iraq was stockpiling WMD. Ali Hassan al-Majid, also known as "Chemical Ali," is captured. He does not divulge any new WMD information.

October--A UN Security Council Resolution recognizes the U.S.-endorsed provisional Iraqi government. The resolution authorizes UN aid under U.S. oversight, but calls for a timetable for Iraqi self-governance.

December--U.S. forces capture Saddam Hussein in his hometown of Tikrit.

Boots on the ground: 93,900; 486 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2004

March--Terror attacks occur in Karbala and Baghdad during Ashura activities. Iraq's interim government submits an interim, U.S.-approved constitution.

April--Moqtada al-Sadr, a radical Shia leader, establishes his Mehdi army. The insurgent force fortifies itself in Najaf and Fallujah.

June--UN Security Council Resolution 1546 recognizes the interim Iraqi government and calls on the UN to support it. The U.S. hands over sovereignty to the interim government, headed by Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

August--Coalition forces attack the holy city of Najaf to expel al-Sadr and his Mehdi army; Ayatollah Ali Sistani brokers a peace deal. Photo evidence emerges of U.S. abuse of Iraqi prisoners at Abu Gharib. U.S. contractors are killed in Najaf, their bodies desecrated.

November--U.S., coalition and Iraqi forces attack rebel forces--led by al-Quaida in Iraq--member Abu-Musab al-Zarqawi--in Fallujah. Reports suggest hundreds of civilians are killed and mosques and hospitals are damaged.

Boots on the ground: 108,400; 846 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2005

January--8 million people participate in Iraq's elections for a Transitional National Authority.

April--Parliament elects Kurdish leader Jalal Talabani as president. Shia Ibrahim Jaafari is named prime minister. The Sunni Awakening movement (also known as the Sons of Iraq program) forms coalitions that unite to maintain security in their communities. The movement starts among Sunni tribes in Anbar Province to become an ad-hoc nationwide armed force in less than a year.

May--Continued violence (car bombings, shootings and bomb explosions) increases Iraqi civilian deaths to almost double those in April.

October--Voters approve a new constitution aimed at creating an Islamic Federal Democracy.

November--The Abu Mahals, a tribe located near the Syrian border, forms an alliance with the U.S. to receive weapons and security training, marking the beginnings of the Anbar Awakening.

Boots on the ground: 161,200; 844 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2006

January--United Iraqi Alliance, a Shia-led party, wins the December elections; however, it fails to gain an absolute majority.

February--Sectarian violence continues to permeate Iraq. A bomb attack in Samarra targets a Shia shrine, and the resulting clashes lead to hundreds of deaths.

May/June--Sectarian violence rages; civilian deaths average more than 100 per day. Al-Qaida in Iraq leader Abu Musab al-Zarqawi is killed by an air strike.

December--The U.S. Congress-appointed Iraq Study Group describes the situation in the country as "grave and deteriorating." Saddam Hussein is executed.

Boots on the ground: 155,100; 820 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2007

January--Bush announces a new Iraq strategy. The "surge" calls for 21,500 Soldiers and Marines to supplement the current forces in Iraq. Other announcements include job programs for Iraqis, more reconstruction proposals and \$1.2 billion in aid.

May--144 Iraqi parliamentary lawmakers sign on to a legislative petition calling on the United States to set a timetable for withdrawal.

June--The Iraqi Parliament votes 85 to 59 to require the Iraqi government to consult with Parliament before requesting additional extensions of the UN Security Council mandate for coalition operations in Iraq.

September--The Iraqi government revokes the license of U.S. security firm Blackwater USA after the killing of eight civilians, including a woman and an infant.

Boots on the ground: 131,500; 903 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2008

2008--Now in its fifth year, the war costs approximately \$12 billion a month.

March--Violence in Iraq is reportedly curtailed by 40 to 80 percent, according to a Pentagon report.

September--Bush, speaking on the fifth anniversary of Operation Iraqi Freedom, states that the war in Iraq has been "longer and harder and more costly than we anticipated," and that there is "still hard work to be done." But he said that the surge was working and had "opened the door to a major strategic victory in the broader war on terror."

November--The U.S. signs a Status of Forces Agreement with Iraq. The agreement calls for all U.S. forces to be out of Iraqi cities by the end of 2009, and out of the country by 2011.

December--The overall level of violence in the country drops 80 percent since the surge began in January 2007, and the country's murder rate drops to pre-war levels.

Boots on the ground: 160,200; 313 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2009

January--The United States officially hands over security responsibility of the Green Zone to Iraqi security forces.

Jan. 31--Iraq provincial elections are held. Voter turnout fails to meet expectations and is the lowest on record in Iraq. Some provincial candidates and those close to them face political assassinations and attempted assassinations; there is also other violence related to the elections.

April--Protesters march against U.S. occupation on the sixth anniversary of the fall of Baghdad to coalition forces. The UK ends combat operations.

August--The last brigade combat team leaves Iraq. This marks a significant decrease in boots on the ground, as well as improved Iraqi security force proficiency. Remaining troops are termed "Advisory and Assistance Brigades."

December--The Iraqi Ministry of Oil awards contracts to international oil companies.

Boots on the ground: 161,200; 148 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2010

April--U.S. and Iraqi forces kill Abu Ayyub al-Masri, the leader of al-Qaida in Iraq, in a joint American-Iraqi operation near Tikrit.

Aug. 31--"The United States has paid a huge price to put the future of Iraq in the hands of its people. We have sent our young men and women to make enormous sacrifices in Iraq, and spent vast resources abroad at a time of tight budgets at home. We have persevered because of a belief we share with the Iraqi people--a belief that out of the ashes of war, a new beginning could be born in this cradle of civilization. Through this remarkable chapter in the history of the United States and Iraq, we have met our responsibility. Now, it is time to turn the page."
--President Barack Obama's address on Iraq

Sept. 1--The transition to Operation New Dawn marks the official end to Operation Iraqi Freedom and U.S. combat operations in Iraq. The remaining 50,000 U.S. servicemembers serving in Iraq conduct stability operations, focusing on advising, assisting and training Iraqi security forces.

Dec. 15--The UN lifts sanctions on Iraq first imposed during the Saddam Hussein administration.

48 total U.S. deaths for the year*

2011

January--Sons of Iraq membership totals 51,900; their role in building security has been significant.

Iraq timeline links/Web references

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Page last updated Thu September 1st, 2011 at 10:59