

Province Profile - Khost



Key Issues

Deteriorating Security Environment

- Khost borders the remote mountainous Pakistani region of North Waziristan and has been a **central front between U.S. forces and militants**.
- During 2007 and 2008 Khost was considered the 'crown jewel' in the **American counterinsurgency effort in Afghanistan**. At the time, Ambassador Richard Holbrooke called it "an American success story."
- Today, **the security situation has since deteriorated** to the point that Khost is now [described](#) as one of the most dangerous provinces in Afghanistan.
- Gen. McChrystal has identified regaining control of Khost as **the insurgents' second-biggest goal in Afghanistan**, after capturing the city of Kandahar.

The Haqqani Network and 'Shadow Government'

- Most violence in Khost has been linked to the Haqqani network, which **operates with relative ease on both sides of the porous Afghanistan-Pakistan border**. Its operations also extend to other parts of Afghanistan.
- Its leader, **Jalaluddin Haqqani**, rose to prominence as a leader of the Islamist uprising against the Soviet occupation in the 1980s, and is said to have been a key CIA asset. His son, **Sirajuddin Haqqani** has taken over the majority of leadership due to his father's ill health. Both are said to be based in North Waziristan, in Pakistan.
- According to Afghan and U.S. officials, the network controls many of the districts surrounding Khost city, using them as bases to launch attacks against the city and wage campaigns to intimidate the local population. The network also runs a **'shadow government' of local officials** in most parts of the province.
- Experts believe that the Haqqani leadership is closely **coordinating its activities with the Quetta Shura** (the Taliban leadership), and is also believed to have close ties to al Qaeda. U.S. officials fear a Haqqani-controlled Khost would quickly become a **new haven for al Qaeda** in Afghanistan.

Cross-Border Influence

- **Connections with Northern Waziristan are strong** in Khost. The remote district of Spera is used as an infiltration point for militants crossing to and from Pakistan. The border terrain is some of the most inhospitable and challenging in Afghanistan, making security patrols and sustained surveillance extremely difficult.
- Despite improved road links, **Khost remains isolated from the rest of Afghanistan** and is more tied to North Waziristan than to Kabul.

Recent Events

- In January 2010, a blast in the Khost governor's office, inside a heavily-guarded compound, wounded the acting governor Taher Khan Sabri.
- In December 2009, a suicide attack against Forward Operating Base Chapman located about 3 miles southeast of Khost city, killed seven CIA operatives.

Key Facts

- **Governor of Khost Province:** The Acting Governor is Taher Khan Sabari
- **Provincial Capital:** Khost (city)
- **Size:** 1,600 square miles (about the size of the San Francisco Bay Area).
- **Members of Parliament:** 4 including 1 woman, out of 249 total house members.

Total Province Population: approx. 640,000

- Vast majority (98%) live in rural areas.
- Almost all (99%) of population is Pashtun.
- In addition, 100,000 *Kuchi* nomads live in Khost

Literacy and Education:

- Around 44% of men and only 7% of women in Khost are literate – equal overall to the national average of approx 28%.
- About 38% of children aged 6-13 are enrolled in school, but only 14% of girls go to school.

Economy of Province (reported household incomes):

Agriculture (46%), livestock (38%) and non-farm day labor (25%) account for the majority of household income in Khost. Opium cultivation is extremely low (less than 1%).

Infrastructure:

- 4% of population has access to electricity, but only 2% is serviced by municipal supply.
- 82% has access to community drinking water.
- 1% has access to sanitary toilet facilities.
- Approx. two-thirds of roads are car-worthy, given seasonal conditions (of winter snow, etc).
- Over 70% of population is covered by mobile phone networks

Possible Questions

- What is being done to promote Afghan official governance and leadership in Khost, to counter the insurgents' influence and intimidation of the local population?
- What is the reason for the deterioration in security in Khost over the last two years?
- How effective is the US-led Provincial Reconstruction Team in Khost and what lessons can be drawn from it?

Map Source

- [BBC](#)