

Afghanistan's Borders

Afghanistan's Neighbors

Pakistan - 1500 miles of border; 2 major crossing points, 6 minor crossings.

- The majority of equipment and supplies for US and NATO forces flows through the Khyber Pass (Torkham) east of Jalalabad, and Chamman (Spin Boldak) south of Kandahar.
- **Multiple, unofficial routes through mountainous terrain**, long-established by families and tribes that straddle both sides of the border, are also used by insurgents and smugglers, without detection by officials.
- The Afghanistan-Pakistan border line was drawn by British Foreign Secretary Sir Mortimer Durand, in 1893. The **'Durand Line'** is still contentious today, and its validity remains disputed.

Iran - 580 miles of border; two major crossing points into Herat and Nimroz Provinces.

- Recent reports indicate that **weapons and fighters** are increasingly entering western Afghanistan through the Iranian border.
- Iran and Afghanistan are planning to build a **new shared border town** at Sarbisheh on Iran's northeastern border.

China - 47 miles of border; one major crossing point into the Wakhan Corridor.

- Despite its smallness and remoteness, the border is a **strategically important entry point** for Chinese persons and materials.
- The Chinese government is reportedly **building a 50-mile road inside Afghanistan** that leads to within a few miles of the Chinese border; a **border supply depot** for patrols; and a **communications center** boosting cell phone coverage along the border.

Key Issues

Border Security

- The **Afghan Border Police** guards the "green" international border and the Border Security Zone, which extends 55 kilometers into the territory of Afghanistan, and controls pedestrian and vehicular traffic at border crossing points.
- Many commentators describe the **lack of resources and capacity to properly police Afghanistan's borders**. Even at major check points, many insurgents, drugs and weapons pass through undetected. Complaints of bribery and lack of regulation are common. It is estimated that only 2 to 3 percent of vehicles passing through Chamman are regularly checked. Inspection processes can be uncoordinated and chaotic resulting in major delays and a hindrance to trade and economic interests.
- Pakistan says it maintains **1000 security posts along its border territory, compared with 100 on the Afghan side**. Pakistan has previously planned to erect a fence along the border but its length, terrain, and political sensitivity make this unlikely and impractical.

Porous Borders

- The unmonitored and **unrestricted flow of people, drugs, weapons and cash** across Afghanistan's borders remains one of the most critical threats to its internal security, and a destabilizing factor for the entire region. Insurgent fighters regularly cross between the battlegrounds of southern Afghanistan and safe havens in neighboring Pakistan's NWFP and FATA regions.
- In addition to illicit goods and arms, smugglers also carry raw materials, vehicles and other consumer goods illegally across the unchecked borders, damaging the formal economy.

Entry for International Supply Routes

- Secure and dependable access points across Afghanistan's borders are **critical to the US and NATO mission** that relies heavily on overland supply chains.
- **High-dependence on the two Pakistani border crossings** has left supply routes vulnerable at times. Sudden, arbitrary closure of the border and reduction of vehicle lanes to single tracks can create long delays and tailbacks. Taliban insurgents have attacked jammed convoys, stealing and destroying millions of dollars of supplies and trucks.
- **Use of the Northern Distribution Network (NDN)** as a secure route into Afghanistan through the northern border with Uzbekistan is increasing. The NDN was set up by US Transport Command (TRANSCOM), with routes through Russia and Central Asia.



Afghanistan's border is 3435 miles long.

Afghanistan's Neighbors Cont.

Uzbekistan 85 miles of border; one major crossing point (river bridge).

- The Afghanistan-Uzbekistan Friendship Bridge built by the Soviet Army in 1982 at the Uzbek town of **Termez** is now the main entry point for the Northern Distribution Network (NDN) transporting US and NATO goods and supplies via Europe, Russia and Central Asia.

Tajikistan - 750 miles of border; four major crossing points – all river bridges.

- Three new bridge border crossings have been built across the **Panj River** in the last 8 years by the Agha Khan Development Network (AKDN).
- A fourth 'Afghanistan-Tajikistan Bridge' built by the US Army Corps of Engineers in 2008, provides an alternative entry point for the NDN.

Turkmenistan - 460 miles of border; one major crossing point.

- The broad gauge former Soviet Railway that crosses into Afghanistan at **Towraghondi** was reopened in 2007.
- The border remains relatively closed and negotiations to open up access for international traffic have made little progress.

Map Source

- [CIA World Factbook](#)

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