

## Afghanistan's National Army Order of Battle

### Democratic Republic of Afghanistan's Armed Forces Order of Battle (1980s)

4 Army Corps  
13 Infantry Divisions  
22 Brigades (3 tank, 1 mechanized, 11 border, 1 artillery, 1 air defense, 2 support, 1 "Guards", 2 "Commando")  
40 Separate Regiments

The DRA Armed Forces had total personnel strength between 120,000 and 150,000 over time.<sup>1</sup> Conscripts constituted 70% of the soldiers in the army, only 30% were volunteers. In 1982, the DRA raised the mandatory service for conscripts from two to three years, and in 1984 from three to four years. By 1984, the DRA suffered 17,000 fatalities and 26,000 desertions, leaving a ground force of 30-40,000 at any given time.<sup>2</sup> Every month, an estimated 1,500 to 2,000 men deserted.

### The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan's Armed Forces Order of Battle (2009)<sup>3</sup>

6 Corps Headquarters  
1 Division Headquarters  
22 Light Infantry Brigade Headquarters  
1 Tank Battalion  
95 infantry/combat support/combat service support battalions/garrison support units  
1 QRF Brigade consisting of 1 tank, 1 mechanized infantry and 1 infantry battalion<sup>4</sup>  
1 Commando Brigade Headquarters  
8 Commando battalions  
1 Special Forces Brigade Headquarters  
1 Headquarters Security Support Brigade HQ with 2 infantry battalions  
1 Counter-Narcotics battalion

The Afghan National Army fluctuates between 100,100 and 130,000 personnel at any given time. Currently, the force is 100% volunteer with no forced conscription initiatives. Desertion rates have improved from a high of nearly 50% in 2003 to a reported 10% in 2010.<sup>5</sup> At least one U.S. official has suggested the actual desertion rate may be as high as 19%.

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<sup>1</sup> Desertions are thought to have kept the DRA ground forces around 40,000 for most of the war. The Air Force and air defense units totaled 7,000; the Sarandoy internal security force had strength around 15,000; border security units reached 4,000 and militia groups totaled around 40,000, many of whom were part-time fighters. For more, see The Russian General Staff, translated and edited by Lester W. Grau & Michael A. Gress, *The Soviet Afghan War: How a Super-power Fought and Lost*, (KS: University of Kansas Press, 2002), 48, 322 fn 9.

<sup>2</sup> Anthony Arnold, *Afghanistan: The Soviet Invasion in Perspective*, (Stanford, CA: Hoover Institution Press, 1985), 100.

<sup>3</sup> CJ Radin, "Afghan National Security Forces Order of Battle," *the Long War Journal*, February 14, 2009. Actual data is based on an unpublished version of the Afghan OOB obtained by the author in late 2010.

<sup>4</sup> Although the tank and mechanized infantry battalions are currently used as light infantry for now since there is not enough maintenance support to keep the tanks and APCs running.

<sup>5</sup> *A Force in Fragments: Reconstituting the Afghan National Army*, Asia Report N°190, International Crisis Group, May 12, 2010, 19.