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## Badghis Province: Examining the Taliban's Northwestern Campaign

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### Badghis Province: Examining the Taliban's Northwestern Campaign

The persistent fighting and terroristic activity plaguing southern Afghanistan has slowly crept into the western and northwestern provinces, raising fears that the Taliban have expanded their efforts into opening a northern front. The Taliban's gateway to the north rests in the remote and lightly defended province of Badghis, a sparsely inhabited region of 500,000 ethnically diverse residents and the second most underdeveloped province in Afghanistan.<sup>2</sup>



However, the isolation of Badghis should not underestimate its strategic value. Badghis was the first northern province overrun and held by the Taliban during their rise to power in late 1996.<sup>3</sup> The Taliban later used Badghis as a springboard to launch a series of military offensives across northern Afghanistan, including attacks in Faryab, Jawzjan and the particularly bloody assault on Balkh province. Over the past two years, the Taliban have once again committed themselves to reasserting their influence and control over this area. The level of insurgent violence in Badghis has risen 263 per cent since 2007, a drastic increase that could threaten the future stability and security for most of northern Afghanistan. (Figure 1)

The central government is desperately trying to expand its vulnerable influence outside the provincial capital of Qala-e-Naw and into the surrounding mountainous districts where a growing Taliban infestation has taken root. Additionally, recent Afghan government initiatives to pacify the region's security, including the controversial concession to local tribal elders by releasing a top imprisoned Taliban figure, may serve as a case-study to how future "negotiations" with the Taliban might unfold. The Afghan government is not short of options in preventing a full-scale Taliban footprint in Badghis, however time may not be on their side. If the Taliban opens a northern front their efforts could be used as a model in the west and prove detrimental to government efforts at reconciliation with moderate insurgents.

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<sup>2</sup> Rafael Roel Fernández, "The Contribution of the Spanish Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Qala-e-Naw to the Reconstruction and Development of Afghanistan," *Real Instituto Elcano*, May 2, 2008.

<sup>3</sup> Neamatollah Nojumi, *The Rise of the Taliban in Afghanistan* (Palgrave, 2002), page 159.

### “A Nest of Taliban”

There were limited International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) or government security forces deployed past Qala-e-Naw until October 2008, leaving the remote northern districts vulnerable to the Taliban, criminal syndicates and factional warlords. With only 600 Afghan National Police personnel assigned to the province, 300 of those are based in Qala-e-Naw, leaving roughly 40 to 50 police for each remaining district.<sup>4</sup> Two of the hardest hit areas in Badghis are the heavily-Pashtun inhabited districts of Ghormach and Balamurghab. Both districts, with the exception of their capitals, have largely fallen under the influence and control of the Taliban since 2007.

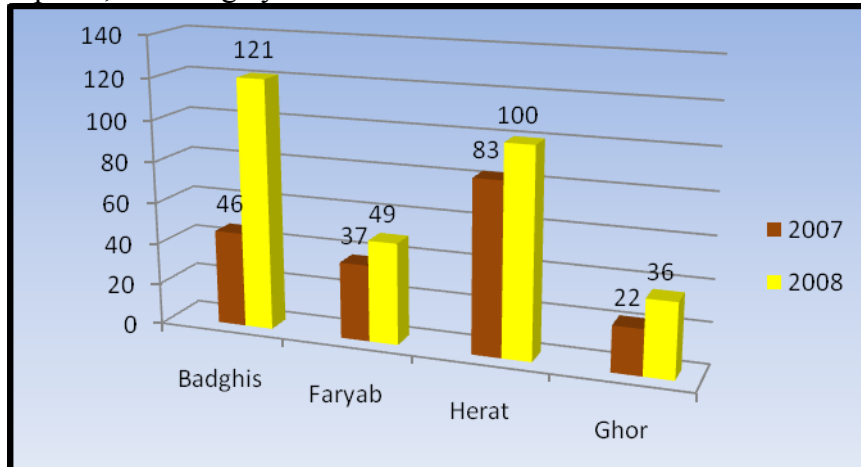


Figure 1- Data from Vigilante Security Services Afghanistan catalogs insurgent attacks in the Western Region Time Frame 1 January - 28 September

“Ghormach borders Faryab province and it is home to Taliban leader Abdul Rahman Haqani, who has close ties with higher Taliban ranks,” revealed a resident from Qala-e-Naw who spoke about the situation on condition of anonymity.<sup>5</sup> “Right now the government has strong control of the district center and a few villages, but the Taliban are based in its remote villages including Jahr-i-syah, Langar and Qala-i-Wali; this is where Abdul Rahman [Haqani] operates.” Haqani originally held the governorship of neighboring Ghor province during the Taliban era. Following the Taliban’s sweep from power in 2001, Mullah Omar tapped Haqani to lead resistance throughout the northwest where he led a series of large-scale assaults against the Balamurghab and Ghormach district centers.

“Ghormach was supposed to be under the control of the Spanish but was given to the Norwegian ISAF contingent because it took far too long for Spanish forces to reach the northern district,” noted David Beriain, a Spanish reporter who spent the most the summer in Badghis shooting a documentary on the insecurity of western Afghanistan. “Even when they finally reached Ghormach, it was usually after being ambushed several times along the way.”

<sup>4</sup> Rafael Roel Fernández, “The Contribution of the Spanish Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Qala-e-Naw to the Reconstruction and Development of Afghanistan,” *Real Instituto Elcano*, May 2, 2008.

<sup>5</sup> Resident of Badghis, email message to author on November 11, 2008.

In late November, media reports revealed the Afghan government's plan to remove Ghormach from the provincial authority of Badghis and officially make it part of neighboring Faryab province.<sup>6</sup> Norway currently runs the Faryab PRT, and along with US forces, has established a FOB in the Qaysar district where a small Afghan National Army (ANA) contingent is stationed as a Quick Reaction Force responsible for security in Qaysar and Ghormach.

Balamurghab has emerged as the Taliban's overall operations hub for northwestern Afghanistan. Local Taliban commanders claim to have 74 "bases" scattered throughout the Balamurghab district alone.<sup>7</sup> Beginning last year, heavy fighting between security forces and the Taliban forced hundreds of Balamurghab's residents to flee Badghis altogether. Many of the residents bypassed Qala-e-Naw and fled to Herat since they believed fighting would soon break out within the provincial capital.<sup>8</sup>

"It takes a full day to travel from Qala-e-Naw to Balamurghab. They know when foreign troops are coming; they have spotters in many of the villages and have all the time in the world to set up an ambush. It's a paradise for ambushes," explained David Beriain. "In August, Spanish and Italian forces along with US Special Forces launched an operation to build a FOB in Balamurghab. They come under attack almost every day. It took a full day to go there from Qala e Naw. In the winter it is impossible to travel by road so helicopters must be used. The company that was hired to do the demining there, took out \$70,000 to pay the Taliban just so they wouldn't attack their laborers and personnel."

### **Badghis Taliban Groups and Personalities**

The current trend in Badghis is troubling. Since early 2007, violence in Badghis has remained constant even though the Taliban lost several commanders due to capture, death and defection. The arrests of several top Badghis Taliban officials, including Mawlawi Dastagir, Mullah Abdul Qayum, Mullah Sarajuddin, top bomb-maker Mullah Muhammad Hanif, the defection of Mullah Ahmad Wardak, and the killing of Mullah Babai and his 20 fighters, has had little impact on the overall security situation in Badghis. In fact, the Taliban have filled these gaps and are once again capable of attacking armed ISAF convoys, destroying police trucks with roadside bombs, and attacking police checkpoints and district headquarters.

The Taliban factions fighting in Badghis have grown from small, lightly armed bands into much larger, better organized units capable of launching large-scale raids and simultaneous attacks. In 2007, Spanish intelligence estimated the Taliban presence in Badghis numbered roughly 200 fighters, by 2008, that estimate soared to well over 2,000.<sup>9</sup> With the Taliban's influence expanding throughout the province, inner-Taliban

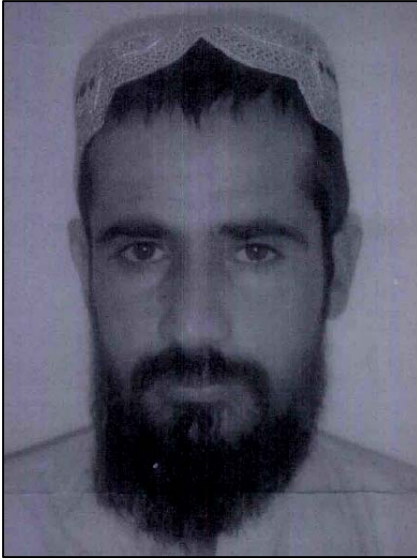
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<sup>5</sup> Nach Gebietsreform, "Afghanistan-Einsatz der Bundeswehr wird gefährlicher," *Spiegel Online*, November 29, 2008. Translated. Available at, <http://www.spiegel.de/politik/ausland/0,1518,593509,00.html>

<sup>6</sup> David Beriain, interview with Author on December 8, 2008.

<sup>7</sup> Carlos Echerverria Jesús, 'Risks Facing the Spanish Contingent in Afghanistan,' *Real Instituto Elcano*, translated to English, January 15, 2008.

<sup>8</sup> David Beriain, interview with author on December 8, 2008.



*Malawi Dastagir after his arrest in Herat*

rivalries arose over command and control issues by younger commanders vying for the top spot held by Abdul Rahman Haqani.

“Insurgent structure in Badghis is as in most provinces, dominated by the dichotomy between Quetta-appointed commanders and local emerging commanders,” suggested a western official in Kabul.<sup>10</sup> The four main commanders operating in Badghis, Mawlawi Dastagir, Abdul Rahman Haqani, Jamaluddin Mansoor Kakar and Mullah Amoruddin Yektan, have an illustrious history throughout the region and among each other.

Initially, Abdul Rahman Haqani, an old guard Taliban leader who served as the governor of Ghor province prior to 2001, was appointed by Mullah Omar to lead the resistance movement in the northwest. Haqani used his prestige and connection with Mullah Omar to establish Ghormach as a Taliban stronghold in 2006.

By the spring of 2007, ISAF and Coalition forces successfully targeted and killed several top Taliban commanders across southern Afghanistan, including Mullah Dadullah, the Taliban’s most senior military strategist. Following Dadullah’s death and fearing spies within the ranks; Mullah Omar temporarily prevented senior commanders from entering Afghanistan, which left Haqani as an “absentee commander in chief.” Although Haqani helped orchestrate the large-scale assault against the Balamurghab and Ghormach district headquarters in late June and again in early July, his presence in Badghis became more sporadic throughout the summer.<sup>11</sup> By November, Mawlawi Dastagir, a young and influential commander, viewed himself as the Taliban commander for Badghis province and even spoke about the Taliban’s strategy to local media.<sup>12</sup> The declaration sent a ripple throughout the region and eventually led to a divide between those loyal to Dastagir and those devoted to Haqani.

“There was a rivalry between Mawlawi Dastagir and Abdul Rahman Haqani and a sub-commander Jamaluddin [Mansoor] Kakar, which some allege led to Dastagir being arrested because the Haqani/Jamaluddin faction leaked information about his movement,” noted a western official familiar with the case. In early March 2008, Dastagir was nabbed

<sup>9</sup> Western official, email message to author on December 6, 2008.

<sup>10</sup> “Dozens killed as Taliban attack dist headquarters,” Pajhwok Afghan News, June 10, 2007. Available at, <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=37599> , Syed Saleem Shahzad, “A Taliban surrender and a mass attack,” June 12, 2007. Available at [http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South\\_Asia/IF12Df01.html](http://www.atimes.com/atimes/South_Asia/IF12Df01.html). “6 ISAF soldiers dead in blast; Taliban claim capturing district,” Pajhwok Afghan News, July 4, 2007. Available at, <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=38911>

<sup>11</sup> Sayed Yaqub Ibrahim, “The Taliban’s Northern Front,” *IWPR*, November 20, 2007. Available at, [http://www.iwpr.net/index.php?apc\\_state=hen&s=o&o=l=EN&p=arr&s=f&o=340751](http://www.iwpr.net/index.php?apc_state=hen&s=o&o=l=EN&p=arr&s=f&o=340751)

in a covert Afghan intelligence operation in northern Herat. “Dastagir was arrested and after confessing his links to the Taliban sent to prison. In his case, the NDS prosecutor recommended 16 years imprisonment for Mawlawi Dastagir.” With Dastagir behind bars, Haqani and others resumed their insurgent activity until Haqani suffered serious injuries during a clash with security forces. Haqani retreated from Afghanistan to Pakistan where he was tracked down by Afghan intelligence agents at a hospital in Peshawar, although he was not arrested.<sup>13</sup>

Another young and rising Taliban commander, Jamaluddin Mansoor, a sub-commander of Haqani, took over command of insurgent activity during the summer of 2008, and along with the cooperation of Mullah Amoruddin, turned Badghis into a kill zone. He shifted resources and drew on local connections to help establish Balamurghab as the key Taliban stronghold in Badghis. By summer’s end, a controversial move by the government prematurely released Dastagir from prison in an attempt to pacify the region and exploit the cleavages present between the two powerful Taliban factions in the area. The government’s decision to release Dastagir from prison would ultimately have dire consequences for the security of Badghis, the central government and its security forces.

### **Badghis ‘Blowback’**

The central government released Mawlawi Dastagir from prison in September, a full 16-years early, as a good will gesture designed to improve the security in Balamurghab. “Dastagir was released in September following a deal struck between the government and elders of Balamurghab. The understanding was that the elders would guarantee the security of both the roadway and government forces, ‘control’ Dastagir and isolate the Rahman Haqani groups in the area,” stated a western official familiar with the situation.<sup>14</sup> The near completion of an expensive 45-meter bridge project in Balamurghab prompted the government’s decision to release Dastagir from prison prematurely. The government hoped to protect the bridge site, the first large-scale construction effort completed in the district, from local Taliban and insurgent sabotage.

“In mid-October after he was released, Dastagir was reportedly named Taliban commander for Badghis Province, with Jamaluddin as his deputy, by local Taliban commanders in an attempt to overcome their past division. The decision was forwarded around October 20, to Quetta, waiting for their ‘approval’ of his appointment. This ‘approval’ had come through and so the attempt by the Afghan government to play on the rivalry between the two ended up unsuccessful.”<sup>15</sup>

Jamaluddin Mansoor recently confirmed his status as the Taliban’s “deputy governor” for Badghis in a recent interview with local sources in Badghis. Mawlawi Dastagir, he said, has been confirmed as the Taliban’s “Governor” for Badghis. (Figure 2)

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<sup>12</sup> “‘Piles and Piles of Evidence’ that Pakistan Is Responsible for Insurgency,” *Spiegel Online International*, August 12, 2008. Available at, <http://www.spiegel.de/international/world/0,1518,571469,00.html>

<sup>13</sup> Western official, email message to author on December 6, 2008.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.



Figure 2- Jamaluddin Mansoor (center) speaks about Taliban tactics in a video obtained by Spanish reporter David Beriain.

The security situation in Balamurghab plummeted following Dastagir's reintegration into the insurgent landscape. On November 25, three Afghan engineers working on the northern leg of the "ring-road" highway were abducted by Taliban fighters loyal to Mullah Amoruddin in the Balamurghab area.<sup>16</sup> Mullah Amoruddin's men executed one of the engineers five days later. Two days after the abduction, a swarm of at least 200 Taliban fighters attacked a 47-vehicle aid convoy led by the ANA and Afghan police in Akazo village, just north of Balamurghab's district capital. The large band of Taliban fighters was allegedly commanded by Mawlawi Dastagir. The three-hour gun battle left 13 ANA soldiers dead, 11 wounded, and 16 others missing.<sup>17</sup> Scores of vehicles were burnt and destroyed while many others were stolen by the Taliban raiders.

November began with a string of roadside bombs and a Taliban instigated ambush in Ghormach; resulting in an airstrike that killed up to a dozen Taliban fighters and seven civilians. The home of a provincial council member was allegedly destroyed in the attack, killing two of his sons and a grandson, according to Ghormach district governor Abdullah Jan.<sup>18</sup> The Norwegian Quick Reaction Force that scrambled to the scene of the clash from neighboring Faryab province was also ambushed by Taliban fighters, leaving two Norwegian officers wounded according to media reports.<sup>19</sup> October marked the most drastic increase in Badghis attacks this year, with seven major incidents occurring during its last three weeks alone. (Figure 3)

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<sup>15</sup> Ahmad Qurishi, "Three road construction workers abducted," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, November 25, 2008. Available at, <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=65900> Note: One of the Afghan engineers was later murdered by his captors on December 2, 2008.

<sup>17</sup> "Taliban kill 13 Afghan soldiers," *Associated Press*, November 27, 2008. Available at, [http://74.125.93.104/translate\\_c?hl=en&sl=es&tl=en&u=http://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/397006.mata-taliban-a-13-soldados-afganos.html&usg=ALkJrhiB1LfmfOviQZdinZx0eduN7uDcog](http://74.125.93.104/translate_c?hl=en&sl=es&tl=en&u=http://www.elsiglodetorreon.com.mx/noticia/397006.mata-taliban-a-13-soldados-afganos.html&usg=ALkJrhiB1LfmfOviQZdinZx0eduN7uDcog)

<sup>18</sup> Waheed Wafa and Sangar Rahimi, "U.S. Says Taliban Put Afghans in Line of Fire," *The New York Times*, November 6, 2008. [http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/world/asia/07afghan.html?\\_r=1&ref=asia](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/07/world/asia/07afghan.html?_r=1&ref=asia)

<sup>19</sup> "13 Taliban, 7 civilians killed in clash in N Afghanistan," *Xinhua*, November 6, 2008. [http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-11/06/content\\_10318356.htm](http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2008-11/06/content_10318356.htm)

## **Security Forecast**

Security and stability for Badghis remains elusive. A reconstituted Taliban force with great support among the population, especially in rugged and remote Pashtun inhabited areas such as Balamurghab, Ghormach, Muqur and Jawand, has effectively established the Taliban's gateway into the north. The long-cycle of inadequate security forces deployed throughout the province, especially with the lack of indigenous Afghan forces, has helped incubate resentment and stalled development in key rural areas.

The importance of the roadway is critical. As it currently stands, there is no paved portion outside of Qala-e-Naw, a significant obstacle in providing security throughout the province. Torrential rains can wash out the existing dirt track road for days, and heavy military convoys have to be carefully weighed to ensure they can hold up against the soft earth without sinking or bogging down. The lack of paved roads also limits the types of vehicles used during military and humanitarian operations. The limited incursions by Afghan and ISAF forces into the Taliban controlled areas over the past year, Operation Shareen-Sahara (Desert Eagle), Operation Four Seasons, and Operation Karez, have had little overall impact. Ten-day operations such as these cannot provide the type of long lasting security needed to construct roads, safely transport aid and expand the influence of the central government. The Afghan government's decision to remove Ghormach district from the provincial authority of Badghis and make it part of Faryab speaks volumes about the security situation and how critical the roadway, or lack of paved roadway, has become.

ISAF and the Afghan government's slow approach to the restive and neglected districts improved by late summer when Spanish, Italian, Afghan and US-forces pushed deep into Balamurghab to establish a much-needed forward operation base (FOB Columbus) in the center of Taliban occupied territory. There is now mention of a FOB being proposed for Ghormach. Although these bases are a step in the right direction, the incredibly harsh winter weather and poor infrastructure will hamper logistics, especially regarding the safety of resupply convoys. Taliban fighters have recently turned their guns on these lightly defended convoys, including a World Food Program food convoy traveling to Jawand, an ISAF/Afghan ammunition convoy in Balamurghab and the vicious ambush against the massive 47-vehicle convoy in Balamurghab.

Harsh winter weather makes resupply by helicopter a perilous venture. The difficulty in maintaining the forward operating base in Balamurghab will certainly test the will of ISAF in regards to securing and stabilizing northern Afghanistan. The ANA needs a permanent presence in the province if the government ever expects to establish stability as well as facilitate ISAF's objective in turning security operations over to local forces.

### **Badghis: Future Frontline?**

The Taliban continue to gain ground and momentum especially as they begin to establish new sanctuaries outside of Balamurghab and Ghormach. However, this expansion brings consequences for Taliban commanders as local villages are resisting the authority from

Quetta-appointed Taliban leaders, and from those outside their own districts. In some instances, recent turf wars and inner-Taliban rivalries have exploded into violent exchanges, pitting Taliban against Taliban in a rare display of public disunity.

On December 11, 2008, Taliban fighters loyal to Mawlawi Dastagir opened fire on fighters loyal to Mullah Bahauddin in the Balamurghab district. One of Bahauddin's men died in the clash and four others were injured. Afghan security officials later indicated a disagreement over a stolen police truck operated by one of the Taliban factions instigated the exchange of gunfire.<sup>20</sup> A similar event took place in April of 2008, when fighters led by top Taliban leader Abdul Rahman Haqani fought a pitched battle with loyalists of Mullah Ahmad Wardak in the Jahr-i-syah village, Ghormach district. Five Taliban fighters were killed and three others suffered wounds in the clash.<sup>21</sup> Wardak later surrendered to Ghormach government officials along with 15 of his fighters in late August.<sup>22</sup> Friction between Taliban factions in Badghis remains a serious weakness for the northern insurgent groups. This friction represents the Achilles' heel of the northern Taliban, and despite Dastagir's reconciliation with rival factions, recent developments hint the current Taliban alliance is in danger.

At the moment, the Taliban's grip on power in northern Afghanistan remains feeble compared to the complete stranglehold they enjoy in southern Afghanistan. The current trend in Taliban violence and expanding influence in Badghis is not irreversible, but if left unchallenged, Badghis will surely suffer a Taliban takeover as it did in 1996. "We are trying to open up this route just as we did in the past," Dastagir told local reporters in 2007.<sup>23</sup> "Our policy is different up here. We have openly engaged the government and foreign forces in the south, but in the north we are quietly expanding our area. The government is weaker here than in the south and the mountains have provided good terrain for our operations. We are trying to work under cover now, and we see that people are welcoming us warmly. Soon we will occupy the whole entrance to the north." Resentment is high and sympathy for the Taliban is growing in Badghis, and if past Taliban statements offer a prophetic view of the future, Badghis will remain in the cross-hairs of the Taliban until they emerge victorious or are defeated.

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<sup>20</sup> Abdul Latif Ayubi, "Taliban infighting leaves one dead, four injured," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, available at, <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=66552>.

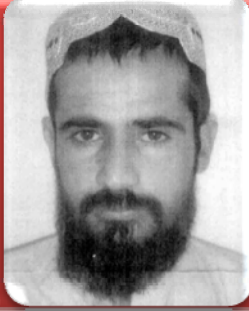
<sup>21</sup> Suliman Hashimi & Zabihullah Ihsas, "Taliban kill eight fellows in infighting," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, available at, <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=53256>

<sup>22</sup> Zabihullah Ehsas and Quraishi, "Taliban group surrenders in Badghis," *Pajhwok Afghan News*, available at, <http://www.pajhwok.com/viewstory.asp?lng=eng&id=61349>

<sup>23</sup> Sayed Yaqub Ibrahim, "The Taliban's Northern Front," *IWPR*, November 20, 2007. Available at, [http://www.iwpr.net/index.php?apc\\_state=hen&s=o&o=1=EN&p=arr&s=f&o=340751](http://www.iwpr.net/index.php?apc_state=hen&s=o&o=1=EN&p=arr&s=f&o=340751)

Figure 3- Taliban and insurgent activity in Badghis from June-November 2008

Date	Attack
Nov 27	Hundreds of Taliban fighters ambushed a 47-vehicle resupply convoy protected by the ANA and ANP in Balamurghab. Scores of Afghan security personnel were killed and wounded with approximately 17 others captured alive by the Taliban. Reports indicate Mawlawi Dastagir orchestrated the attack.
Nov 25	Taliban fighters led by Mullah Amoruddin abducted three Afghan road workers near Balamurghab.
Nov 13	ISAF forces battled Taliban insurgents in Ghormach. Airstrikes later killed 13 Taliban and seven civilians. A provincial council member's house was reportedly destroyed in the bombing, killing two of his sons and a grandson.
October 31	Two police and four Taliban were killed during an ambush in the Moqur district.
October 23	Seven Taliban were killed and six were wounded during a Coalition raid in the Ghormach district.
October 22	Taliban fighters ambushed an ammunition convoy in the Balamurghab district sparking a gun battle that killed two Taliban and wounded seven others.
October 12	Taliban fired rockets struck a NATO base in the Balamurghab district during a transfer of command ceremony. Separately, ISAF and Taliban fighters clashed for more than 12-hours which left up to 40 Taliban dead and wounded. Helicopter gunships and jets were utilized to quell the Taliban attack.
October 11	Taliban fighters ambushed an ISAF patrol sparking a fierce battle that lasted several hours.
October 10	Taliban fighters ambushed an ISAF patrol tasked with protecting a World Food Program convoy as it traveled from Qala-e-Naw to the Jawand district.
Sept. 11	Two security check-points were attacked by Taliban fighters in Ghormach. Two policemen were wounded and Taliban fighters managed to confiscate a police truck and a rocket launcher. Afghan authorities released Mawlawi Dastagir from prison as a good will gesture to tribal elders in Balamurghab in exchange for protection of the roadway and government forces in the district.
August 31	Taliban commander Mullah Ahmad Wardak surrendered to authorities in Ghormach along with 15 of his men.
August 12	Amrullah Saleh, the head of the National Directorate of Security (NDS), said Top Taliban commander for Badghis Mullah Abdul Rahman Haqani was recovering at a hospital in Peshawar after being "heavily wounded in recent fighting."
July 3	A major battle erupted between Taliban fighters and a combined ISAF/Afghan patrol. The gun fight lasted several hours, leaving an estimated 25 Taliban fighters killed and several Afghan policemen wounded.
June 24	Gulbulddin Hekmatyar sent a two page letter to <i>Pajhwok Afghan News</i> indicating his plan to expand his terrorist activities to northern provinces of Badakshan and Badghis.
June 2	A large number of Taliban attacked a checkpoint in the Balamurghab district near the border with Turkmenistan. Reports suggest as many as 100 Taliban took part in the raid while a second smaller band attacked the district headquarters in the Muqur district, killing some policemen and stealing government issued trucks. The Balamurghab siege ended after NATO aircraft bombed Taliban positions, killing an estimated 55 insurgents according to provincial authorities.



### Mawlawi Dastagir

- Newly appointed Taliban 'shadow' Governor for Badghis Province.
- Noorzai Pashtun from the Chalanak Payan village in Balamurghab.
- Arrested in March and later released from prison in Septmeber 2008



### Jamaluddin Mansoor Kakar

- Newly appointed deputy 'shadow" Governor for Badghis Province
- Very active in the Balamurghab district.
- Fromer rival of Mawlawi Dastagir



### Mullah Bahrodin

- Part-time rival of Mawalawi Dastagir
- Fighters associated with Bahrodin sparked a gunfight with Dastagir loyalists in Balamurghab on December 11, 2008.



### Abdul Rahman Haqani

- Former Taliban era-Governor of Ghor Province.
- Former Quetta-appointed Taliban commander for Badghis Province.
- Wounded in battle, Haqani received medical attention in Peshawar, Pakistan where he has significant ties.



### Mullah Amoruddin Yektan

- Powerful Taliban commander in Badghis Province.
- He is the Taliban's district commander for Ghormach.
- His fighters kidnapped threeAfghan roadworkers in late November, 2008 and later executed one of them.

