

# Prospects for Ukraine-American cooperation with in the military and military-technical spheres, taking into account the recent change of power in Afghanistan

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## Abstract

The article considers the peculiarities of assessments, conclusions of Ukrainian and Western analysts, experts and politicians on the prospects of U.S. cooperation with Ukraine in the military and military-technical spheres, taking into account the latest change of power in Afghanistan, which were published in August-September by media such as: Al Bawaba, BBC, Ganghara, Shephard Media, Law Fare blog, Oryx blog, The New York Times, The Sunday Times, U.S. Department of Defense, Європейська правда and others. The relevance of the proposed analysis is determined by the fact that it allows to understand the prospects of American support for Ukraine, taking into account the recent negative consequences of the seizure in Afghanistan of a large number of weapons and military equipment by the Taliban. The conducted qualitative analysis allowed identifying a number of issues that proved to be a priority for analysts in the political, military and military-technical cooperation spheres. It has been established that various statements about the fall into the hands of terrorists of modern U.S. weapons and military equipment in Afghanistan are not true. Manipulation of this data could lead to a decrease in the level of American military and military-technical support, both in Ukraine and in other NATO partner countries, which today oppose Russia's aggressive policy. In the future, this could negatively affect global and European security.

**Key words:** Afghanistan, Taliban, U.S., Ukraine, Military Cooperation, Military-Technical Cooperation.

## Introduction

Analysis of assessments, statements and conclusions of experts, analysts and politicians, current topics for discussion, as well as forecasts for further development of U.S. foreign policy, taking into account the Afghan factor, provide a deeper understanding of the process-taking place on the international arena in 2021. They

will help, first, to identify the most pressing issues of today, on which Americans and Europeans are focused; second, they make Ukrainians aware of their chances of being supported by democracies in the fight against Russia and restoring the sovereignty of Russian-occupied Ukrainian territories.

## Material and methods

With the help of qualitative content analysis and the use of the method of real-time analysis", there were selected and analyzed a number of different levels expert materials aimed at

highlighting features on the withdrawal U.S. and NATO troops from Afghanistan. Have been used electronic versions of media resources (available in Ukraine and Republic of Turkey) such as: Al

Bawaba, BBC, Ganghara, Shephard Media, Law Fare blog, Oryx blog, The New York Times, The

Sunday Times, U.S. Department of Defense and White House, Yevropeiska Pravda and others.

## **Results and discussion**

In the analysis of the array of dominant problems covered on the pages of the above-mentioned media, there is one to which the attention of military experts is growing. What changes has the U.S. policy of military and military-technical support for its partners changed since the recent events in Afghanistan? This is especially true of Ukraine, which today faces the Russian threat.

On September 11, 2001 the once-unthinkable happened: the US government, economic and military facilities were attacked. Notably, the victims of this the deadliest terrorist attack became civilian population, innocent citizen. On October 7, 2001, a U.S.-led coalition begins attacks on Afghanistan with an intense bombing campaign by American and British forces. About 15 land-based bombers, some 25 strike aircrafts from carriers, and US and British ships and submarines launching approximately 50 Tomahawk missiles have struck fortified targets of Taliban. The first acknowledged large-scale action by U.S. ground forces in Afghanistan, was conducted on the night of 19–20 October, 2001. Operating primarily from USS Kitty Hawk, US SF Task Force raided the compound of Mullah Omar, a key Taliban leader, near Kandahar, and the US airborne units were dropped onto a landing strip of Kandahar airport (Ablazov, 2015).

The United States' controversial withdrawal from Afghanistan has left it teetering at the edge of an abyss as the country is facing a nationwide Taliban resurgence. While the withdrawal of U.S. troops and their NATO allies has been praised by some and heavily criticized by others, there is one thing seemingly everyone can agree on: the 20-year U.S.-led mission to defeat the Taliban has been an utter failure. In addition, it made other U.S. partners think twice about the prospects of their further support in the event of further changes in U.S. administrations.

In the absence of U.S. and NATO forces Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANSDF) couldn't hold its ground against an

enemy. Without direct U.S. air support, intelligence assets and logistical support the Afghan military and other forces have had immense difficulty in confining Taliban forces to their current areas of control. The withdrawal of U.S. contractors only has exacerbated the situation, and ground much of the Afghan Air Force (AAF) within one-two weeks after their departure.

As a result, in the August and September 2021 the Taliban is securing enormous swathes of territory in Afghanistan, as the West pulls out and says enough is enough.

Afghanistan is plunging into turbulence as Taliban units sweep across whole districts, capturing key towns across the country. This Taliban resurgence leaves the country teetering on the edge of anarchy.

The ANDSF have been overwhelmed since the Taliban launched its offensive in May. The campaign started gradually, picking up momentum from June onwards.

The Taliban's success was precipitated by President Joe Biden's announcement on 14 April 2021 that he was withdrawing 8,600 remaining U.S. contingent. The U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) kicked off the drawdown on 1 May, including its Bagram Air Base in early July.

NATO's Operation Resolute Support had been withdrawing in concert with the US. Germany and Italy left Afghanistan in late June, the UK pulled out on 8 July, and Australia on 11 July. At least 16 smaller national contingents withdrew in either May or June. Consequently, the Taliban has enjoyed swift military success.

On 23 June, Joint Chiefs of Staff Chairman Gen Austin Milley said the Taliban controlled 81 district centres. By 21 July, this had snowballed to more than 210 of 419 districts in the country.

In its lightning advance, the Taliban captured five of 34 provincial capitals in just three days in August, including Kunduz.

The Taliban has avoided directly attacking international troops, targeting the ANSDF instead. In some cases, Afghan forces put up

resistance and conducted tactical retreats, but in others, they fled in disarray. Some 1,600 troops fled across the Tajikistan border for refuge in July, for example.

As of the end of April, the ANDSF had 300,699 personnel (of which 182,071 were defence and the rest internal security) enrolled. With the demise of government control, there are fears that warlords will once again arise across Afghanistan (Gordon Arthur, 2021).

A U.S. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report issued on 30 July warned: 'Particularly concerning was the speed and ease with which the Taliban seemingly wrested control of districts in Afghanistan's northern provinces, once a bastion of anti-Taliban sentiment. The deteriorating situation caused the commander of the NATO Resolute Support Mission, General Miller, to tell reporters on June 29 that "a civil warpath is visualisable". Miller added in a later interview, "We should be concerned. The loss of terrain and the rapidity of that loss of terrain has to be concerning."

The security situation is grim for the populace. In the first half of 2021, 1,378 civilians were killed in attacks, and another 2,806 wounded. From March-May this year, insurgents initiated 10,383 attacks, of which 3,268 were 'effective'. Attacks increased significantly after the Taliban and U.S. signed an agreement in February 2020.

On 29 June, the Afghan government claimed it had killed over 6,000 Taliban fighters and wounded another 3,485 in the preceding month. Whether these figures are accurate or not, they have apparently done little to slow it down.

By 5 July, CENTCOM estimated that it had withdrawn 90% of equipment from Afghanistan. This included 984 C-17 flights and thousands of vehicles. The remaining equipment is being turned over to the ANDSF.

The U.S. and others have invested billions of dollars in training the ANDSF, but it has proved unprepared to take on the Taliban.

Whether aircraft, small arms or vehicles, the U.S. has provided enormous amounts of equipment too. The ANDSF has 25,000

HMMWVs alone, for example, although the U.S. never supplied it with sufficient MRAPs to resist ever-present improvised explosive devices.

As of 30 June, the U.S. Congress had appropriated nearly \$88.61 billion to help the Afghan government provide security since 2002. According to the Government Accountability Office (GAO), from 2001 to 2021 the U.S. had spent \$141 billion on reconstruction in Afghanistan.

To this figure needs to be added the training investment provided by the NATO-led ISAF, as well as national contributions from countries such as the UK that had provided instructors for the Afghan National Army Officers' Academy and the Infantry Branch School.

In addition, the U.S. military's mission to train, in August advise and assist the Afghan forces has transitioned to providing 'over-the-horizon security assistance' under the Defense Security Cooperation Management Office – Afghanistan. However, training and advising troops and maintaining equipment is not something easily done via e-mail and video-conferences.

Whatever people's opinions are, it is obvious that the 20-year U.S. and allies' efforts to defeat the Taliban in Afghanistan have proved a signal failure. The US/NATO presence in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2021, have ended in military failure and humiliation.

Based on the above, a significant number of political and military experts began to research the political, economic and military prospects of the new Taliban government in Afghanistan.

Some experts have suggested that outside observers question the managerial qualities of Taliban leaders and their ability to run the state rather than the military, and studied the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan. They noted that since 2001, Afghanistan has been an extreme example of what economists call a "rentier country," a country whose economy and government spending depend on unearned foreign income or rent (Serhii Danilov 2021).

Others made predictions about the geological and economic prospects and features of Afghanistan. Economists noted that for many years no one would want to extract the minerals

of Afghanistan in serious volumes. The main and so far, insoluble problems in Afghanistan are the lack of political stability and infrastructure. There are many deposits, but they are inaccessible, there is no infrastructure, no guarantees of investment safety, and the risks are monstrous (Dmytrii Oreshkin 2021).

Politicians and experts in the East made predictions about the underground Taliban regional and internal policy. It was noted that the Taliban are not just people with machine guns. They need attention and appropriate international recognition (Leonid Siukiainen 2021).

Among other things, it was emphasized that the departure of British and American forces from Afghanistan after the rushed and bungled evacuation of civilians has left millions of people at the mercy of the Taliban. For the moment, government services are unavailable and the economy, propped up for the past generation by American aid, is collapsing. Kabul, is gripped by fear and uncertainty, many of its inhabitants hiding in their homes and filled with a sense of betrayal by the westerners with whom they once worked (Charlie Faulkner 2021).

In particular, in August 30th General Kenneth Franklin McKenzie Jr. the Commander, United States Central Command announced the completion of the U.S. withdrawal from Afghanistan. He told reporters there were no longer any American troops in the country and that the last U.S. plane had departed. He added that for those who were not able to leave, the diplomatic efforts to get them out would continue. It's a mission that brought Osama bin Laden to a just end along with many of his Al-Qaida co-conspirators, and it was not a cheap mission. The cost was 2,461 U.S. service members and civilians killed and more than 20,000 who were injured. (General Kenneth F. McKenzie Jr. 2021)

Simultaneously, the special attention of experts has been focused on the extent and loss of U.S. military and military-technical assistance in Afghanistan. The figures show that the Taliban received a significant number of weapons and military equipment after capture of the country and the victory over ANDSF.

The Oryx blogsite analysed Afghan equipment losses for June. In a piece published on 23 June, Oryx reported the loss of stunning amounts of military equipment captured or destroyed: eight tanks, 37 M1117 armoured cars, three M113 APCs, 21 mortars, 35 towed howitzers, eight anti-aircraft guns, nine helicopters (including five Mi-17s, three UH-60A Black Hawks and one MD 530F), 1,682 vehicles, including 323 M1151 and 331 M1152 HMMWVs, and five M1224 MaxxPros (Stijn Mitzer, Joost Oliemans, 2021).

About Afghan Air Force (AAF) was sad that it has been badly overtaxed since the U.S. is no longer providing close air support, resupply or ISR.

The SIGAR report noted that AAF airframes have been flying at least 25% over their recommended scheduled maintenance intervals. This high operational tempo is exacerbating supply chain issues and delaying scheduled maintenance and battle damage repair.

Furthermore, aircrews were overtasked due to the security situation in Afghanistan. With NATO forces pulled out, the situation deteriorated by a lack of maintenance contractors. As of early June, there were 7,795 U.S. DoD contractor personnel supporting operations in Afghanistan. But in August all of these contractors leave country and AAF personnel can't more operate its equipment in a proper way.

Early it was mentioned that the U.S. has already transferred some aircraft maintenance, such as the MD 530F fleet, from Afghanistan to Al Ain, Abu Dhabi in the UAE.

As of mid-2021, the AAF had the following usable aircraft in its inventory: 23 A-29 Super Tucano, ten AC-208, 23 C-208, three C-130, 32 Mi-17, 43 MD 530F and 33 UH-60. This amounted to 167 serviceable aircraft out of a total inventory of 211. Another 37 UH-60s are held in strategic reserve in the US.

But the aircrew situation also was alarming, with only 15 crews available out of 42 authorized to fly this fleet (Trevor Nash 2021).

The ANDSF, which literally melted under pressure from the Taliban, left them with a large

number of different weapons and military equipment. The Taliban got dozens of light armored vehicles and trucks, hundreds of small arms. But perhaps the most expensive trophy was combat aircraft.

There is no information on how many planes and helicopters went to the Taliban. First, it is possible that ANDSF destroyed some aircraft during the retreat. Secondly, it is known that a number of aircraft were overtaken in neighboring countries. However, attackers and helicopters, which were quite effective for fighting in the region, could be in the hands of the Taliban. Now the main question is whether the Taliban will find staff to service aircraft, spare parts and, most importantly, a flight crew that could lift them into the air.

The AAF, according to the Office of the U.S. Special Inspector General for Reconstruction of Afghanistan on January 1, 2021, had 162 aircraft. But, not all of them were working.

According to the same source, the air force at the beginning of the year in the country's air force had 50 aircraft: 17 light attack aircraft A-29 (Embraer EMB 314 Super Tucano) and 10 light strike AC-208 Combat Caravan, as well as 21 light transport aircraft C-208 Cessna Caravan and two medium C-130 Hercules. In addition, there were 86 serviceable helicopters: 12 transport Mi-17 made in Russia, 38 light MD 530F and 36 UH-60 Black Hawk.

In addition, a number of aircraft were part of the special aviation unit, but these data are classified and there is no exact information about these aircraft. All modern Afghan aircraft were somehow delivered from the United States, including Russian helicopters.

However, it is clear that aviation cannot be maintained in flight for a long time without spare parts. In the AAF, only two types of aircraft could undergo a full cycle of maintenance without the participation of American specialists – Mi-17 helicopters (and its basic modification Mi-8) and C-208 Cessna Caravan. The Mi-17 has been well known to Afghans since the Soviet presence in the country, and the C-208 Cessna Caravan light transport aircraft is a version of the common civilian aircraft of the same name. The rest of the planes and helicopters, the expert

said, were unlikely to be fully operational at the time they reached the Taliban. The United States will try to monitor the market for spare parts for American-made helicopters and to prevent their supply to Afghanistan (Pavlo Aksonov 2021).

The Al Bawaba site also analysed Afghan equipment losses for June-August. It was mentioned that Taliban are now controlling an arsenal worth around \$85 billion of equipment following the U.S. troops withdrawal and the failure of Afghan government to keep control and stay in power.

Citing various sources, the publication noted that, over 64,300 machine guns, 358,530 assault rifles, more than 22,170 Humvee and 8,000 trucks, GAO revealed. Moreover, SIGAR shared the Islamist movement controlling over 109 various types of helicopters.

Photos of the Badari 313 – the special forces of the Taliban fighters are already circulating on the Internet as the forces can be seen wearing U.S. troops' look alike suits and carrying U.S. machine guns while riding leftover trucks. The special unit is armed with modern sidearms, modern combat boots, and even night vision goggles. It is super hard to distinguish from any other country's special combat units (Al Bawaba 2021).

The Ganghara site on a base information from SIGAR create its own infographic about U.S. equipment lost in Afghanistan. According to this table U.S. leave for Taliban an arsenal that cost \$212,39 million U.S. dollars (Ganghara 2021).

But another analyst, Jonathan Schroden made the dippiest evaluation of situation. He mentioned that, as the Taliban swept across Afghanistan in the months after the U.S. withdrawal began in May, there were frequent reports of the group's fighters capturing military equipment that had previously been supplied by the United States to Afghanistan's security forces. In the wake of the Taliban's capture of Kabul August, however, it became clear that the group was now in control of vast stores of U.S. provided equipment. This situation led directly to a series of questions, such as: How much U.S. stuff does the Taliban now have? How much is

that stuff worth? And, can the Taliban actually use it?

The lack of a clear picture coming from the U.S. government has led many others to try and paint it instead. Unfortunately, many of these attempts are getting it wrong, and their inaccuracies are being amplified by partisan and nonpartisan social media users alike. In light of all this confusion, Jonathan Schroden describe five myths surrounding the Taliban’s new arsenal of U.S. equipment and provide some thoughts on what this new arsenal means for the group going forward.

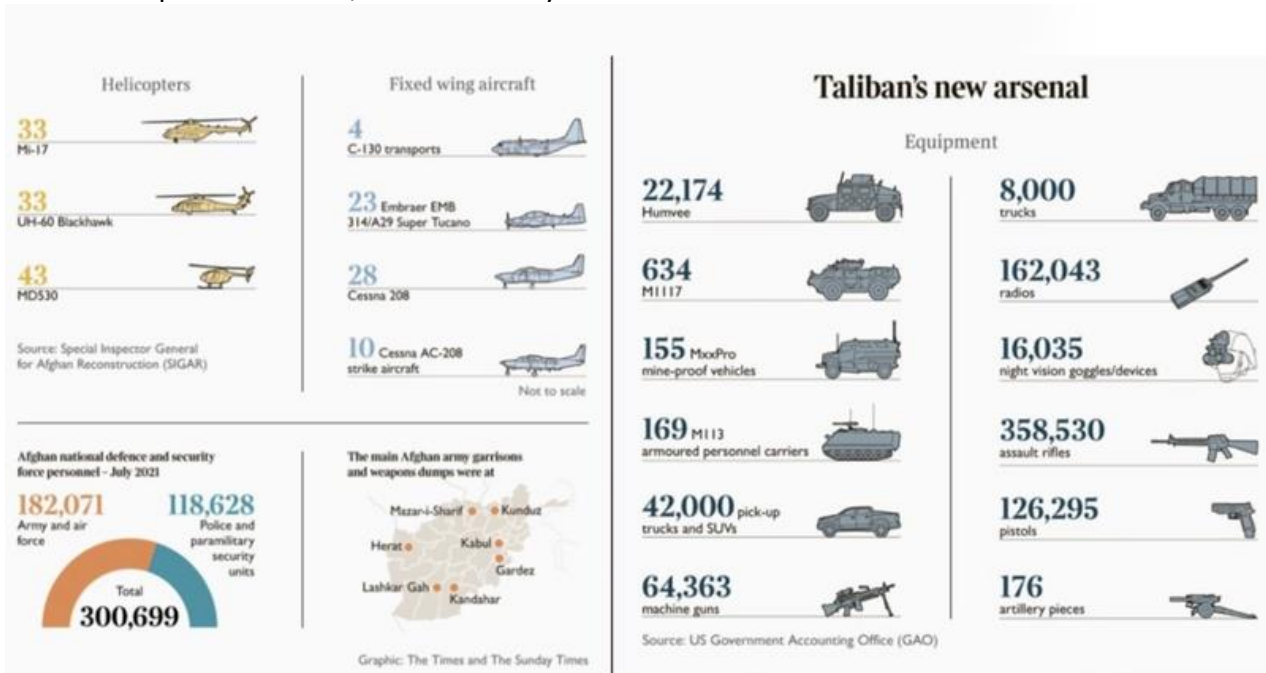
Myth 1: The Taliban have captured \$88 billion worth of weapons and equipment.

Statements to this effect conflate the net worth of the Taliban’s current arsenal with the sum total of funding that the United States appropriated for reconstruction of Afghanistan’s security sector. According to the SIGAR, “As of June 30, 2021, the U.S. Congress had appropriated nearly \$88.61 billion to help the Afghan government provide security in Afghanistan”. There are at least four factors that make the Taliban’s current arsenal worth far less than this figure.

First, not all of that money was even spent. As SIGAR reported in June, “Of the nearly \$3.1

billion appropriated for the Afghanistan Security Forces Fund (ASFF) in FY (fiscal year) 2020, over \$2.4 billion had been obligated and more than \$2.1 billion disbursed, as of June 30, 2021. About \$675.6 million of FY 2021 ASFF has been obligated and \$247.4 million disbursed, as of June 30, 2021”. In plain English, Afghanistan’s army and police collapsed before the U.S. military could spend all of the money that Congress gave it to support these forces.

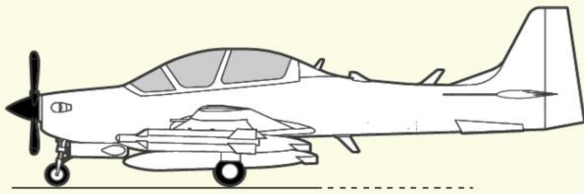
Second, the primary cost driver of Afghanistan’s security forces has consistently been not military equipment, but the salaries of personnel in the force. In other words, the U.S. never spent anything close to \$88 billion on weapons and equipment for Afghanistan’s security sector. For example, in FY 2016, personnel costs consumed 29 and 48 percent of the budget for the Afghan army and police, respectively. Thus, huge sums of that \$88 billion were disbursed to individuals in Afghanistan’s security forces who then dissipated it via personal spending into the country’s economy. Additional large sums – perhaps as much as \$300 million per year – were skimmed by corrupt security leaders by harvesting salaries paid to “ghost soldiers”.



The Al Bawaba infographic of analyze Afghan equipment losses for June-August

**MAJOR ITEMS OF EQUIPMENT PROVIDED TO THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY BETWEEN APRIL 30 AND JUNE 30, 2021**

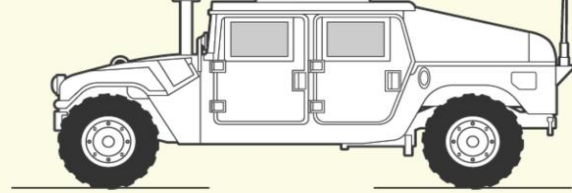
**A-29 Super Tucano**



**Light Attack Aircraft**

Carries a wide variety of weapons, including precision-guided munitions. Was designed to be a low-cost system operating in low-threat environments.

**M1151 HMMWV**



**Expanded Capacity Armament Carrier**

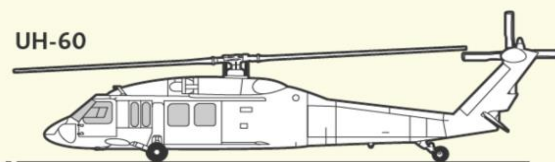
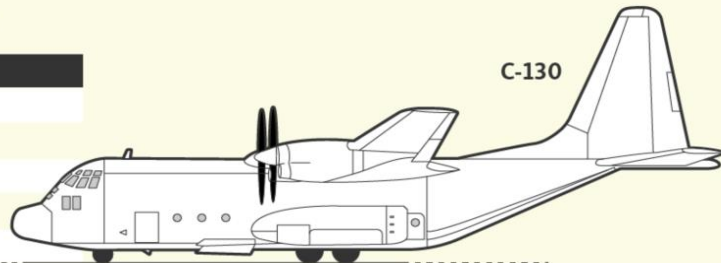
Lightweight, high-performance, four-wheel-drive, air-transportable and air-droppable, tactical-wheeled vehicle.

TYPE	DESCRIPTION	UNITS	UNIT COST	TOTAL
Aircraft	A-29 light attack aircraft	6	\$22.25 million	\$133.51 million
Vehicle	M1151 HMMWV	174	\$238,500	\$41.5 million
Parts	Diesel engines	84	\$37,443	\$3.14 million
Parts	Hydraulic transmissions	304	\$7,697	\$2.34 million
Ammunition	2.75 inch (70 mm) rockets	99,696	\$1,906	\$18.48 million
Ammunition	40mm high-explosive rounds	60,840	\$75	\$4.56 million
Ammunition	.50 caliber cartridges	884,880	\$3.20	\$2.7 million
Ammunition	7.62 mm cartridges	2.01 million	\$0.75	\$1.51 million
Ammunition	5.56 blank training cartridges	4.72 million	\$0.22	\$1.04 million
Uniform	Shirts, various sizes	88,709	\$41	\$3.6 million
<b>TOTAL:</b>				<b>\$212.39 million</b>

Note: The above list only includes the 10 items of equipment with the highest value provided to the Afghan Army between April 30 and June 30, 2021.

**AFGHAN AIR FORCE AIRCRAFT INVENTORY**

AIRCRAFT	TOTAL	USABLE
<b>FIXED WING</b>		
A-29	23	23
AC-208	10	10
C-208	23	23
<b>C-130 (Hercules)</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>ROTARY WING</b>		
Mi-17	56	32
MD-530	50	43
<b>UH-60 (Black Hawk)</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>TOTAL:</b>	<b>211</b>	<b>167</b>



As of June 30, 2021



C. Coelho/M. Marques | Source: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)

**The Ganghara infographic of analyse of military staff lost in Afghanistan**

Third, additional large fractions of that funding were spent on consumable items. For example, in FY 2016, about 15 percent of the army and police budgets was spent on things like fuel and ammunition. Another 10 percent and 4 percent was spent on army and police training,

respectively. Last, not all of the weapons and equipment the U.S. funded are even still in existence: Large numbers of the guns, vehicles, radios and other equipment that the U.S. provided to Afghanistan were destroyed over the course of almost 20 years of constant

fighting.

Taking all of these factors into consideration, it is clear that the Taliban's arsenal is worth only a fraction of the \$88 billion that the United States appropriated for the Afghan security forces since 2002.

Myth 2: The Taliban have captured everything the U.S. ever gave to Afghanistan's security forces.

In recent days, there have been numerous infographics purporting to show the amount of U.S. provided equipment captured by the Taliban, the most widely shared of which came from an article in *The Times*. Some of the graphics openly disclose that the figures listed are estimates, but *The Times's* figure does not. Rather, it gives exact numbers for each of 19 different pieces of military equipment. The problem is, these numbers are inaccurate. As with funding, they appear to conflate the total number of each piece of equipment that the U.S. provided to Afghanistan over the past 20 years with what the Taliban have now. This is clearly incorrect.

For example, contrary to *The Times's* claim that the Taliban now have four C-130 transport planes, SIGAR reported that only four C-130s were even in Afghanistan as of this summer (the fourth was out of the country for routine maintenance). *The Times's* graphic also ignores that perhaps as many as 46 aircraft were flown by AAF pilots to Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in an attempt to flee the country. While the Taliban may know how many aircraft they currently have, even the best estimates make clear that the rest of us do not. And given the vast numbers involved and the fact that the pieces of weaponry are scattered all across the country, it's safe to say that even the Taliban don't know exactly how many guns and vehicles they now have in their possession.

In addition, we can mention that if the figure of 585 soldiers who escaped 14-15 August from Afghanistan on 22 planes and 24 helicopters to Uzbekistan is correct, then there must be transport vehicles.

Myth 3: The Taliban know how to use all the stuff they have captured.

They do not. While the Taliban are now

touting a video in which they claim to be flying a Blackhawk over Kandahar, a reputable report clarifies that the pilot is a former member of the AAF. Regardless, it is clear the Taliban do not have a cadre of trained pilots for the helicopters and aircraft they now own. Even if they were able to coerce or co-opt every pilot from the AAF left in Afghanistan to get in the cockpit, they had still been short on pilots for two reasons: Many have already fled, and the Taliban killed some of them during their campaign to conquer the country.

While less exciting than aircraft, the Taliban have also likely captured scores of military-grade pieces of electronic equipment, such as encrypted radios and jamming devices used to counter improvised explosive devices. Given the difficulties the U.S. had in training Afghan army and police personnel to use this equipment (e.g., the U.S. eventually encouraged these forces to use WhatsApp instead of the radios we provided), it is likely the Taliban also do not know how to use most of this type of gear.

Myth 4: The Taliban don't know how to use any of the stuff they have captured.

They do know how to use a lot of it. There are plenty of pictures and videos of Taliban fighters using American-made small arms (e.g., M16s, M4s) and night vision devices, reports of them using mortars, and visuals of them using long-range D-30 howitzers (albeit in direct fire mode). There is also no shortage of evidence that they know how to drive and operate the various up-armored vehicles they have captured, including HMMWVs, MRAPs and MSFVs. And while the Taliban may not have the ability to fly their C-130s or American-made helicopters, their C-208s, PC-12s, and A-29s are relatively simple fixed-wing aircraft that someone with basic to moderate knowledge of flying could get off the ground (though arming these aircraft and using them to deliver effective airstrikes is another level of difficulty likely beyond the Taliban's current capabilities). Russian-made Mi-17 helicopters also seem feasible for the Taliban to operate, if not immediately, then in the near-term future. The Pakistani government has them (some of which were given to it by the US), as do many Eastern European states. It is therefore



conceivable that the Taliban could get some pilots trained in a few years by one of these countries or, more immediately, rent some as contractors.

Myth 5: The Taliban can't maintain any of the stuff they have captured.

Sure, they can. The Taliban already know how to maintain the Russian-made small arms they have, and while the specifics of American-made small arms are slightly different, if Taliban fighters haven't already figured out how to maintain the ones they have captured over the years, they could certainly do so now via the internet. Moreover, in terms of vehicles, basic maintenance of most of the vehicles the U.S. provided to Afghanistan's security forces can be handled by knowledgeable auto mechanics. More maintenance that is extensive would require a more specifically trained mechanic, but the U.S. trained quite a few of these via the National Maintenance Strategy – Ground contract. It seems likely that the Taliban could either entice or coerce these individuals to continue maintaining the group's new vehicle fleets. While spare parts are unlikely to be provided by U.S. companies, the Taliban have captured thousands of vehicles; cannibalization alone should be sufficient to last them for years.

Aircraft will again be the most difficult element of the Taliban's new arsenal, especially given that the U.S.-made aircraft used by the AAF were all being maintained entirely by U.S. contractors. That said, the U.S. trained a sizable number of Mi-17 mechanics who could also be co-opted or coerced to keep these helicopters flying, or the Taliban could attempt to contract for their maintenance from Pakistani or Eastern European companies.

Also, Jonathan Schroden gives meaningful conclusion about Taliban's new arsenal of military weapons and equipment that were provided to Afghanistan by the United States.

He notes, that it's true that the Taliban now have a sizable new arsenal of military weapons and equipment that were provided to Afghanistan by the United States. But that arsenal is worth far less than \$88 billion, and it's not as large as many reports are saying it is. While the Taliban cannot use all of the arsenal

they do have, they can use the vast majority of it, and they should be able to maintain quite a bit of it, either on their own or with some help.

The Taliban have been a ground-centric force with little to no air capability for decades, and in the immediate term, that's unlikely to change very much. But the group is now an up-armored and armed-to-the-teeth ground-centric force, which has the potential to help greatly in its attempts to consolidate control of the country and deal with various remaining internal challenges, such as the Islamic State in Khorasan Province or the National Resistance Front – neither of which has any air capability, either.

In the months and years to come, however, it seems likely that the Taliban will find ways to get their new-found aircraft in the air and to figure out how to provide air support to their ground forces. At a minimum, the Taliban now have an ample war chest, pieces of which could be sold to the highest bidder as a means of generating much-needed revenue for their new government. Given the potential financial advantages of selling weapons, and the extensive smuggling networks throughout the region, it seems likely that at least some of the Taliban's newfound small arms will find their way to Kashmir, the Middle East, Africa and beyond. All told, the Taliban's new arsenal is less valuable and sizable than many believe, but it is nonetheless a noteworthy foundation on which to build. Observers are likely to see the Army of the Islamic Emirate – and a number of jihadist groups worldwide – wielding American-made weapons for years to come. (Jonathan Schroden 2021).

In addition to the above, it is very important to analyze the interview of Afghan combat General Sami Sadat's for the New York Times. In this interview Sami Sadat said that it's true that the Afghan Army lost its will to fight. The Afghan Army is not without blame. It had its problems – cronyism, bureaucracy, but ANDSF ultimately stopped fighting because their partners already had.

Losing combat logistical support that the United States had provided for years crippled Afghan Arm, as did a lack of clear guidance from Afghan leadership and US. However, ANDSF

fought, bravely, until the end. They lost 66,000 troops over the past 20 years; that's one-fifth of our estimated fighting force.

General Sami Sadat also give three main keys, which contributed to the defeat ANDSF.

First, former President Donald Trump's February 2020 peace deal with the Taliban in Doha doomed us. It put an expiration date on American interest in the region. The Trump-Taliban agreement shaped the circumstances for the current situation by essentially curtailing offensive combat operations for U.S. and allied troops. The U.S. air-support rules of engagement for Afghan security forces effectively changed overnight, and the Taliban were emboldened.

Second, ANDSF lost contractor logistics and maintenance support critical to their combat operations.

The Americans using the U.S. military model based on highly technical special reconnaissance units, helicopters and airstrikes trained the Afghan forces. ANDSF lost our superiority to the Taliban when our air support dried up and our ammunition ran out.

Contractors' maintained AAF bombers, attack and transport aircraft throughout the war. But in July, most of the 17,000 support contractors had left Afghanistan. A technical issue means that aircraft – a Black Hawk helicopter, a C-130 transport, a surveillance drone – need to be ground.

The contractors also took proprietary software and weapons systems with them. They physically removed ANDSF helicopter missile-defense system. Access to the software that ANDSF relied on to track our vehicles, weapons and personnel also disappeared. Real-time intelligence on targets went out the window, too.

The Taliban fought with snipers and improvised explosive devices while Afghan Army lost aerial and laser-guided weapon capacity. In addition, since ANDSF could not resupply bases without helicopter support, soldiers often lacked the necessary tools to fight. The Taliban overran many bases; in other places, entire units surrendered.

Third, the corruption endemic in Mr. Ghani's

government that flowed to senior military leadership and long crippled Afghan forces on the ground irreparably hobbled ANDSF.

ANDSF cannot ignore the third factor, though, because there was only so much the Americans could do when it came to the well-documented corruption that rotted our government and military. That really is Afghanistan national tragedy. So many of Afghanistan leaders – including in the military were installed for their personal ties, not for their credentials. These appointments had a devastating impact on the national army because leaders lacked the military experience to be effective or inspire the confidence and trust of the men being asked to risk their lives. Disruptions to food rations and fuel supplies, a result of skimming and corrupt contract allocations destroyed the morale of ANDSF (Sami Sadat 2021).

After studying the hypothetical and actual loss of American weapons and military equipment in Afghanistan, and analyzing the root causes of the defeat of some 300,000 ANDSF Taliban troops of up to 80,000, it is possible to draw some conclusions about the possible further development of Ukrainian-American relations in military and military-technical sphere. At the same time, it is also important to predict Ukraine's next steps, taking into account the Russian aggression that has been going on since 2014 and the consequences of the cessation of military and military-technical support ANDSF by the U.S. and NATO countries until the complete fall of the Afghan government.

First of all, we need to clear understand the difference between the war conflicts in Ukraine and Afghanistan.

For the seventh year in a row, Ukraine is waging a hybrid war with Russia, which does not officially recognize itself as a party to the conflict. At the same time, all the advantages in manpower, equipment and material resources in this case are on the Russian side.

Today, only the will of Ukrainian people, the strength of the armed forces and the level of support of international partners in the political arena and in the military and military-technical

spheres keep Ukraine from total defeat. Realizing this, the Ukrainian government is doing everything possible to continue and strengthen this support and to prevent various factors that could negatively affect it, such as corruption and technical backwardness of the armed forces.

Moreover, the Ukrainian side still remembers the difficulties of 2014 regarding a number of refusals by many countries in its military and military-technical support in the fight against Russia. With this in mind, Ukraine is trying to implement its defense doctrine documents and build relations with partners on the world stage.

We remember, that in a press briefing on 10 August, U.S. President Joe Biden stated that ‘we spent over a trillion dollars over 20 years. We trained and equipped with modern equipment over 300,000 Afghan forces. And Afghan leaders have to come together. We lost thousands – lost to death and injury – thousands of American personnel. They’ve got to fight for themselves, fight for their nation...Afghan leaders have to come together ... they’ve got to fight for themselves, fight for their nation ... but they’ve got to want to fight’ (Joe Biden (2021)).

U.S. President was right, but his comments were not based on reality and nor did they show any understanding of Afghanistan and its people. The U.S. failed to appreciate that its concepts and doctrines do not apply universally to all peoples and regions of the world.

At the same time, in Afghanistan has struggled for the most part with terrorist groups, like Taliban, that until recently had no significant military resources and were often dissolved in Afghan society.

More negative factors in the Afghan conflict, in turn, were the incomplete understanding of the real situation on the ground by the U.S. and ISAF, persistent clan-based society in all provinces of Afghanistan, high levels of corruption and societal nepotism in daily life and all branches of dependent on external influences government, and the transformation of Afghanistan’s in the last 20 years to “rentier-

country”.

Moreover, it must be borne in mind that the U.S. aid model operating in Afghanistan cannot fully meet Ukraine's needs in its fight against Russia.

The immense amount of equipment provided to ANDSF over the past two decades is hard to overstate, numbering some 25.000 HMMWVs Humvees alone. Although an impressive number in and of itself, a lack of protection against improvised explosive devices means that these vehicles offer little of the protective capabilities of MRAPs available to NATO forces. Regarding to aviation, the Americans were smart about what they were handing over to the ANDSF army. From aviation, they handed in AFF either transport vehicles, or purely reconnaissance, or if combat, then only specialized anti-insurgency. In the U.S., there was an understanding that even if the Taliban or another terrorist groups can use and keep the captured aircraft in flight, they will not be able to threaten neighboring countries or commercial civilian planes.

Also, weapons and military equipment procured by the U.S. for ANDSF forces were vulnerable to theft or misuse due to inadequate staffing, monitoring and record-keeping at central storage depots. Such larceny and corruption posed a significant danger to U.S. and coalition forces. In addition, without the help of foreign specialists and technicians, AAF aircrafts could not perform combat missions as intended.

Another factor to consider is how the training given to the ANDSF was evaluated and assessed, and what support was given by the U.S. and its allies. In essence, the ANDSF could operate effectively only with cajole and support by U.S. and ISAF forces.

A clear example of this, were words of Afghan combat General Sami Sadat that’s the final days of fighting in Afghanistan were surreal. ANDSF engaged in intense firefights on the ground against the Taliban as U.S. fighter jets circled overhead, effectively spectators, but only as observers (Sami Sadat 2021).

## Conclusions

In spite of the apparent failure of the United States after military withdrawal from Afghanistan, and the complete collapse of the Afghan government and the defeat of the ANDSF, the prospects for Ukrainian-American cooperation in the military and military-technical spheres have not changed significantly.

At the same time, it is possible to predict that after the defeat in Afghanistan, the U.S. government will be more meticulous in transferring military property to its partners, especially those involved in armed conflicts. The United States will continue to refrain from

supplying high-tech weapons and equipment to these countries.

Ukraine needs to be clear that the level of its support in the international arena, as opposed to Russia, will be directly proportional to the degree of indifference of the world's leading countries, including the United States, to the Ukrainian-Russian conflict leveled by its own economic and political factors. Because the main current causes of significant military defeats are political destabilization in the country and systemic failures of government policy in the international arena.

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