

Afghanistan Far Deadlier Than Iraq for U.S. Troops in 2009

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WASHINGTON: USA Report. More than twice as many U.S. troops died in Afghanistan in 2009 than in Iraq, U.S. casualty records show, and Afghanistan is likely to become an even deadlier place for American forces as reinforcements are rushed there to battle insurgents.

More than 300 U.S. troops died in Afghanistan in 2009 compared with 148 in Iraq. This is the first year since the war in Iraq began in 2003 that more troops died in Afghanistan, Pentagon records show.

Military officials and analysts predict violence will increase in Afghanistan in 2010. President Obama has ordered 30,000 more U.S. troops to fight Taliban insurgents and provide better security for Afghan civilians. That will bring the total number of U.S. forces to about 100,000. They will be joined by 50,000 troops from allies. Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said this month that he anticipates "a tough fight in 2010" in Afghanistan, resulting in higher casualties.

"It looks like 2010 is going to be pretty nasty" in Afghanistan, said John Pike, director of [globalsecurity.org](#). "It's going to be nasty simply because there will be more Americans to be shot. The Taliban are unabated."

Underscoring the danger in Afghanistan was a suicide bombing in Khost province in which eight American civilians were killed, Lt. Col. Almarah Belk, a Pentagon spokeswoman, told Bloomberg News.

Counting casualties in Afghanistan or Iraq is an "idiotic" measure of success or failure, said James Carafano, a military analyst at the [Heritage Foundation](#). Success in Afghanistan will be judged by how much of the population is safe from the Taliban and how Pakistan deals with havens for insurgents on its side of the border. "Casualties in Afghanistan are likely to go way up at least initially," he said. "That's because we will be taking the fight to the enemy. I don't think that's necessarily a bad thing."

Casualties in Iraq dropped rapidly after additional troops were sent there in 2007 as part of a revamped counterinsurgency strategy.

"The odd thing is if you want less casualties, you have to throw more people into the fight," Carafano said.

Pike said he doubts the counterinsurgency strategy being pursued by Gen. Stanley McChrystal will have the same effect in Afghanistan [as in Iraq]. A lack of national unity, illiteracy and a weak government militate against success there, he said.

“We’re going to kill the Taliban, and they’re going to kill us,” he said. “I don’t know that much more is going to be accomplished beyond that.”

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