


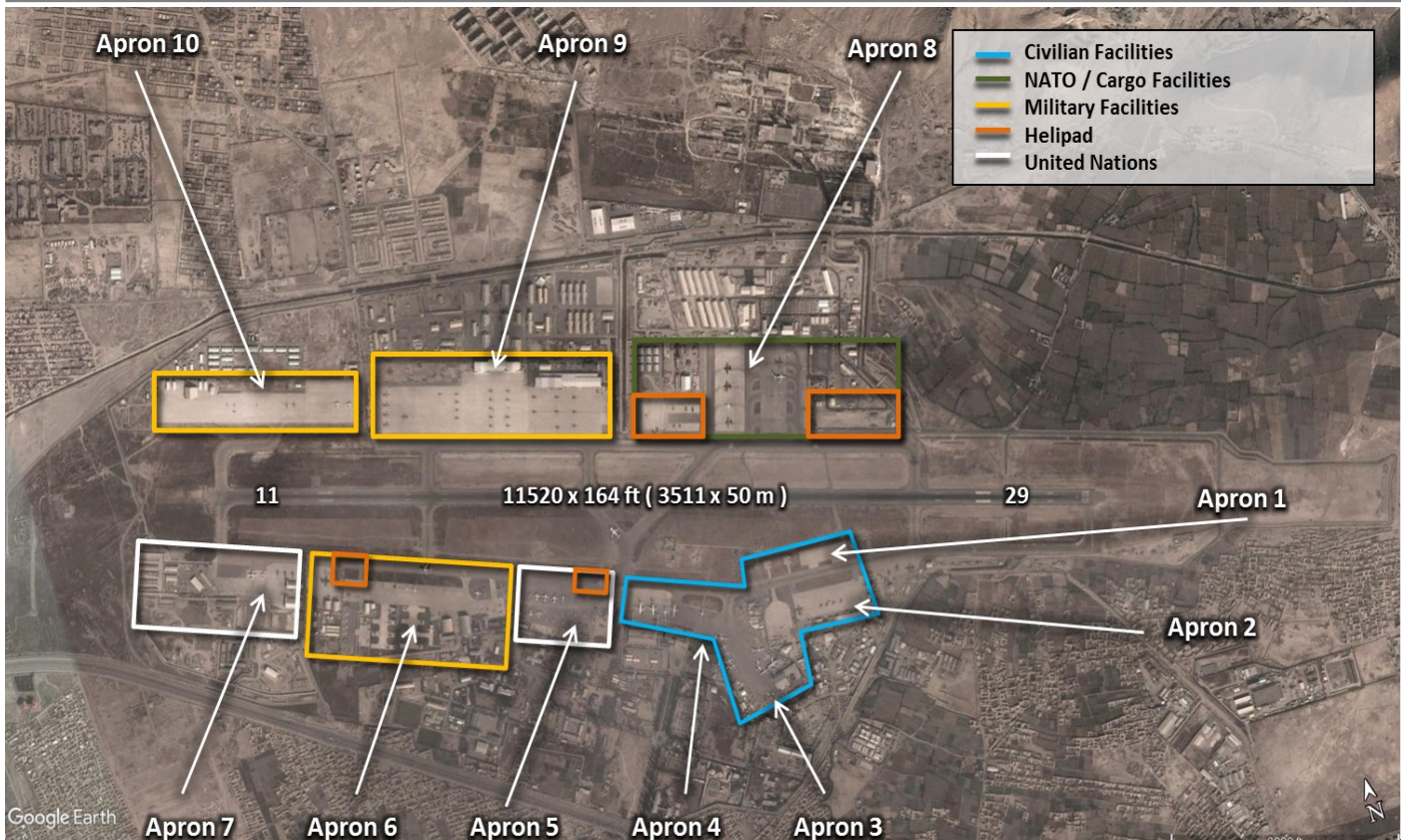


# AVIATION TRAVEL SECURITY BRIEF

<b>AIRPORT NAME</b>	Hamid Karzai International Airport	<b>CITY RISK RATING</b>	 EXTREME
<b>AIRPORT IDENTIFIER</b>	ICAO: OAKB, IATA: KBL	<b>MEDICAL RATING</b>	 EXTREME
<b>AIRPORT LOCATION</b>	Kabul, Afghanistan	<b>COUNTRY RATING</b>	 EXTREME
<b>DATE REVIEWED</b>	22 August 2021	<b>LOCAL EMERGENCY</b>	Police: 119, Fire: 100



<b>Security Personnel</b>	<b>Good:</b> 24/7 military security forces; well-trained & equipped.	<b>Airport of Entry</b>	Yes.
<b>Security Features</b>	<b>Good:</b> Complete perimeter fencing, lighted aprons, CCTV, fire station, controlled points of access.	<b>International Standard</b>	Manages according to international standards; officially evaluated by ICAO.
<b>Runway Specs.</b>	<b>11/29:</b> 11,520 x 164 ft (3,511 x 50 m) @ 5,877 ft (1,791 m) <b>RWY &amp; RMP:</b> good condition.	<b>Hours of Ops</b>	H24, with restrictions.
<b>Ground Handling</b>	Slots required, handling <u>not</u> required; ground handlers available. PPR Required for overnight parking.	<b>Airport Contacts</b>	Ops: +93799513903 Manager: +93 700 283792 PPR Overnight: +93 799 513903 <a href="mailto:isafkiaairopsnu@hq.isaf.nato.int">isafkiaairopsnu@hq.isaf.nato.int</a>

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## AVIATION SUMMARY

### Airport Summary

**The situation remains extremely fluid, and the potential remains for parts of this assessment to change at short notice. At this time, emergency and military flights continue at Kabul's Hamid Karzai International Airport (OAKB), though we recommend deferring all but essential evacuation operations due to overcrowding at the facility and a tenuous security environment; ops should be conducted only with exhaustive coordination with military elements in charge of the facility. A NOTAM posted on 16 August indicated control of the airspace had been ceded to the military; we advise deferring all overflight of Afghanistan unless evacuating personnel. Evacuation operations should reduce to an absolute minimum the time spent in Afghan airspace.**

Also known as KIA, Hamid Karzai International Airport is Afghanistan's primary international airport, housing a wide-array of international military forces, Non-Governmental Organizations, the United Nations (UN), and other international organizations. It is an extremely important strategic resource and installation for the Afghans as well as North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). As such, it is heavily defended by local security forces and NATO-led international forces, although the strength of this defense is inconsistent across the airfield; the military portions guarded by NATO are far more secure than the commercial/civilian side guarded by local forces. Following the 2021 troop drawdown in the country, US and Turkish forces are reported to be tasked with maintaining security at the facility. However, negotiations on this arrangement remain ongoing.

On the civilian side, facilities are basic and this area is considered a softer target and targeted more frequently by insurgent and foreign hostile forces than the military side. Only passengers with a valid plane ticket are permitted beyond the initial security screening points/car park and onwards to the departure terminal. The majority of NATO facilities are located on the north side of the airport which is a restricted access area. KIA and its infrastructure are constantly being upgraded to meet international standards; under NATO-led management, it is a safe airport to fly into and out of with the main concern being the potential for attacks by hostile forces.

- **Operators should defer all but essential evacuation operations due to overcrowding at the facility and a tenuous security environment; ops should be conducted only with exhaustive coordination with military elements in charge of the facility.**
- **Travel to Kabul should be for essential purposes only. Essential travel to OAKB requires flexible itineraries, detailed preparation and dedicated local security support: be prepared to postpone or cut short travel at short notice.**
- **If deciding to operate, all flights should operate on a short-turnaround schedule (drop and go) due to the EXTREME travel risk environment in the city of Kabul amid the ongoing Taliban takeover of the capital.**
- **If an overnight is required due to an AOG or similar scenario, we recommend liaising with international security forces.**
- **If off airport travel is required, we do not recommend leaving the airport without professional security support.**
- *Kabul International Airport is an Airport of Entry (AOE) with Customs, Immigration and Quarantine (CIQ) available.*
- *Well-maintained perimeter fencing with signage installed along the fence line and sufficient ramp lighting. CCTV monitoring of terminals with gated and monitored access control points.*
- *24/7 international security forces that conduct foot and mounted roaming patrols. Military installation with a base emergency alert system that sounds when attacks are occurring.*

### Airport Security

Security at Hamid Karzai International Airport is considered good. One of the most secure installations in Afghanistan, the airport is also one of the highest profile targets in the country, and it experiences direct and indirect fire (rocket and mortar) attacks. While most of these attacks generally do little damage and some miss the base entirely, there have been dozens killed and/or wounded at the airport from suicide bombings, shootouts, and rocket/mortar attacks. The indirect fire attacks have been the primary concern in recent years, but direct attacks in the area do occur. On rare occasion, indirect fire attacks have damaged or destroyed aircraft parked

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on the ramps. Further, shooting incidents have been known to occur and pose an incidental risk to travellers.

If the base emergency alert system sounds, we highly advise seeking cover immediately. Cover is defined as protection provided by earth, rock, concrete, and dense metal such as engine blocks or armor plate. A connex or unarmored vehicle is not cover and will provide little to no protection from modern weapons, including small arms. Remain in cover until the "all clear" is sounded. If off-installation and an attack occurs, seek cover and maintain extreme vigilance to your surroundings. If hostile forces manage to get inside the perimeter, all personnel not involved in base defense should find a secure location to "bed-down" until the situation is brought under control by security forces.

Following the departure of most western military forces from the country in the summer of 2021, Turkish military forces have provided security for the facility, and have indicated they will continue to do so beyond the US military departure in September 2021. While a Counter Rocket, Artillery, Mortar (C-RAM) system was reportedly installed at the installation in July 2021, its current status is unverified.

Below is a list of some attacks by militants targeting KIA since 2016:

- **15-20 August 2021:** *Unconfirmed and confirmed accounts of sporadic gunfire were reported near the facility amid the ongoing evacuation efforts at the facility.*
- **18 March 2021:** *Armed clashes were reported along the Airport Road, six people were reportedly injured.*
- **18 February 2021:** *A blast struck near the interior ministry compound on the Airport Road, near the facility's perimeter. No casualties were reported.*
- **19 December 2020:** *Five rockets targeted the Bagram Airbase (OAIK). There were no casualties or injuries reported.*
- **12 December 2020:** *At least 10 rockets targeted the Hamid Karzai International Airport and nearby residential areas. One person was killed and two were injured in the surrounding neighborhoods. One rocket hit the edge of the airport compound, with shrapnel causing slight damage to a Kam Air parked aircraft.*
- **18 August 2020:** *14 rockets targeting the presidential palace in the Sash Darak neighborhood, 2 miles south of OAKB. 3 people were killed and 22 injured.*
- **16 June 2020:** *An improvised explosive device was detonated near Hamid Karzai International Airport. There were no casualties, though two injuries were reported.*
- **19 February 2020:** *Rocket fire targets a residential area adjacent to OAKB. No casualties or damage was reported.*
- **13 November 2019:** *A car bomb targeting a private security convoy killed 12 and injured 20 in the Qasaba area just north of the airport.*
- **22 July 2018:** *The Islamic State-Khoasan conducted a suicide bombing near the OAKB main gate, killing 16 people and injuring another 22.*
- **27 September 2017:** *The Taliban launched as many as 30 rockets at OAKB that were reportedly meant to target the visiting US Defence Secretary.*
- **14 December 2016:** *An assailant opened fire at a checkpoint leading to OAKB; one person was killed and two others injured in the attack.*
- **04 January 2016:** *Two suicide bombings occurred near OAKB. At least 30 Afghan nationals were injured in a truck bombing at the gates of Camp Baron. The Taliban claimed responsibility for the attack. Earlier in the day, a suicide bomber detonated his explosives at a security checkpoint, causing no casualties.*

## TERRORISM

The Taliban's militant fighters have overrun Kabul. High-profile buildings associated with foreigners such as business class hotels, guest houses and embassies, as well as activities associated with the international assistance efforts, including aid programmes, are key targets and have been attacked in the past.

Rigorous security mechanisms at international facilities, which include multiple barriers, mean that militants are

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often unable to penetrate beyond the outer perimeter of their target. Nevertheless, there are persistent, direct risks to foreign nationals from militant operations, particularly following the Taliban takeover..

Insurgent groups also regularly target convoys. Main routes to and through the city such as Airport, Darulaman and Jalalabad roads remain targets of terrorist attacks due to its usage by security forces, government and international community convoys. Such incidents can take the form of suicide attacks. Sporadic rocket attacks can also occur.

The direct threat to the international civilian community, particularly humanitarian aid organisations and areas frequented by foreigners, has increased significantly amid the US troop withdrawal and subsequent Taliban offensive.

The US and UK announced on 12 August they would temporarily deploy 3,000 and 600 troops to the city respectively in order to facilitate the evacuation of their citizens, with most of these forces being deployed to the airport. Several countries have also relocated embassies to the installation. The US has now increased the planned troop presence to at least 7,000.

The airport facility is already secured by Turkish military forces, who are also slated to remain in place past the planned 11 September withdraw of all US forces. Business-class hotels, guest houses, embassies, activities associated with international assistance efforts, including aid programmes, and foreigners involved in activities perceived to threaten Islam continue to remain at high risk.

## **SOCIAL UNREST**

The airport remains the primary location of daily unrest, with unruly crowds routinely gathering at the perimeter, and Taliban-associated forces routinely using live fire on these groups. **Do not leave the airport.**

Incident-driven anti-US or anti-Western protests occur occasionally and sometimes turn violent, involving stone-throwing and arson, particularly when related to emotive issues; perceived religious offence is a key trigger. Demonstrations over political issues take place around election time, particularly in the vicinity of universities, the presidential palace and the election commission, though generally pass off peacefully.

Protests against alleged insults to Islam trigger protests of varying scale and intensity. In September 2017, several protests took place against NATO leaflets that were deemed offensive to Islam. The Taliban claimed responsibility for a subsequent suicide attack near the entrance of Bagram airfield (OAI) in Parwan province, which was reportedly carried out in retaliation for the leaflets.

## **CRIME**

Crime levels are increasing, particularly in local residential areas, fuelled by youth unemployment and facilitated by the limited capabilities of the police and criminals' ready access to weapons. Additionally, like other cities in Afghanistan, Kabul is vulnerable to carjacking, car theft, petty theft, armed robbery and burglary.

Foreign nationals are high-value targets for kidnap. Such incidents occur relatively infrequently in Kabul compared to outside urban areas, largely to the fact that well-protected business travellers and expatriates working in the capital present more difficult targets for would-be kidnappers than foreign aid workers or journalists in more remote locations. However, there have been multiple kidnaps of foreigners in the city in recent years; most result in the release of the victim, but some remain unresolved.

Movement around the city is not recommended after dark, particularly as there are very few street lights; UN personnel and most NGOs observe a curfew of 21.30 or 22.00 (local time), and the Taliban have instituted a city-wide 21.00 curfew. Movement around Kabul should be subject to strict journey management practices. Members should use low-profile (and preferably armoured) vehicles, have the ability to communicate – by radio or telephone – at all times, and should change the timings and routes of regular journeys as much as possible.

## **TROUBLE SPOTS**

Members should minimise time spent at possible targets for militant attack, both stationary and in transit. Main routes to and through the city such as Airport, Darulaman and Jalalabad roads remain most prone to terrorist

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attacks due to their usage by security forces, government and international community convoys. High-traffic areas, particularly around chokepoints such as Airport and Massoud circles, are also vulnerable.

Other potential targets include government buildings; international buildings, including embassies and those associated with the international assistance efforts; military facilities; the vicinity of military vehicles on patrol or in transit; the vicinity of diplomatic close protection teams, whether moving or stationary; locations that are popular with the international community, including business-class hotels and restaurants; international guest houses; and locations with a high population density, such as bazaars and other shopping areas, for example Chicken and Flower streets.



## SECURITY FORCES AND CORRUPTION

The Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police have ceded control of Kabul to the Taliban, and in some cases have defected. While there have been no reported serious outbreaks of violence or large-scale targeting of foreigners, the security forces cannot be counted on in case of trouble, and embassy and consular services are likely to be extremely limited.

## ORIENTATION

The city is divided into north-east, north-west, south-east and south-west zones, with the administrative buildings situated in the centre. Pashtunistan Square is located in the city centre, around which the presidential palace, Serena hotel, and finance, justice and defence ministries are located. Most secure accommodation compounds and the Camp Phoenix joint Afghan-international military base are located on Jalalabad Road, to the

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east of Hamad Karzai International Airport (KBL). The roads of the Wazir Akbar Khan area, where the majority of embassies and NGOs are located, are built on a grid pattern, as are parts of the Qala-e Fatullah and Shar-e Nau areas; however, other areas of the city can be hard to navigate. Although the majority of diplomatic missions are located in Wazir Akbar Khan, the Indian and Indonesian embassies are situated in Shar-e Nau. Many hotels and guesthouses are also located in Shar-e Nau, as well as the western suburb of Kart-e-Parwan.

## GROUND TRANSPORTATION

### **From the airport:**

Passengers and vehicles arriving at the airport are checked by the security forces at several stages. Only passengers with a valid plane ticket are permitted beyond the initial security screening points/car park and onwards to the departure terminal.

- **For practical and security reasons, including the risk of opportunistic kidnap, visitors should be met at the airport by a reliable driver and preferably an armoured vehicle.** Drivers sometimes have trouble accessing the terminal building and may have to wait outside; visitors should make clear arrangements about where to meet their driver, who should always have photographic identification. Cars and their passengers are subjected to searches.

### **In the city centre:**

- Travel within the city should be minimised as much as possible, and avoided after dark. **Members should travel with formal security support and preferably an armoured car. They should also ensure that they hire a driver who is recommended and reliable, trained in defensive driving and preferably fluent in both English and Pashto.** Vehicles should be low-profile – without logos – and with Afghan licence plates.
- Cars should be left in secure compounds overnight and should not be left unattended near the driver's residence or outside secure compounds.
- Where possible, vehicles should avoid being caught in traffic jams next to security force vehicles or around choke points such as roundabouts; this increases the incidental risks posed by militant attacks.
- Business travellers should not use taxis; in addition to the security risks, taxi drivers are extremely unlikely to speak any English and cars are usually in a dilapidated condition. Members should travel with formal security support and preferably an armoured car.
- Visitors should not walk anywhere without a formal security framework in place.
- Public transport should be strictly avoided.

## LODGING

### **Baron Hotel**

Near Kabul Intl Airport  
Kabul, Afghanistan  
Phone: +93 (0) 752 060 128  
[reception@thebaronhotels.com](mailto:reception@thebaronhotels.com)  
[www.thebaronhotels.com](http://www.thebaronhotels.com)

### **Cohan Village**

HKAIA St, PD09,  
Next to Baron Compound  
Phone: +93 (0) 799 606 040  
Email: [info@cohanvillage.com](mailto:info@cohanvillage.com)  
[www.cohanvillage.com](http://www.cohanvillage.com)

### **Darya Village**

Airport Road, Next to Baron &  
Cohan Compounds  
Phone: +93 (0) 729 202 266  
Email:  
[hotel.manager@daryavillage.af](mailto:hotel.manager@daryavillage.af)  
[www.daryavillage.af](http://www.daryavillage.af)

**We recommend that operators strongly consider deferring overnight flights amid a deteriorating nationwide security environment following the Taliban takeover of Kabul. If an operation proceeds anyway, the following facilities should only be considered in the case of an unavoidable RON, and are subject to the limitations of a rapidly evolving security environment, as well as exhaustive synchronization with international military forces present at the airport.**

### **American Military Village**

15th Street, Lane 4  
Behind Norwegian Embassy  
Wazir Akbar Khan, Kabul  
Phone: +93 (0) 79 555 7000  
[www.americanmedicalaf.com](http://www.americanmedicalaf.com)

Adequate facilities in Kabul are hard to find and expensive. While there are a few large business class hotels in Kabul, their profile makes them a significant target for insurgent groups such as the Taliban, Haqqani network, and the Islamic State-Khorasan (IS-K) group. Several attacks at hotels have been conducted in recent years leading to dozens of deaths.

We do not recommend leaving the airport without professional security support in place due to the EXTREME travel risk environment.

## **MEDICAL FACILITIES**

Afghanistan is considered an EXTREME medical risk location. The standard of public health care in Afghanistan does not meet international standards. During the political and military turmoil of the last 40 years, some medical facilities have been damaged. Repairing these and maintaining existing facilities is an ongoing challenge. More recently, and with the assistance of several NGO's and governmental groups, there has been a focus on constructing and reconstructing medical facilities. However, shortages of skilled labour and funds are hampering the process. International military facilities may offer a higher standard of care, but are not usually available to travellers unless authorized by a commanding officer. Moderate and serious medical conditions are often recommended international evacuation, usually to the United Arab Emirates. In any event, we strongly recommend contacting MedAire's 24/7 Global Response Centre for proper advice and coordination of care.

## **VACCINATION REQUIREMENTS**

For the most up-to-date vaccination requirements and recommendations, please visit the MedAire [Client Portal](#) (login required) or contact MedLink directly to discuss your specific requirements and recommendations with a medical professional.

## **ENTRY & EXIT REQUIREMENTS**

Entry and exit requirements constantly change and depend on individual circumstances, such as; nationality, point of origin, and destination. Please submit individual requirements to the database [here](#) for specific up to date information.