



WFP Afghanistan SPECIAL OPERATION SO 200360

Country:	Afghanistan
Type of project:	Special Operation
Title:	Provision of Humanitarian Air Services in Afghanistan
Total cost (US\$):	US\$2,993,891
Duration:	Two months (1 st January to 29 th February 2012)

Executive Summary

This Special Operation (SO) is established to provide safe and reliable air transport services to the humanitarian community in Afghanistan in 2012. Continuing insecurity and the poor transportation networks within country have severely limited access for aid workers to beneficiaries. Hence the establishment of The United Nations Humanitarian Air Service (UNHAS) which will support over 160 aid agencies and the donor community in providing humanitarian assistance to various parts of the country.

Through this project, at least 12 locations will be served with two 37-seat Dash-8 aircraft operated by WFP/UNHAS which will be based in Kabul and Islamabad. In addition one BE200 (10 seater) will be tasked to serve 5 deep-field locations not accessible to the two DASH 8s. Therefore in total, 17 locations will be reached

In September 2011, UNHAS introduced an electronic flight management application (e-FMA) system that is now used to process flight bookings and manifests, capture operational data and track flight activities. This innovation allows WFP/UNHAS to implement the SO based on actual operational needs, as data collected from the FMA system allows for better flight scheduling.

The Special Operation is required for a 2 month period, from 1st January to 29th February 2012, at a total cost of **US\$2,993,891**. A cost recovery mechanism will be applied, though ticket sales, which is expected to generate 30% of needed revenue. The remaining 70% of the budget will necessitate donor contributions.

Project Background

1. In 2011, Afghanistan ranked 172 out of 187 countries in the UNDP global Human Development Index.
2. Humanitarian conditions in Afghanistan have remained extremely poor due to protracted conflict and recurrent natural disasters. An intensification of conflict in 2011 caused further civilian casualties and displacement, delayed humanitarian action and disrupted essential services.
3. In 2011, a drought further compounded the humanitarian situation in Afghanistan. Limited snow and rainfall during the 2010/2011 winter and the following spring caused a

slow-onset emergency. As a result, more than 2.8 million people in 14 provinces have been adversely affected.

4. Regular and sustained access to areas requiring humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan is a key challenge for aid agencies. In addition to the widespread insecurity, access is limited because of the inhospitable terrain and poor transportation infrastructure. For humanitarian workers, air travel is the only option for movement within Afghanistan.
5. The prevailing security challenges coupled with weak administrative and regulatory practices continue to hamper commercial aviation growth in Afghanistan. There are currently no commercial air carriers operating within the country which are in compliance with International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) standards and recommended practices. For safety reasons, United Nations staff are not cleared to fly on any commercial air carriers operating within Afghanistan.
6. WFP/UNHAS Afghanistan was established in 2002 as a UN Inter-agency Common Service and since has been providing safe, efficient responsive humanitarian air service to the international community in Afghanistan.
7. Currently, over 160 user agencies rely on the continued provision of UNHAS services. Thus UNHAS offers vital support to the implementation of numerous humanitarian operations.
8. From January to December 2011 the service transported 24,904 passengers and 94 metric tonnes of cargo to some 12 destinations with an average of 3 flights per week per destination. During the same period, UNHAS evacuated or relocated 18 people, including 6 for medical emergencies and 12 individuals due to insecurity reasons.

Project Justification

9. Insecurity, poor infrastructure, and long distances between project sites as well as the lack of safe and reliable local air transport providers make the presence of WFP/UNHAS essential to the humanitarian community in Afghanistan.
10. The UN Department of Safety and Security (UNDSS) designated most provinces of the country as having “substantial,” “high,” and “extreme” threat levels. Security incidents have continued to increase throughout Afghanistan. In the first 10 months of 2011 the average number of security incidents exceeded the number for the same period in 2010 by 24 percent. In 2011, humanitarian offices have come under direct attacks in Kandahar and Mazar-e-Sharif with loss of life.
11. In addition to insecurity, the vast distances between key project sites and their activities, as well as the location of humanitarian bases present an enormous challenge to implementation of humanitarian activities. Road networks between sites are limited or non-existent, and in the winter, some areas of the country are completely inaccessible by road. Thus, air travel remains the safest and most reliable mode of travel to reach many humanitarian program sites within Afghanistan.

12. At present, there are no commercial air carriers that are operating within Afghanistan that are in compliance with ICAO standards and approved for UN travel. Following the May 2010 crash of Pamir Airways Flight 112, which killed all 44 passengers and crew on board, a number of NGOs increased their restrictions on commercial air carriers and thus have become more reliant on UNHAS for travel.
13. Taking into account the overall deteriorating security situation and geographical constraints within the country, access to project sites for assessment, implementation, monitoring and evaluation remains a challenge for the entire humanitarian community in Afghanistan. A survey conducted by UNHAS early in 2011 revealed the need to open a further five to seven deep-field locations in support of humanitarian needs.
14. WFP/UNHAS is the only organization offering an extensive and reliable service to the whole humanitarian community in Afghanistan. The UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Department of Field Service and the International Committee of the Red Cross both operate air services in the country, however they provide air transport primarily for their own staff
15. Additionally, there are no adequate medical facilities in Afghanistan. In case of serious injury/illness, aid workers requiring urgent medical care must be evacuated to Kabul and/or Dubai for treatment. In case of emergency, medical evacuation (MEDEVAC) by air remains the only viable and reliable mode of travel.
16. This project builds on WFP/UNHAS' long experience providing air transport to the humanitarian community in Afghanistan. In 2011, UNHAS introduced a number of innovations into its operation, including route optimization and an electronic flight management application, which will allow this new operation to provide better and more efficient services for the humanitarian community.
17. In light of the above, the UNHAS Board of Directors has requested WFP to continue to provide these vital air services. As a result, this operation has been incorporated into the humanitarian Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP) for 2012.

Project Objectives

18. The objectives of this Special Operation are to provide safe, efficient and cost-effective inter-agency air transport service for United Nations agencies, NGOs and donor organizations involved in humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan.
19. In addition to passengers, the service will continue transporting light cargo, such as medical supplies and ICT equipment, provide timely evacuations (medical and security), and, when called upon, will assist national authorities in search and rescue operations.

Project Implementation

20. On behalf of all users, WFP will manage the UNHAS operation in Afghanistan. This air service is expected to support more than 160 agencies operating in the country.
21. In 2012, UNHAS will operate a fleet of three aircraft: two 37-seat capacity Dash 8 planes serving 12 locations, and a 10-seat capacity BE200 plane to serve five deep-field

locations inaccessible to the Dash 8 planes. The BE200 will also provide operational flexibility in the event of unforeseen breakdowns and planned maintenance to the other aircrafts.

22. The fleet will serve at least 17 locations: existing destinations including Bamyan, Faizabad, Farah, Hirat, Jalalabad, Kabul, Kandahar, Kunduz, Maymana, Tirin Kot, and Mazar-e-Sharif in addition to the regional service to Islamabad, as well as new deep field locations such as Taloqan, Qala-e Naw, Nili, Chaghcharan and Gardez. UNHAS Afghanistan has its main operating base in Kabul, with a secondary base located in Islamabad, Pakistan for connection to international routes.
23. The project will use standard WFP management structures and support systems:
 - Passenger and cargo booking will be made through WFP/UNHAS management structures, with data and voice connectivity available to relay flight manifest and schedules to all locations where WFP maintains sub-offices for distribution to users.
 - A dedicated communication system exists to monitor the location and flight progress of all WFP operated aircraft through VHF/HF radios. And in the interest of flight safety a satellite tracking systems is in place
 - The web-based Electronic Flight Management Application (e-FMA) system has been implemented. The system enables monitoring of air service usage by various agencies, load factors, flight routing, and provides operational and cost data for management overview.
 - Weekly/monthly flight schedules are maintained, with flexibility to adjust to requests for special flights.
24. WFP's Aviation Section (ODLA) based in Rome is responsible for the contracting of the aircraft and safety oversight of the operation.
25. ODLA's Quality Assurance Assessments will be conducted and their reports will be used as a tool for evaluation and improvement of operational efficiency.
26. In order to enhance safety of air operations, as well as to participate in aviation capacity building initiatives, WFP Aviation will continue conducting aviation training for WFP and non-WFP (partners and government) staff involved in the air operation in the country.
27. In accordance with WFP's Air Transport Directive of January 2004 and in compliance with ICAO recommendations, WFP created the UNHAS Board of Directors (BoD). The BoD is composed of United Nations agencies, NGOs and donor representatives in Kabul. Its role is to define the operational requirements and priorities in terms of air transport needs, as well as to monitor the quality of services rendered and provide feedback and guidance to the WFP Chief Air Transport Officer (CATO). The BoD conducts meetings every three months or as regularly as the situation on the ground demands.
28. The CATO will manage the operation locally under the overall supervision of the WFP Country Director and the Chief of WFP's Aviation Unit. The CATO will provide operational reports to the Country Director (CD), the Chief Aviation, and the BoD.
29. The WFP Afghanistan Country Director will act as the Funds Manager and the Finance Officer will be the Allotment Administrator for this operation. ODLA will provide

operational and administrative support and will be responsible for the oversight of the operational activities in Afghanistan.

Project Cost & Benefits

30. The total project cost for this Special Operation is **US\$2,993,891** as detailed in the budget. The project applies a partial cost recovery mechanism through ticket sales, which are expected to cover approximately 30% of the costs. The remaining 70% of the budget needs to be raised through donor contributions.
31. The cost of this Special Operation is a slight increase from the previous year's budget. The primary reasons are an increase in the price of fuel as well as other operational costs, such as necessary security upgrades.
32. The project takes advantage of WFP/UNHAS' existing and long-term contracts with service operators to lower the cost of aircraft charter, and will utilize equipment bought in earlier phases of the operation. .
33. In addition, the project also optimizes aircraft utilization and cost efficiency by combining flight destinations in a Northern and Southern loop. This increases flight frequency for users while helping to ensure that flights have a targeted 65% occupancy rate.
34. The envisaged benefits of the WFP/UNHAS operation in Afghanistan are as follows:
 - enhanced operational efficiency, effectiveness and security in the implementation and monitoring of humanitarian programs;
 - a common service provided to the humanitarian community which is consistent with the call by the Secretary-General "for greater unity of purpose and coherence at country level and that each United Nations entity should benefit from another's presence through establishing corresponding consultative and collaborative arrangements";
 - enhanced air safety through a standardized, single contracting and safety surveillance system;
 - a cost-effective service that can take advantage of economies of scale through lower aircraft direct operating cost, payload consolidation and an integrated organization; and
 - An essential tool used to provide medical and security evacuation service to the humanitarian aid community in the country.

Monitoring & Evaluation

35. Based on project historical statistics, key performance indicators will be monitored and reported at the end of the project and will include the following:
 - Aircraft occupancy rate of 65 percent;
 - Number of passengers transported against planned (target: 2,200 passengers per month);
 - 100 percent utilization of contracted hours;
 - Frequency of and attendance at the BoD meetings (target: Quarterly);

Minutes of the meeting will be available;

- The number of United Nations agencies and other humanitarian organizations utilizing the service and number of locations served. Currently more than 160 agencies benefit from this service with access to 12 locations; and
- 100 percent response to medical and security evacuation requests.

The implementation plan will be revised as the situation evolves, according to the needs of the humanitarian community.

Risk Assessment and Contingency Planning

36. A number of risks could impact the implementation of the SO. The main risks identified are presented through the three risk areas (contextual, programmatic and institutional). The subsequent narrative explains the risks and outlines mitigation measures to be taken.
37. **Contextual Risks.** Security in Afghanistan can deteriorate further, which may result in additional limitations of humanitarian travel. To mitigate this risk, WFP/UNHAS will work in close coordination with UNDSS to ensure timely communication of the security situations at destinations and will plan its operations accordingly. WFP or UNDSS Field Security Officers are present in every location where UNHAS currently travels, and can respond and assist in the event of any security incidents. UNDSS is also responsible for security in the new locations for UNHAS flights planned for in this project. Operational hazards will be identified through established WFP Aviation structures and the relevant risk analysis and mitigation actions will be implemented as required to keep an acceptable level of risk.
38. **Programmatic Risks.** Humanitarian agencies may scale up their assistance in the country through increased number of staff, and/or expansion of activities into more remote areas. WFP/UNHAS will be able to meet the increased demand in humanitarian travel through efficient planning of flight operations. Additional aircraft capacity can be rapidly deployed for passenger and cargo transport, if required. Conversely, UNHAS can also scale down its activities if necessary, as existing contracts with aircraft providers allow for a decrease in utilization. UNHAS relies heavily on short-term consultants, which allows for greater flexibility in either scaling up or scaling down activities.
39. **Institutional Risks.** The success of the SO is conditional on adequate resources being available to WFP throughout the implementation period. WFP/UNHAS has already developed a fundraising strategy to address shortfalls. Jointly WFP/UNHAS and its BoD will continue advocacy efforts in order to ensure uninterrupted services for the humanitarian community.

Exit Strategy

40. Given the complex protracted situation in Afghanistan, restricted humanitarian access, and lack of safe air service providers in the area, WFP cannot envisage the development of an exit strategy at this time. However, WFP will rely on statistical data, monthly continuous assessment reviews, and the BoD's regular feedback and devise an exit strategy as and when the situation improves.

RECOMMENDATION

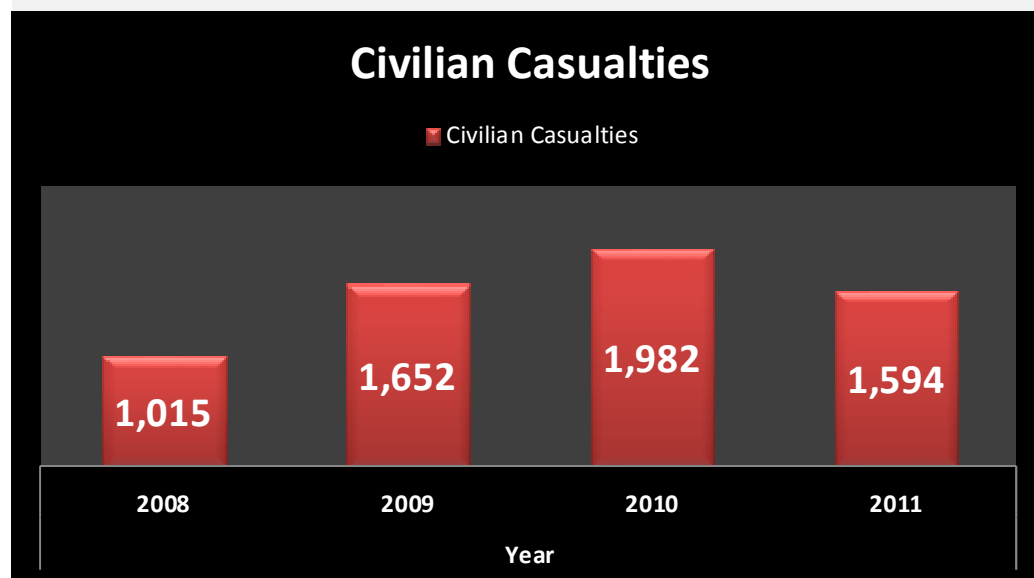
This Special Operation covering the period from 1st January to 29th February 2012 at a total cost to WFP of US\$2,993,891 is recommended for approval by the Deputy Executive Director, OD with the budget provided.

APPROVAL

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Ramiro Lopes da Silva
Deputy Executive Director, OD

Annex 1: Map of United Nations office locations and road links

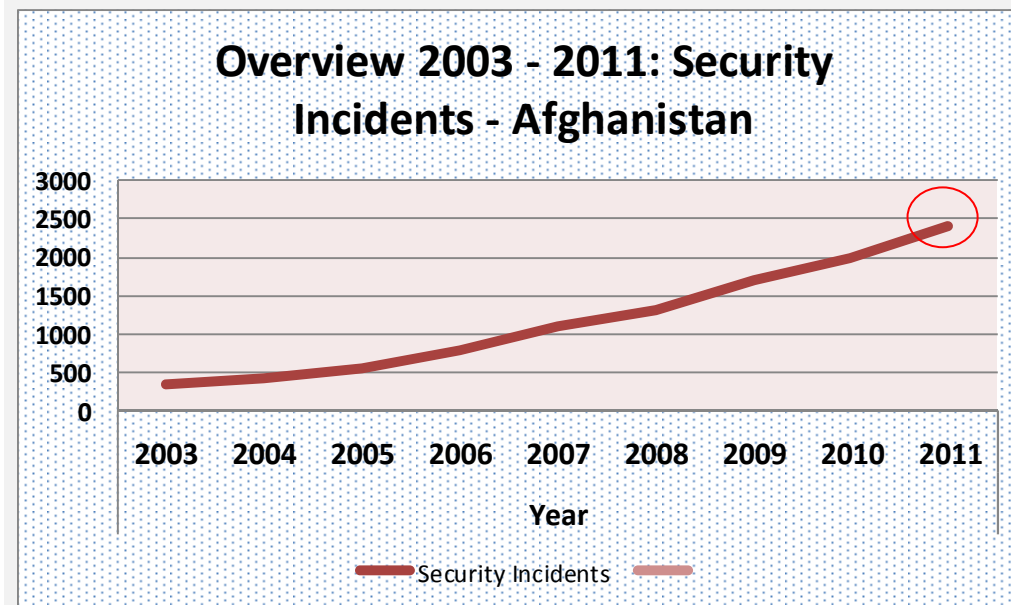
1. CIVILIAN CASUALTIES CAUSED BY EXPLOSIVE DEVICES: ROADSIDE/ OTHER *January 2008 – September 2011*



- 60% of civilians affected by IED explosions
- 19% of casualties caused by X explosions
- 9% of casualties caused by BBIED explosions
- 6% of casualties caused by RCIED explosions
- 5% of casualties caused by VBIED explosions
- 1% unknown

**Large portion
of casualties
caused by
roadside
explosions**

2. SNAPSHOT: SECURITY INCIDENTS *January 2003 – September 2011*



- Continued/steady increase of security incidences
- Correlation: Political events = increase in security incidences
 - 2004: Presidential Election
 - 2005: Parliamentary Election
 - 2010: Parliamentary Election

**Given the political climate in
Afghanistan, security incidents
may continue to rise in 2012.**

Annex 2: Map of UNHAS existing and planned flight locations

