

Afghanistan

Here's a look at what's been happening in and around Afghanistan since attacks began three weeks ago:

Chaghcharan

Pentagon officials reported last week that Northern Alliance troops had taken the city, which would give the alliance control over lines of communication and resupply between Kabul and Herat.

Herat

Capturing Herat, the largest city in western Afghanistan, would anchor the northwest and protect the Northern Alliance's weakest front.

- Suspected terrorist training camps
- Afghan air bases
- Taliban army bases
- Approximate areas controlled by the Northern Alliance
- Russian army bases
- Allied ground attack
- Airstrikes

Arabian Sea

USS Carl Vinson
Battle Group

USS Enterprise
Battle Group

40,000 U.S. sailors and Marines on 50 ships

Mazar-e Sharif

Has the largest airport in Afghanistan. It could serve as a staging area or refueling depot for U.S. helicopters and commandos.

The front line of Alliance vs. Taliban fighting

The line shifts but generally weaves through Pol-e Khomri southwest to Bamian. If the Northern Alliance takes these towns, its forces will have traversed the Badakhshan mountain range and could link up with forces around Mazar-e Sharif.

Taloqan: Controls the western slope of the nation's highest mountain range. Taliban forces have tried to keep the city secured because of its importance as a jumping-off point for reinforcing troops under attack in Mazar-e Sharif.

Baghlan: Sits on the western slopes of the Badakhshan range, another dividing line between the Northern Alliance's main territory in the northeast and Taliban forces.

Kabul

Afghanistan's capital. Northern Alliance troops have pulled to within 25 miles from the north. They've held back from attacking to concentrate on Mazar-e Sharif and Taloqan and because U.S. officials have pressured Alliance leaders to wait until agreement has been reached on what type of government would replace the Taliban if Kabul falls. Pakistan is opposed to a government dominated by the Alliance, which, like the Taliban, has been accused of human rights abuses.

Taliban Forces

Within Mazar-e Sharif are estimated at 2,500-3,000 troops, at least 10 tanks and some artillery.

In Kabul are estimated at 40,000.

Taliban forces in the south and other parts of Afghanistan are estimated at 35,000-100,000.

Many of the Taliban's planes, airstrips and other assets have been destroyed in U.S.-led bombing raids.