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**UNAMA study finds Afghan suicide attackers often duped, coerced**

A detailed UNAMA study of suicide attackers in Afghanistan has found that people, children included, are being coerced or duped into carrying out such attacks. Released on the anniversary of Afghanistan's first-known suicide attack, the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2001 slaying of commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, and just days before the anniversary of 9-11, the study presents data and analysis and includes interviews with more than two dozen failed and alleged suicide attackers.

"With this study we've looked at suicide attackers here in Afghanistan, and based on what we've found you can say we are puncturing a few popular myths," says Tom Koenigs, UN Special Representative for Afghanistan. "The Afghan suicide attacker is not crazed, fanatical or brainwashed. Some are recruited in madrassas, but many are not. Of those we've seen most are young, poor, uneducated, and easily influenced."

The UNAMA study is the most detailed so far into the phenomenon of suicide attacks in Afghanistan. Previous research has noted the low effectiveness of Afghan suicide attackers, who in some cases succeed in blowing up only themselves. UNAMA's findings affirm this but also point to a possible explanation – that coercion and misrepresentation on the part of terrorist training and recruitment networks mean attackers are often ill-prepared for their missions and unaware of the consequences.

The study notes a sevenfold increase in suicide attacks in Afghanistan between 2005 and 2006 and a continuing though slower rising trend in 2007 till now. It looks at the history of suicide attacks in other countries, noting similarities as well as differences with Afghanistan. Also examined

is the cross-border nature of the problem, which is impacting Pakistan as well as Afghanistan.

“Suicide attacks traumatize entire communities, undermine popular faith in institutions of the state, provoke responses that limit freedoms, and intimidate populations into a sense that hopes of peace rest only with the providers of violence,” says Mr. Koenigs. “Our aim with this study has been to find answers. It’s not intended to be the final word on the problem, but the start of what I think is an overdue exploration.”

The study, *Suicide Attacks in Afghanistan (2001-2007)*, containing recommendations for action, is available for download at [www.unama-afg.org](http://www.unama-afg.org).

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