

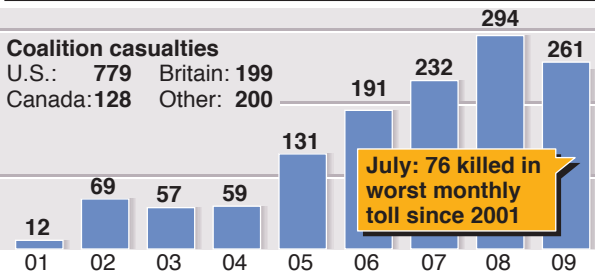
Afghan presidential election

Afghan President Hamid Karzai leads the race against a divided opposition in August 20 polls which take place amid the worst violence since the Taliban was ousted eight years ago

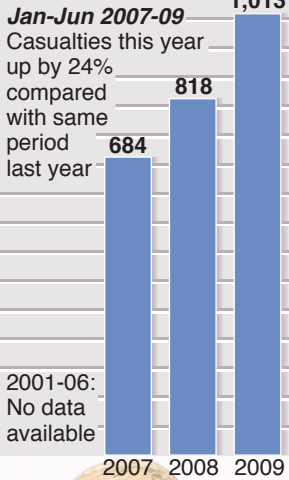
CANDIDATES: President Karzai faces 41 challengers, with **Abdullah Abdullah** and **Ashraf Ghani** seen as main rivals. If no candidate wins more than 50%, second round run-off between top two candidates will be held early October

Coalition casualties

U.S.: 779 Britain: 199
Canada: 128 Other: 200



Civilian deaths



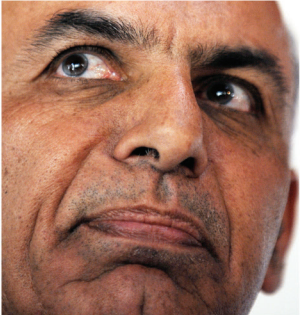
Hamid Karzai, 51: First installed by international agreement in 2001, won 55.4% of vote in first democratic election in 2004

Remains popular despite government corruption, slow development and deterioration of security



Abdullah Abdullah, 48: Foreign minister (2001-06) and leader of anti-Taliban **Northern Alliance**. Has support of **Jamiat-e Islami**, dominated by ethnic Tajiks

Wants change – nation led by prime minister answerable to parliament



Ashraf Ghani, 60: Former finance minister and World Bank official, presents himself as technocrat

Ghani is Pashtun like Karzai but lacks Abdullah's regional support base

SECURITY

There are now about 101,000 foreign troops in Afghanistan, with U.S. numbers at about 62,000. Washington plans to push U.S. troop levels to a record 68,000 by year's end

ELECTORATE

Voters: 15-17 million of 32.7 million population registered to vote

Polling centres: 7,000. One in 10 could be closed because of poor security

Cost: Around \$220 million – bankrolled by international partners

Over 3,000 donkeys to deliver ballots to remote polling sites
Pictures: Getty Images



Source: Centre for Strategic and International Studies
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