

## FORCES AVAILABLE FOR AFGHANISTAN, 2009-10

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As Gen. Stanley McChrystal requests additional troops for ISAF in Afghanistan, the U.S. military's ground combat forces will have to rely not only on Army light infantry and Stryker brigades – a pool of forces that is still stretched thin – but also on Marine units, a large number of which have been freed up by the Marine withdrawal from Iraq. Unless units already in theater have their deployments extended, it appears that a maximum of three extra brigades – one Stryker BCT, one Marine RCT, and one light infantry BCT – could be deployed to Afghanistan before the end of 2009. As many as four more light BCTs and RCTs could be deployed in the first half of 2010, although to replace them the following year could be difficult. If the military judged that even one or two heavy BCTs could be used in parts of Afghanistan, this could relieve the pressure on the pool of light and Stryker BCTs, since the drawdown in Iraq will leave many heavy BCTs free.

### BRIGADES CURRENTLY IN AFGHANISTAN

These brigades are currently deployed to Afghanistan. The Army BCTs are serving twelve-month deployments, except for the National Guard BCT, which is scheduled to be relieved after nine. The length of the Marine component's deployment is not clear.

- 3rd BCT, 10th Mountain – deployed to Logar-Wardak since January 2009, and will need to be relieved in January 2010 (unless deployments are extended again).
- 4th Airborne BCT, 25th ID – deployed to Paktya-Paktika-Khowst area since March 2009, and will need to be relieved in March 2010.
- 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade – deployed to Helmand in April-May 2009, and will need to be relieved in May 2010. However, its ground component, RCT-3, deployed in November 2008 and will probably need to be relieved in November 2009.
- 48th BCT, Georgia National Guard – deployed as an advisory brigade to RC-East in May 2009, and will need to be relieved around February 2010.
- 4th BCT, 4th ID – deployed to N2KL in June 2009, and will need to be relieved in June 2010.
- 5th Stryker BCT, 2nd ID – deployed to Kandahar in July 2009, and will need to be relieved in July 2010.
- 4th BCT, 82nd Airborne – deployed as an advisory brigade to RC-South in September 2009, and will need to be relieved in September 2010.

## INFANTRY BCTS ALREADY SCHEDULED TO DEPLOY

These brigades are scheduled to deploy to Afghanistan to replace the infantry BCTs already in theater.

- 173rd Airborne BCT – returned from Afghanistan in July 2008 and is scheduled to deploy in winter 2010, to relieve either 3/10 Mountain in January or 4/25 ID in March.
- 3rd BCT, 101st Airborne – returned from Iraq in October 2008 and is scheduled to deploy to Afghanistan in winter 2010, to relieve either 3/10 Mountain in January or 4/25 ID in March.
- 86th BCT, Vermont National Guard – scheduled to relieve 48th BCT in late winter 2010.

## ADDITIONAL INFANTRY BCTS AVAILABLE IN 2009-10

If an additional boost in troop levels in Afghanistan is ordered, the bulk of the reinforcements will have to come from the small pool of light infantry BCTs that are not either deployed, deploying, or resetting. This small group of BCTs will also have to replace two of the brigades already in Afghanistan.

- 2nd BCT, 82nd Airborne – returned from Iraq in March 2008 and has had a full 18-month dwell period; serves as the 82nd Airborne's Division Ready Brigade.
- 1st BCT, 10th Mountain – returned from Iraq in October 2008; will have had 15 months of dwell time in January 2010 and 18 in April 2010.
- 1st BCT, 101st Airborne – returned from Iraq in November 2008; will have had 15 months of dwell time in February 2010 and 18 in May 2010.
- 2nd BCT, 101st Airborne – returned from Iraq in November 2008; will have had 15 months of dwell time in February 2010 and 18 in May 2010.
- 4th BCT, 10th Mountain – returned from Iraq in January 2009; will have had 15 months of dwell time in April 2010 and 18 in July 2010.

## AVAILABLE STRYKER BCTS

There is currently one Stryker BCT in Afghanistan (5th SBCT, 2nd ID), and two more are in Iraq. Of the two Stryker BCTs that could conceivably deploy to Afghanistan, one will be required to relieve 5/2 SBCT next summer, but a second could begin deploying as early as winter 2010.

- 2nd Stryker Cavalry Regiment – returned from Iraq in September 2008; will have had 15 months of dwell time in December 2009 and 18 in March 2010.
- 2nd SBCT, 25th ID – returned from Iraq in February 2009; will have had 15 months of dwell time in May 2010 and 18 in August 2010.

## AVAILABLE MARINE RCTS

There is currently one large Marine unit in Afghanistan, the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade in Helmand. This unit deployed in April-May 2009 and will likely be relieved by another MEB next spring, but its core ground headquarters, Regimental Combat Team 3 (RCT-3), deployed in November 2008. So of the available Marine RCTs, one will be needed to relieve RCT-3 before the end of 2009.

- RCT-7 – returned from Iraq in January 2007; available either to relieve RCT-3 or to deploy as a second RCT.
- RCT-2 – returned from Iraq in January 2008; available either to relieve RCT-3 or to deploy as a second RCT.
- RCT-1 – returned from Iraq in January 2009; available for deployment from late winter 2010 on.
- RCT-5 – returned from Iraq in January 2009; available for deployment from late winter 2010 on.

## HEAVY BCTS

To date, no heavy BCTs have deployed to Afghanistan (although a small number of National Guard heavy battalions have converted to Humvees and MRAPs for Afghan deployments). It is conceivable that heavy BCTs could switch to infantry BCT equipment sets in whole or in part, as many have done in recent years in Iraq, and serve in Afghanistan.<sup>1</sup> The following heavy BCTs could conceivably deploy to Afghanistan in the spring or summer of 2010 (and one or two more would become available in the fall of 2010).

- 3rd ACR – returned from Iraq in January 2009; will have had 15 months of dwell time in April 2010 and 18 in July 2010.
- 1st BCT, 4th ID – returned from Iraq in March 2009; will have had 15 months of dwell time in June 2010 and 18 in September 2010.

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<sup>1</sup> In fact, of the national contingents in Afghanistan, the American military is the only one that does not have at least some armor or mechanized capability – Britain routinely deploys battalion-sized light tank units, and Britain, Canada, Denmark, and the Netherlands all routinely deploy companies or platoons of main battle tanks and infantry fighting vehicles.) The following heavy BCTs could conceivably deploy to Afghanistan.