

# Afghanistan at a Glance



**KEY** ▲ Largest concentrations of Afghan refugee camps ● Areas of most concentrated poppy growth

## Poppy Fields

Narcotics trafficking is a major source of revenue for the country. Despite a decline in its production of raw opium in 2000, Afghanistan remained by far the world's largest opium poppy producer. The decline was caused by severe drought in the south and many parts of the north.

## Refugees

During the nearly 10-year Soviet military occupation of Afghanistan, which ended in 1989, one-third of the population fled the country, with Pakistan and Iran sheltering a combined peak of more than 6 million refugees.

## National Facts

**Population:** 25,838,797

(July 2000 est.)

**Birthrate:** 41.82 births/1,000 population (2000 est.)

**Per capita income:** \$730

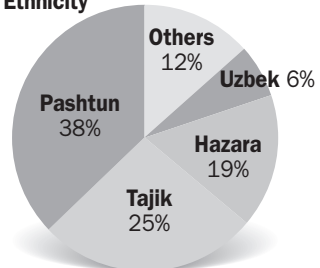
**Size:** 251,739 square miles, slightly smaller than Texas.

**Elevation extremes:** Lowest point Amu Darya, 846 feet; highest point, Nowshak, 24,557 feet.

**Natural resources:** Natural gas, petroleum, coal, copper and other minerals, gems.

**Exports:** Opium, fruits and nuts, hand-woven carpets, wool, cotton, hides and pelts, gems.

## Ethnicity



Sources: CIA World Factbook 2000; United Nations

Researched by LYNN MEERSMAN and JULIE SHEER / Los Angeles Times

## Recent Political Developments in Afghanistan

**April 1978:** The conservative Daoud regime is overthrown in a left-wing coup led by a military commander.

**December 1979:** The Soviet Union airlifts troops to Kabul, the Afghan capital, and replaces the prime minister with a Soviet-backed party rival. In the next three years, Soviet military involvement increases because of continued resistance throughout the country by *mujahedeen* ("holy warrior") guerrillas.

**April 1988:** Afghanistan, Pakistan, the Soviet Union and the U.S. conclude agreements providing for Soviet troop withdrawal to be completed within one year.

**February 1989:** Soviet troop withdrawal completed. A new political and defense council is created to rule the country.

**May 1991:** The Afghan government announces that it is prepared to observe a cease-fire with the *mujahedeen* to implement a peace plan offered by the United Nations secretary-general.

**September 1991:** The U.S. and the Soviet Union declare that they will stop supplying arms to the combatants.

**April 1992-August 1994:** Afghan leader Najibullah resigns. A joint takeover of the country by *mujahedeen*, militia and former

government forces occurs.

**November 1994-September 1996:** Several thousand young Taliban fighters, backed by Pakistan's Islamic clergy, win control of one-third of the Afghan provinces.

**May-December 1997:** Anti-Taliban groups unite as the United National Islamic Front for the Salvation of Afghanistan and control the north for the rest of the year.

**August 1998:** The Taliban launches a major offensive to try to win control of the country, but neighboring countries send troops to defend against possible fundamentalist incursions. U.S. cruise missiles strike camps in Afghanistan thought to be part of an alleged terrorist network run by Saudi militant Osama bin Laden. The attack is ordered by President Clinton in retaliation for the bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania earlier in the month.

**Early 1999:** Talks are launched for a possible power-sharing agreement between the Taliban and its foes.

**February 2001:** The Taliban declares all statues idolatrous and orders the destruction of two large stone sculptures of the Buddha that had looked over the Bamian valley for at least 1,500 years. Even Islamic countries had pleaded for the statues to be spared.