

DICK TAYLOR

ISAF VEHICLES AFGHANISTAN 2007

Kabul & Kandahar



STRATIS

Contents

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Introduction

ISAF
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The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan was set up in 2002 and in summer 2007 was in its tenth iteration, or ISAF X. It is often described as a “Coalition of the Willing”. Currently, although this fluctuates, around 37,000 troops from 39 nations are deployed throughout the country. It is based on, but is not exclusive to, a NATO force. Some countries provide large numbers of troops – the US has nearly 15,000, whilst the UK is the second largest contingent with over 7000. Others contributing significant numbers (over 1000) are: Germany (nearly 3000), Italy (c2500), Canada (2000+), as well as The Netherlands, Poland and Turkey. Amongst the smallest contributing nations are Iceland with 10, Ireland with 7, and the smallest of all, the Ukraine with a single soldier! ISAF divides the country up into five areas, each the responsibility of a Regional Commander, and are roughly the size (in terms of troops) of a large Brigade or small Division. These are known as Regional Commands (RC) South, West, East, North and Capital. The main ISAF HQ is a large multi-national affair, and is based in the centre of Kabul.



This photo-record contains nearly 200 illustrations, and the intention is to focus primarily on the photographs; however, explanatory notes and captions are included where these will be helpful. In the first part of this book we will look at just some of the types of vehicles (18 in fact) used in Afghanistan, mainly in Kabul and Kandahar, and in the second section we shall concentrate on the schemes and markings noted. Naturally, a huge number and variety of vehicles are to be found around the country, and this photo-book cannot hope to show all of them in all their various configurations – one of the reasons for this is the extensive up-armouring that is an ongoing feature of the fleet. In some instances the up-armouring uses traditional steel armour plate, but increasing use is being made of other materials. For the obvious reasons, wheeled vehicles far outnumber tracked AFVs. However, normal trucks and lorries are increasingly being armed and armoured, as the traditionally “rear areas” are no longer clearly defined, and logistic troops often find themselves attacked whilst on convoy duties. Many countries supply protection enhancement kits designed to be fitted onto such vehicles in theatre, and which can also be moved between vehicles as required, for example if the fleet is rotated for maintenance reasons.



For those interested in the camouflage and markings of these vehicles, it will be seen in the second part that many of them remain in the European schemes. As a general rule, tactical vehicles employed in the rural areas for operations are in various sand-coloured schemes, but urban vehicles are often left in the plain green or normal European camouflage colours.

The author's fee for this work has been donated to the RTR Benevolent Fund and to BLESMA, the British Limbless Ex-Serviceman's Association.

PART 1 VEHICLES

LAV III

The large Canadian contingent in Kandahar Province uses some Leopard MBTs, but also many Light Armoured Vehicle (LAV) IIIs where tanks would not be suitable. Based upon the Piranha III made by the Swiss Mowag, part of the General Dynamics Corporation, the LAV is an 8x8 wheeled APC armed with a stabilised M242 Bushmaster 25mm cannon and a 7.62mm coaxial MG. Over 650 have been made for the Canadian forces by GD Land Systems of Canada; Turretless Command Post variants of the LAV are also deployed.

Basic Characteristics

Crew + Passengers	3+6/7	Driver, Gunner, Commander
Combat Weight (Tonnes)	14	
Engine	280HP Caterpillar Diesel	
Length (M)	6.9	
Width (M)	2.6	
Height (M)	2.0 (to roof) 2.88 (to turret roof)	

A dusty Canadian LAV III prepares for a patrol from Kandahar Airfield.



AT105 SAXON

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The much-slighted British Army Saxon was close to retirement but has something of a comeback in Afghanistan, being pressed into Internal Security roles based out of Camp Souter in Kabul. Designed by GKN Sankey, it entered service in 1983 as a battle taxi with an IS variant – it was never meant to be used as a frontline APC. Some of the Saxons used in Kabul have been fitted with bar armour, and the AT105A Ambulance variant is used by the RAMC.

Basic Characteristics

Crew + Passengers	2+10	Driver, Commander
Combat Weight (Tonnes)	10.6	
Engine	164HP Bedford 500 6 Cyl diesel	
Length (M)	5.17	
Width (M)	2.5	
Height (M)	2.63	



This Saxon was fitted with bar armour.

A line up of four Saxons in Camp Souter. One has bar armour, the other three are in Internal Security (IS) configuration with anti-riot equipment fitted.



PART 2

VEHICLE CAMOUFLAGE AND MARKINGS

Students of the Second World War often bemoan the fact that at the time, no-one took photographs or recorded paint and marking details for the sole benefit of later communities of modellers! In an effort to prevent history repeating itself, this section seeks to portray just some of the many different types of military camouflage and markings seen in Afghanistan during summer 2007. Hopefully, it should not only serve as a permanent record of the vehicles and their schemes, but also and more importantly from the perspective of this book's likely readership, inspire some to depict these vehicles in model form.

As noted already, the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan includes around 37 nations. Because of the size and diversity of the forces involved, a large number of different vehicle types can be seen, and what follows is a nation-by-nation account of the markings noted. I did not operate in every region of the country, so please note that this record is limited to what I saw, both in terms of countries – 18 are featured here plus a little on Afghani and UN vehicles - and types.

ISAF MARKINGS

Some generalisations about these can be made. Firstly, there was a complete lack of standardisation of markings even within the same unit, let alone within countries! It was very difficult to find two vehicles marked to the same standard, so the modeller who doesn't feel obliged to base his/her model on a particular vehicle will find plenty of scope for imagination. Various ISAF insignia are in use, as a green and white disc sticker, a camouflaged shield, stencilled in white within a circle or square, or simply the letters ISAF in white or, less commonly, black. ISAF pennants, white (but sometimes gold) on green, were also common, flown from antennas.



Some nations prefer this camouflaged ISAF shield device.

BELGIUM

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Vehicles were very plain, overall NATO green with little in the way of markings. Some but by no means all bore rectangular national markings; some of these had ISAF stencilled immediately above in white. The registration plates were black numerals on white with a thin black outline, preceded by a small national tricolour flag.



A typical Belgian registration plate.

A Belgian Unimog in plain green, with very little in the way of markings.



AND FINALLY...

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Local vehicles were generally old and full of people and goods! The driving skills beggar belief, but the most striking thing for me was the so-called Jingle or Jingly trucks. These are named as such because the drivers dangle many lengths of chain from the chassis, making them jingle as they drive along! They are also very brightly painted, as this example shows...

Diorama, anyone?

