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The Long March

Building an Afghan National Army

Obaid Younossi
Peter Dahl Thruelsen
Jonathan Vaccaro
Jerry M. Sollinger
Brian Grady

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Preface

The criticality of the Afghan National Army (ANA) to the success of the allied efforts in Afghanistan and the ultimate stability of the national government is well recognized. Although the Afghan Air Corps is part of the ANA, it is much less mature in terms of training, manning and equipment. Thus, this monograph deals primarily with the ground forces.

This monograph assesses the progress of the Afghan National Army. It offers observations on the recruitment, training, facilities and operational capability of the ANA. The monograph will interest those involved in international security affairs, security sector reform, counterinsurgency operations, and nation building.

This project was jointly sponsored by the Royal Danish Defence College (RDDC) and RAND's International Security and Defense Policy Center. The RDDC, located in Copenhagen, Denmark, is the Danish armed forces' center for education, training, and research-generated consultancy. The International Security and Defense Policy Center is part of the RAND National Defense Research Institute, a federally funded research and development center sponsored by the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Joint Staff, the Unified Combatant Commands, the Department of the Navy, the Marine Corps, the defense agencies, and the defense Intelligence Community.

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Summary

Background and Purpose

The Afghan National Army (ANA) is seen as a sine qua non for security in Afghanistan. The recent resurgence of the Taliban, operating out of bases in Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan, underscores the threat to the Afghan government and the importance of the army in stemming this insurgency and providing for Afghanistan's future security. Efforts to rebuild the ANA have been going on for about six years, and judgments about its progress have been mixed.

This monograph offers an assessment of the progress of the ANA to date. It draws on a variety of sources, including in-country interviews with U.S., NATO, and Afghan officials; data provided by the U.S. Army; open-source literature; and a series of public opinion surveys conducted in Afghanistan over the past three years.

Assessment of the Afghan National Army

Our assessments pertain to following areas:

- manpower, infrastructure and equipment
- training
- operational proficiency
- public perceptions of the army.

Manpower, Infrastructure, and Equipment

Of these three areas, manpower shows the most progress. The ANA has recruited nearly 79,000 soldiers, and the goal of 122,000 personnel plus an additional 12,000 in training, transient, holding, and student (TTHS) status seems possible, if difficult. Reenlistment efforts have been relatively successful, with about 67 percent of non-commissioned officers and about 49 percent of soldiers opting for an additional enlistment. This success notwithstanding, important personnel issues remain, including an unacceptably high absent-without-leave rate and a lack of ethnic balance across the force.

Progress has occurred in developing the infrastructure, but it lags behind in manpower recruitment. Only about 40 percent of infrastructure projects are completed or under way. Funding is available to complete many of them, but the time line of that completion extends longer than U.S. officials would like. The projected force increase, from 80,000 to 122,000, will require additional infrastructure, posing yet another set of challenges to a program that already lags behind the requirements.

Finding a source of funding to pay the salaries of an additional 40,000 soldiers and to build the necessary infrastructure has not been a bright spot thus far. Afghanistan's GDP is only \$11 billion, and the annual federal budget is \$4 billion, much of which is foreign aid (O'Hanlon, 2008). Opium cultivation and trafficking constitute a large part of the country's economic activity. Thus, the ability of the Afghans to provide the economic support and develop the infrastructure that the ANA requires remains an open question. It is likely that a continued international commitment will be necessary to ensure that the ANA and its infrastructure are sustained.

Equipment is also a problematic area. Some units, such as the commandos, are well equipped, but others are missing equipment or have old or obsolete materiel. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) reports that Afghan combat units are short about 40 percent of the major necessary items. A recent U.S. decision to provide additional equipment to the ANA will help, but some units that do not currently have the assistance of coalition forces find themselves outgunned by their Taliban adversaries.

Training

After a somewhat rocky start, institutional training appears to have progressed well. The programs of instruction appear sound and attuned to the needs of the Afghan army. More problematic is the unit-level training, which depends in large part on the efforts of embedded training teams. Teams promised by NATO have been slow in coming, and two years after the program's inception, only about half of the operational mentor and liaison teams (OMLT) have been staffed. Additionally, some of these teams have restrictions on what they can do. Furthermore, the schedules of the teams do not mesh well with the operational employment of the Afghan units they advise. Ensuring that enough teams are available to meet current demands and to support the increase will be important and, if recent history is any guide, difficult.

Operational Proficiency

The key to the success of the Afghan army is how well it performs in combat. The coalition claims that Afghan units participate in almost all operations and take the lead in about half of them. Publicly available data to support or refute this claim are hard to come by. Anecdotal information is mixed, but in general it seems that the army is steadily improving. Some units (commandos) essentially run their own operations with some advice from mentors. Others are considerably less adept. Still, many observers note real improvement, although the starting baseline was relatively low. A recent GAO assessment indicates about 40 percent of the ANA is capable of conducting operations with support of international forces (GAO, 2008). Accounts of several operations—for example, the one in Kandahar province in summer 2008 to reimpose security after a large number of Taliban broke out of prison in—show a capability to respond quickly and carry out a relatively sophisticated operation. Still, the increase in the number and quality of Taliban fighters is posing a serious threat to the stability of the country to the point that U.S. commanders have made requests for additional forces. Thus, in spite of the progress made in the development of the ANA, its operational effectiveness remains very much in the balance.

One area universally seen as needing major improvement is the ability of the ANA to support itself. Logistics remains a weakness, both in planning and in execution.

Public Perception

In a conflict that ultimately hinges on public support, it is noteworthy that survey data indicate that the people of Afghanistan view the army positively. While the overall perception of security has declined recently, the ANA is seen as a positive force in providing security. This positive perception helps coalition forces carry out operations, using the Afghan forces to interact with the civilian population while they focus on direct combat with the insurgents.

The Way Forward

The ANA remains a work in progress but is an indispensable part of the ultimate security of the country. Coalition forces cannot be the guarantors of national security. Only the Afghans themselves can do that. However, coalition forces, particularly those of the United States, will play a crucial role in Afghanistan for the foreseeable future, particularly in light of the increased threat from Taliban forces operating out of Pakistan and parts of Afghanistan. Even if the ANA reaches the stage where it can operate independently, the United States and other nations will need to keep a security presence in the country for a substantial period. Moreover, it is likely that an international commitment will be necessary to ensure that the ANA and its infrastructure are sustained for the foreseeable future.

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Of course, the contents of this monograph are the sole responsibility of the authors.

Abbreviations

AMF	Afghan Military Force
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANATC	Afghan National Army Training Command
ANBP	Afghanistan's New Beginnings Program
ANP	Afghan National Police
AWOL	absent without leave
CENTCOM	Central Command
CFC-A	Combined Forces Command-Afghanistan
CJTF	Combined Joint Task Force
CM	Capability Milestone
COMISAF	Commander ISAF
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan
DDR	disarmament, demobilization and reintegration
ETT	embedded training teams
FOB	forward operating base
FY	fiscal year
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GDP	gross domestic product
HDI	Human Development Index
HMMWV	high mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicle

HQ	headquarters
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JCMB	Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board
KMTC	Kabul Military Training Center
MoD	Ministry of Defense
MPRI	Military Professional Resources Incorporated
MTT	mobile training teams
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NCO	non-commissioned officer
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OMC-A	Office of Military Cooperation–Afghanistan
OMLT	operational mentor and liaison team
OPLAN	operation plan
OSC-A	Office of Security Cooperation–Afghanistan
RC	regional command
RDDC	Royal Danish Defence College
SOF	special operations forces
TTHS	training, transient, holding, and student
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan

Introduction

Background

Afghanistan moved to the center of the world stage following the September 11 attacks on the United States. The broad strokes of the country's history since then are well-known, even though the conflict in Iraq has subsequently overshadowed the one in Afghanistan until recently. But the conflict continues there, and the involvement of foreign militaries has increased, with both the United States and NATO having significant numbers of forces present in the country. Most policymakers realize that foreign forces cannot ensure the long-term peace and security of the country. Ultimately, Afghan forces will have to provide those guarantees. This is not to say that U.S. and perhaps NATO forces will not have a long-term presence in the country as well. But the Afghans will have to provide the bulk of the security forces, with perhaps air or specialized support from the United States or NATO in the foreseeable future.

The essential role of an Afghan military force has been recognized since the outset of the recent conflict there, and considerable effort and expense has gone into building up the Afghan National Army (ANA). Judgments on the success of that effort vary,¹ but it is widely accepted that the ANA will be central to the long-term success of the central government. Without an effective army, the country will slip back into

¹ See, for example, Chan, 2007, and Giustozzi, 2008.

chaos until some force, probably the Taliban in this case, restores some type of order.

The challenges the country faces only underscore the importance of the ANA and the difficulty of the task before it. Afghanistan ranks 174th out of 178 countries on the global Human Development Index (HDI); the 2007 Afghanistan Human Development Report found that 6.6 million Afghans do not meet its minimum food requirements (UNDP, 2007). Illiteracy and gender discrimination remain widespread. Additionally, 2006 witnessed a significant rise in terrorist attacks and a 59 percent spike in the area under poppy cultivation, making the country a world leader in the production of illegal opium with 90 percent of global production (UNDP, 2007). These characteristics make the population susceptible to exploitation by external forces.

Purpose and Sources

This monograph offers an assessment of the state of the Afghan National Army. It describes the current development status of the army, how the public perceives it, the training it has received, and its performance in recent operations.

The monograph draws on several sources of information. A primary source is interviews. These were conducted with the members of U.S. military in Afghanistan, participants in the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission, Afghan government officials, and the United Nation Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) in November of 2005, December of 2007, and October of 2008. It also draws on material subsequently and recently provided by U.S. military, ISAF, and open-source information. Information about the public's perceptions of security and the ANA comes from a dozen surveys conducted in Afghanistan by various organizations.

Overview of Afghanistan

This section presents some basic information about Afghanistan: geography, composition of the population, some of the history of the military, the national military strategy, and general information about the army. Those familiar with this information may wish to skip to Chapter Two.

Geography and Population

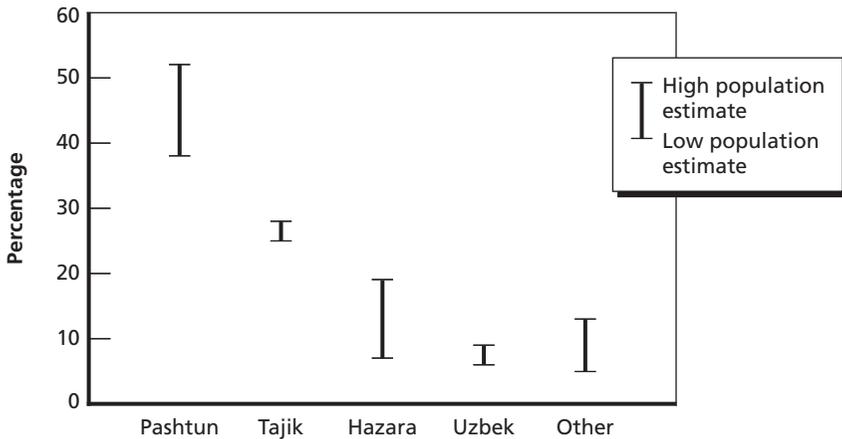
Afghanistan is a landlocked country of approximately 250,000 square miles (slightly smaller than Texas). It is located at the intersection of the Iranian plateau, the central Asian steppes, and the Indian subcontinent. Iran borders it on the west; Pakistan on the south and east; Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan on the north; and China on its easternmost region. Afghanistan's population is estimated to be about 30 million and includes several ethnic minorities. However, no census has been conducted since 1979, and that census is considered partial and incomplete, which is why the figures on the ethnic composition in Figure 1.1 must be considered to be estimates. Afghans by and large are Muslims with very small Hindu and Sikh minorities. Of the Muslim populations, 80 percent are Sunni and 19 percent are Shi'a (CIA, 2008).

Because of years of external and internal strife and lack of an adequate public education system, only 28 percent of Afghans can read and write (UNICEF, 2008). Illiteracy poses a particular challenge to building the Afghan national security forces—including the ANA, the Afghan National Police (ANP), and other complementary security forces—and to all efforts to improve the economic and social well-being of the Afghan people in general.

Afghanistan Military History

The modern history of Afghanistan is marked by conflict and change, due in part to its strategic location, diverse ethnic and cultural-

Figure 1.1
Estimated Ethnic Composition of Afghan Population



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linguistic composition, and clan structure. Indeed, since the founding of modern Afghanistan in 1747 by Ahmad Shah Durrani, the nation has seen three Anglo-Afghan wars, a widespread insurgency against Soviet occupation, several years of civil war, and the brutal regime of the Taliban religious extremists. Table 1.1 provides a time line of conflict and size of military forces of Afghanistan.

Today, the largest military forces in Afghanistan are those of the United States and the U.N.-mandated International Security Assistance Force, which currently operates under the auspices of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). There are about 51,000 troops from 41 different countries under ISAF mandate, of which 20,600 are U.S. troops (ISAF, 2008d). These foreign forces are fighting insurgents and supporting the ANA to maintain peace and stability in Afghanistan since the fall of Taliban. While American forces initially bore the brunt of foreign casualties in Afghanistan, other nations have increasingly

Table 1.1
History of Conflicts and Size of the ANA

Time Frame	Leader	Size of Force	Conflict	Notes
1891–1893	Amir Abdur Rahman Khan	40,000	Pacification of Hazarjarat	Tribal militia army. The state tried unsuccessfully to implement a national military
Early 1920s	King Amanullah	23,000	None	Military neglected
1928	King Amanullah Khan	11,000	Civil war	Neglect of military meant that Amanullah could not quell rebellion
1933	King Nadir Shah	70,000	None	Modern army model with professional officer education and NCO corps
1945	King Nadir Shah	110,000	None	90,000 in army; 20,000 in rural security force
1960s	King Zaher Shah	98,000	None	Soviet assistance creates 90,000-man army, 8,000-man air force
1978	President Daoud Khan ^a	90,000 (pre-coup)	Military coup	PDPA usurps Daoud with Soviet backing ^b
1979	Nur Muhammad Taraki followed by Hafizullah Amin and Babrak Karmal	50,000	Soviet invasion	Army strength falls in one year of PDPA power. USSR invades
1980	Babrak Karmal	25,000 ^c	Soviet-Afghan War	USSR tries unsuccessfully to rebuild national army. Mujahideen better at recruitment
1985	Babrak Karmal	47,000	Soviet-Afghan War	40,000-man conscripted army with 7,000-man air force. Units at 25% strength
2007	Hamid Karzai	122,000 ^d	Global War on Terror	Currently 79,000 strong

SOURCES: Nyrop and Seekins, 1986; Jalali, 2002.

NOTES: All figures are estimates. Figures do not include police. PDPA = People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan. ^a Daoud Khan, a former prime minister and cousin of King Zaher Shah, deposed the monarchy and instituted a presidency in a bloodless coup in 1975. ^b The PDPA deposed President Daoud Khan and installed the first pro-Soviet president, Nur Muhammad Taraki. ^c The Afghan army was backed up by about 100,000–120,000 Soviet soldiers. ^d Projection.

sustained casualties as the international role in combating a resurgent Taliban has increased.²

Afghan Military Strategy³

Afghanistan's national military objectives are safeguarding territorial integrity, ensuring independence and sovereignty, defeating insurgency and terrorism, contributing to the stable and secure environment, reforming various defense sectors, and contributing to regional and international security and stability. The national interests of Afghanistan under current conditions focus on the prosperity of the Afghan people, establishment of the rule of law, and stability and consolidation of the central government. Because of the presence of international forces, Afghanistan does not see any direct threat from any regional powers in the near future. However, many internal issues threaten Afghanistan's present and future.

The greatest threats to Afghanistan's security described in the Afghan Military Strategy are the internal and external threats posed by the Taliban, al Qaeda, and other extremist groups from border areas. Although the disarmament and demobilization of armed factions have progressed, illegal armed groups throughout the country also threaten Afghanistan's stability. Opium cultivation and trafficking are major sources of concern for Afghanistan's future stability as described in the Afghan military strategy. Also, the lack of education and economic opportunity is seen as a major indirect threat to Afghan national security. Uneducated people with a low standard of living are more vulnerable to extremist ideals, so the creation of a secure, prosperous populace is critical to Afghanistan's future security.

² As of October 27, 2008, there were 1,003 coalition deaths in Afghanistan as part of ongoing coalition operations (Operation Enduring Freedom and the ISAF): 625 American, 121 British, 97 Canadian, 30 German, 23 Spanish, 22 French, 17 Dutch, 16 Danish, 13 Italian, 8 Polish, 8 Romanian, 6 Australian, 3 Czech, 3 Estonian, 3 Norwegian, 2 Hungarian, 2 Portuguese, 2 Swedish, 1 Finnish, 1 Lithuanian, and 1 South Korean (Wikipedia, 2008).

³ This section is based on Afghan Ministry of Defense, 2005.

Afghan National Army

The objective is for the ANA to be able to carry out joint operations with members of the coalition forces and NATO ISAF and to be increasingly capable of conducting independent operations. The initial goal was to develop a full Afghan military capability by 2010, including five army corps and one air corps (UNAMA, 2006). Today, this goal has been changed with the aim of developing a 122,000-strong military by 2014; of these, some 68 percent would be ground combat troops.⁴ Recruitment has been on a voluntary basis to create a professional army. According to the Afghan constitution, the president of Afghanistan carries out the command and control of the military.

Currently, the ANA has about 79,000 members.⁵ Afghan officials believe that the future size of the ANA should be almost double the 122,000 now agreed upon by the Afghan government and the international community. They believe that, in order to be able to fight the insurgency and defend themselves from aggression by any of the neighboring countries, the number should be closer to 200,000.⁶ The goal is to give the ANA a national presence and give the central government legitimacy and access across the country. Figure 1.2 compares the troop size of Afghanistan's to those of neighboring countries and of Columbia, which has a drug problem similar to that of Afghanistan.

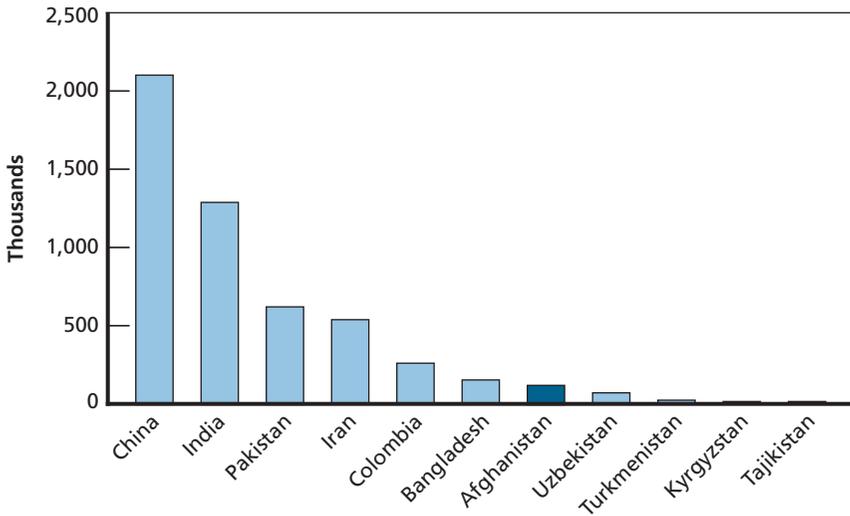
Although Afghanistan has a relatively long tradition of having a national army, it has a much longer tradition of tribal militias. Indeed, when the country has found itself in dire straits, the militias, not the national army, have tipped the balance against external foes. Thus, in some ways the military power of Afghanistan is greater than simple numerical counts might suggest. In comparison with many of the coun-

⁴ In the Petersberg agreement of December 2, 2002, and the following Afghanistan Compact, the number is 70,000 soldiers. This number, however, was lifted initially to 80,000 soldiers (86,000 with manning margin). The decision was taken at the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) meeting, February 5–6, 2008, in Tokyo, Japan. Then, on September 10, the JCMB raised the number to 122,000 soldiers plus 12,000 people in training, transient, holding, and student (TTHS) status for a total force of 134,000.

⁵ This information is from ISAF headquarters as of October 9, 2008.

⁶ This was Defense Minister Rahim Wardak's assessment at a press conference held in November 2007.

Figure 1.2
Sizes of Other Military Forces



SOURCE: International Institute for Strategic Studies, 2008.

NOTE: The figure for Afghanistan is an estimate. To date, there are no reliable estimates of Afghan population.

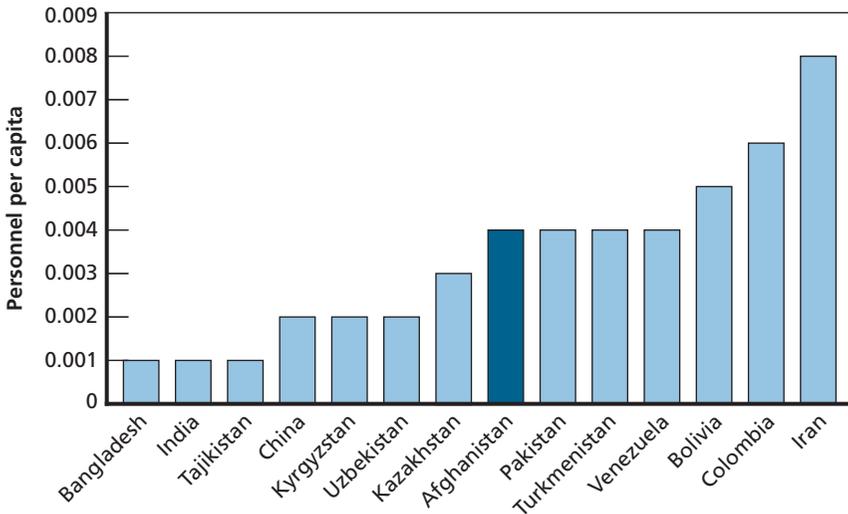
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tries listed in Figure 1.2, such as Pakistan and Iran, the 122,000-man force currently planned for Afghanistan is small and puts the country on par with the other “stans” (Kyrgyzstan, etc.). However, its security challenge is much more formidable. Figure 1.3 provides a similar comparison on a per-capita basis.

How the Monograph Is Organized

This monograph has five chapters. Chapter Two charts the recent history of the efforts to build a national army, including a description of the initial challenges that had to be overcome. Chapter Three recounts the training the army has undergone and the use of embedded liaison teams. Chapter Four reports on how the army has performed in recent operations. Chapter Five describes Afghans’ perceptions of both the

Figure 1.3
Per-Capita Sizes of Other Military Forces



NOTE: The figure for Afghanistan is an estimate. To date, there are no reliable estimates of Afghan population.

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nation's security and the ANA. This is particularly critical because the success of the army will hinge to a large degree on how well the public accepts it as a national force. The final chapter presents conclusions and recommendations for future programs on rebuilding national armies in post-conflict environments.

Recent History of the Afghan National Army

This chapter charts the recent history of the ANA, beginning in 2002. It describes some of the initial challenges and the optimism concerning how quickly the security burden could be shifted from coalition forces to Afghan units. It then discusses the first planning efforts for the ANA and how they progressed. The chapter concludes with a description of the current status of the ANA.

Initial Challenges

By early 2002, Operation Enduring Freedom had proved to be swift and successful, with operations in urban areas followed by bitter fighting and increased casualties in the mountain passes. Coalition commanders, however, did not want a Bosnia-like long-term occupation of Afghanistan. Soon after the invasion, the blanket term “security sector reform” began to be bandied about in Kabul as the tool for extracting coalition forces.¹ Coalition partners used the still conceptual “Afghan National Army” as a justification not to deploy peacekeeping troops throughout the country. The reality of a multiyear insurgency had not yet emerged.

¹ *Security sector reform* is defined by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation Development (OECD) as “another term used to describe the transformation of the ‘security system’—which includes all the actors, their roles, responsibilities and actions—working together to manage and operate the system in a manner that is more consistent with democratic norms and sound principles of good governance, and thus contributes to a well-functioning security framework” (OECD/DAC, 2005, p. 20).

But the level of international commitment did not match the ambitious plans for either the national army or the national police force. In early 2002 when the coalition announced plans to create a 70,000-man national army and border patrol, Ambassador James Dobbins, U.S. Special Envoy to Afghanistan, proposed a first-year U.S. contribution of \$130 million. Other nations promised or donated equipment but little financial support (Deen, 2002). In comparison, the U.S. contribution for FY08 of \$2.7 billion is significantly higher than the 2002 contribution (OSD, 2007). At the time, U.S. military officials predicted that the army would be at full strength by 2004 (Deen, 2002). It is unclear how they arrived at this date, but in retrospect it appears to have been too optimistic. Building the initially planned 70,000-man army with a 1:10 officer-to-enlisted ratio in two years would have required the Kabul military academy to graduate nearly 450 officers every six weeks.

In line with the early extemporaneous nature of the coalition, initial efforts to build defense forces were a hodgepodge. In April 2002, the British trained a single Afghan battalion. Concurrently, the ISAF² trained 4,000 Afghan soldiers who were due to become active before ISAF's planned withdrawal at the end of 2002 (Manuel and Singer, 2002). Outside of Kabul, Afghan Special Operations Forces (SOF) were training, funding, and commanding their own anti-al Qaeda units. These forces were effective in combat but were neither ethnically mixed nor loyal to the national government. SOF paid their forces at a rate higher than the Afghan government could match, complicating efforts to integrate these units into the national army.

Planning the ANA

Preparation for a national Afghan army began when U.S. and coalition forces began drawing up plans for a post-Taliban Afghanistan. At a December 2001 conference held in Bonn, Germany, all the major

² The ISAF did not come under NATO command and coordination until April 11, 2003. Until then, the command shifted between different nations (NATO, 2008).

Afghan political and military actors, along with the United States and Afghanistan's neighboring countries, gathered to determine the construct of an interim government. The result was an agreement, signed on December 5, 2001, that recognized the coming need for an Afghan army and established the Afghan Interim Government.³ One year later, on December 2, 2002, at a conference held in Petersberg, Germany, the initial target and framework for the new army were agreed upon.⁴ The army was to consist of 70,000 soldiers divided among an air corps, infantry units, and the new Ministry of Defense.

At the same time as the Interim Government was taking shape, the United States and Great Britain were coordinating a multinational effort for the establishment of the security sector to distribute the inevitable financial burden. By April 2002, the "lead nation" strategy had emerged, which distributed responsibilities among five nations: Germany would be responsible for developing the ANP; Italy would lead judicial reform; Japan would coordinate disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of warlords and militias; Great Britain would assume accountability for counter-narcotics efforts; and the United States would build the ANA.

In the initial stages of the process, the Afghan Interim Government and the United States, as lead nation, needed to decide whether to build the new ANA from scratch or to build on some of the existing structures. This decision was postponed until September 2003 when they decided to commence the process from a "tabula rasa," meaning that all structures from the Ministry of Defense (MoD) to the ground units were to be built from scratch.⁵ This decision enabled the building of a strengthened MoD more capable of executing the reform and less susceptible to corruption and old power struggles.⁶ From 2002 to 2005,

³ For the text of the Bonn Agreement, see *Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions*, 2007.

⁴ See "Rebuilding Afghanistan: Peace and Security," 2002.

⁵ Interview conducted with a senior representative of UNAMA in December 2007 in Kabul.

⁶ Interview conducted with a senior representative from Military Professional Resources, Incorporated, in December 2007 in Kabul.

the U.S. developed the ANA through the Office of Military Cooperation–Afghanistan (OMC-A), which was later reorganized as the Office of Security Cooperation–Afghanistan (OSC-A) when it assumed the additional mission of training the ANP. Both these organizations were subordinate organizations of Combined Forces Command–Afghanistan (CFC-A).⁷ CFC-A was the overarching operational headquarters. In line with the concept of a small footprint, the first vision of the ANA involved training militia leaders as company-grade officers with warlords as generals, all united under a power-sharing agreement. Under this concept, the United States would provide uniforms, equipment, and training so that within five years what started as dispersed militias would be a satisfactory defense force for a developing country. Policymakers disagreed about the merits of this approach as opposed to building a brand new army, but it held sway and eventually emerged as the prevailing approach.

Within a year, the United States had abandoned the concept for two reasons.⁸ First, the converted militia troops performed poorly in combat. Coalition commanders found that local politics often trumped national interests during operations. Integration was difficult because some illiterate militia leaders lacked skills necessary to operate within the formal hierarchy of a conventional army. Second, the Kabul government needed to extend its influence in the provinces, and the local influence over military forces inhibited that process.

By late 2002, Afghan political bargaining was in full tilt. To strengthen the central government, ease the ethnic tensions, and help unify the country, the United States moved to make the ANA an ethnically balanced, professional, and legitimate manifestation of the national government in the provinces. OMC-A raised requirements for officer candidates, invested in infrastructure for an increased training tempo, and raised the ANA manpower goal from 50,000 to 70,000.⁹

⁷ In April 2006, CFC-A was reorganized under the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) and renamed the Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan, the name it goes by today.

⁸ These two reasons are expansions of ideas set forth in Giustozzi (2007), pp. 47–48.

⁹ This number was finally agreed upon at the Petersberg conference.

After the ANA was redesigned in 2003, its trajectory was relatively straightforward. However, the United States encountered recruiting problems, high absent without leave (AWOL) rates, issues with ethnic balance, and poor unit discipline and quality. In response to discouraging initial ANA combat deployments in the summer of 2003, OMC-A began embedding 19-man training teams with ANA units.¹⁰ Initial results were promising, and the United States committed 300 personnel to this effort or one trainer for every 30 Afghan soldiers (Gius-tozzi, 2007). In 2005, the commander of the CFC-A slowed the rate of training, accepting lower output in exchange for higher quality of the trainees.¹¹ Subsequently, the United States assigned 288 more trainers to the program.¹²

To improve the quality and volume of recruits, the United States instituted a national recruiting center program. These centers minimized the influence of local strongmen in recruitment and improved ethnic balance among the enlisted ranks. The Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC-A) confirmed that recruiting young soldiers to ANA has not been a major problem, stating “KMTC [Kabul Military Training Center] has never missed a recruiting target.”¹³ Some recruitment is done through local village elders who, after discussions with the recruiting center representatives, send a number of local men to the training sites. When new candidates for the officers’ course were being enlisted in 2007, 1,700 individuals from 32 provinces applied for the 300 billets. The only areas with very little recruitment are in the volatile Kandahar and Helmand provinces in southern Afghanistan.¹⁴ The latest recruitment numbers from Kandahar Province illustrate the problem. From fall 2007 to fall 2008, only approximately 600 indi-

¹⁰ Embedded training teams (ETTs) or Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTs) are discussed later.

¹¹ Author’s interview of Maj. Gen. John T. Brennan in Kabul, November 2005.

¹² Brennan interview.

¹³ Interviews conducted in December 2007 with a representative from CSTC-A in Afghanistan.

¹⁴ CSTC-A interviews.

viduals were recruited to ANA. Reenlistment for soldiers is about 50 percent on average (ISAF, 2008e).

Swelling recruitment numbers strained training facilities, prompting increased infrastructure spending. The United States still struggles to provide ANA soldiers adequate housing (Twomey, 2008, p. 5). Other unresolved problems include corruption and persistent but stable AWOL rates.¹⁵

By 2005 the ANA was emerging as a success story, in contrast to the sputtering ANP.¹⁶ In April of the following year, OSC-A reorganized itself with a new name: Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC-A). CSTC-A includes both the ANA and the ANP manning, equipping and training responsibilities.¹⁷ In December 2005, President Karzai appealed for a new plan that would reintegrate NATO into security sector reform, but a general agreement of cooperation was not forged until September 2006.¹⁸ Several times since then the United States has outlined potential NATO contributions, but it is unclear how NATO will respond to these requests.¹⁹

In February of 2008, the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB) expanded the size of ANA from 70,000 to 80,000 personnel;²⁰ in September of the same year, that number was raised to 122,000 with an additional 12,000 TTHS (DoD, 2008).

¹⁵ According to CSTC-A, AWOL rates averaged 12 percent from October 2006 to January 2007. The most recent figure is 7.8 percent, suggesting some progress.

¹⁶ Although Germany remains the lead nation for training of the ANP, in July 2005 the United States took over responsibility for training and fielding.

¹⁷ CSTC-A has approximately 1,000 personnel.

¹⁸ See “Declaration by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan,” 2006, for the full text.

¹⁹ See CSTC-A, 2007a, v-1-2 through v-1-3.

²⁰ In summer 2005, the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) tried to scale back ANA to 50,000 from 70,000 to save costs.

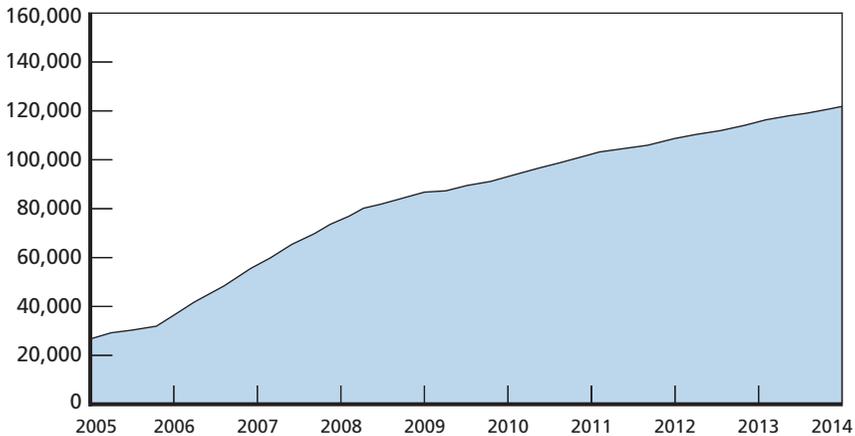
Current Status of ANA Development

Today, the United States divides its strategy for fielding the ANA into three phases: (1) ANA Development, (2) Transition to Afghan Primacy, and (3) Transition to Strategic Partnership (CSTC-A, 2007a). In Phase 1, the United States, with coalition assistance, mans, equips, and trains a self-sustaining 122,000-man army.

Figure 2.1 shows current growth projections for the ANA through 2014.

With an estimated population of 30 million people, most of whom live in poverty, it would not seem difficult to recruit an army of 122,000, particularly given the salaries, which are very good relative to the civilian population.²¹ Yet recruiting has been slow and retention

Figure 2.1
Planned Growth of the ANA



SOURCE: Department of Defense, 2009.

NOTES: Data have been adjusted to reflect the more recent end-strength goal of 122,000. Figures for 2012 and onward include 12,000 personnel in TTHS category (UNAMA, 2008).

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²¹ Estimates of the population vary widely, and no formal census has been conducted for several decades.

difficult. A senior military official has observed that the vast majority of the recruits, while having spent most of their lives as fighters for one group or another, had not done so within a formal military structure.

Since most of them had never been to school, they did not even have experience with the structured environment that education provides. Thus, the transition into a structure that featured tiered authorities, daily schedules, and cascading requirements was a profound cultural shock. An equally profound change is the melding of ethnic groups. Tensions run high among some groups, and their members have little first-hand experience associating with people from other groups. Adapting to such an intense cultural change takes time, and many do not make the transition.²²

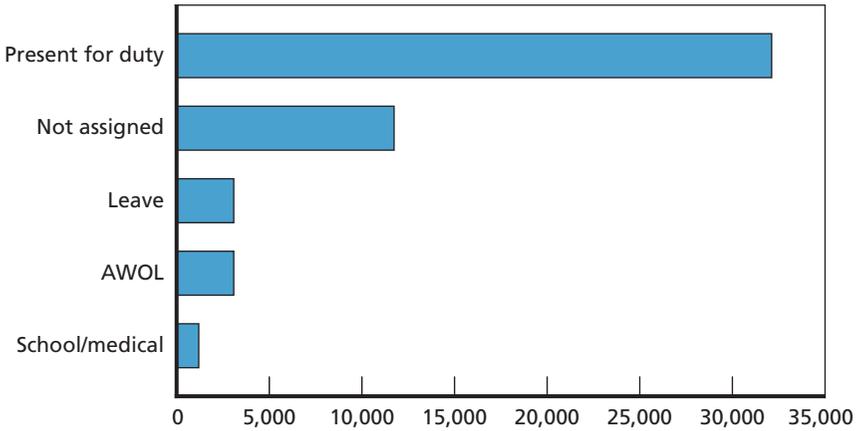
A recent decision to raise the pay of soldiers to \$110 per month may help with recruiting, reduce AWOL rates, and encourage reenlistment. Electronic transfer of funds has begun to ensure that the money goes to the soldiers, suggesting that corruption remains a problem. However, this will be a challenge in a country where electricity is sparsely available and the banking infrastructure is woefully inadequate.

Figure 2.2 shows ANA data from May 2008. Of interest is the fact that the AWOL rate, while still high, is lower than historical reports, less than 8 percent compared with 12 percent historically (see Table 2.1).

In Phase 2, ISAF teams evaluate the ability of ANA units to conduct independent operations for six consecutive months. In Phase 3, the ANA continues to conduct independent operations, i.e., it is capable of planning, executing, and supporting multi-unit operations without oversight, while the U.S.-Afghan relationship transitions to a traditional security assistance partnership. Note, however, that the original timeline for achieving Phase 3 was overly optimistic.

²² It is worth noting that the U.S. Army loses about one-third of an enlistment cohort over three years. In fiscal year (FY) 1999, for example, an accession cohort of 67,007 had shrunk to 45,167 three years later, even before recurring tours to Iraq and Afghanistan had begun (OSD, 2007).

Figure 2.2
ANA Ground Combat Strength



SOURCE: ISAF, 2008b.

NOTE: "Not assigned" refers to soldiers in the training centers who will get unit assignments once they complete basic training.

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Table 2.1
ANA AWOL Level, January–October 2007

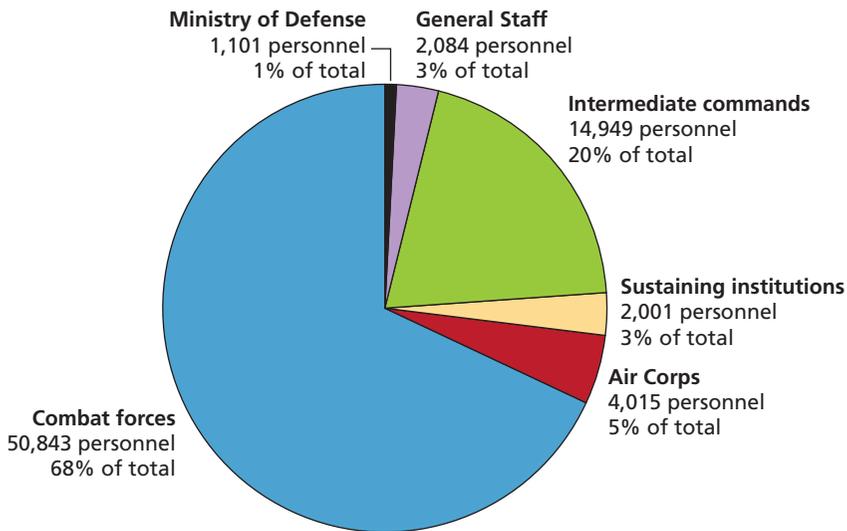
Month	Planned Strength	On-Hand Strength	AWOL	AWOL as % of On-Hand
January	32,285	27,765	4,420	16
February	33,466	29,785	3,681	12
March	35,062	30,153	4,909	16
April	35,577	32,573	4,442	14
May	36,450	33,928	4,193	12
June	37,926	35,172	4,347	12
July	38,785	36,324	4,036	11
August	41,257	38,016	4,224	11
September	42,559	39,276	4,854	12
October	43,088	39,818	6,482	16

SOURCE: Provided by CSTC-A, November 2007.

Figure 2.3 displays the distribution of all ANA billets (Tashkeel) envisioned in November 2007.²³ Combat forces account for 68 percent of all forces. They include the Commando Brigade headquarters as well as the five corps headquarters. Intermediate commands, which include the logistics command, headquarters support and security brigade, the training education command, the recruiting command, and the medical command, account for 20 percent of the forces. The remaining 12 percent is divided among Air Corps, General Staff, sustaining institutions, and MoD personnel.²⁴

Figure 2.4 displays the distribution of these billets by officers, noncommissioned officers (NCOs), soldiers, and civilians.

Figure 2.3
Distribution of ANA Billets as of November 2007

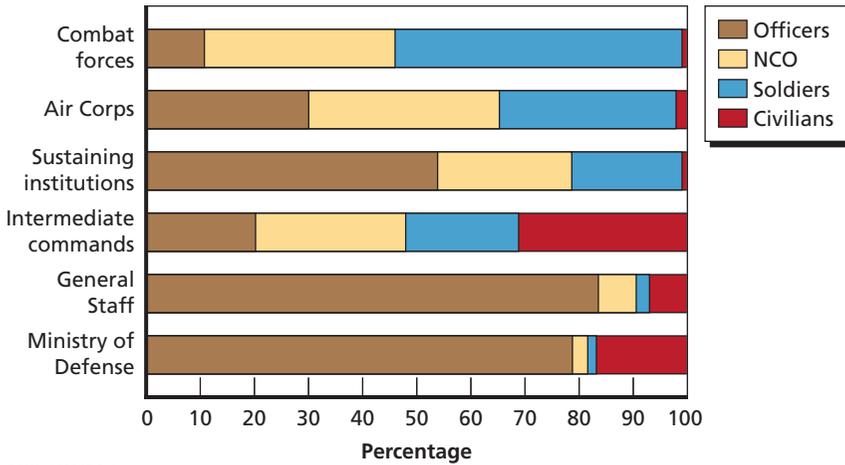


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²³ The Tashkeel is similar to the U.S. military's Military Table of Organization and Equipment.

²⁴ The information here is drawn from the Tashkeel data provided by the CSTC-A in November 2007.

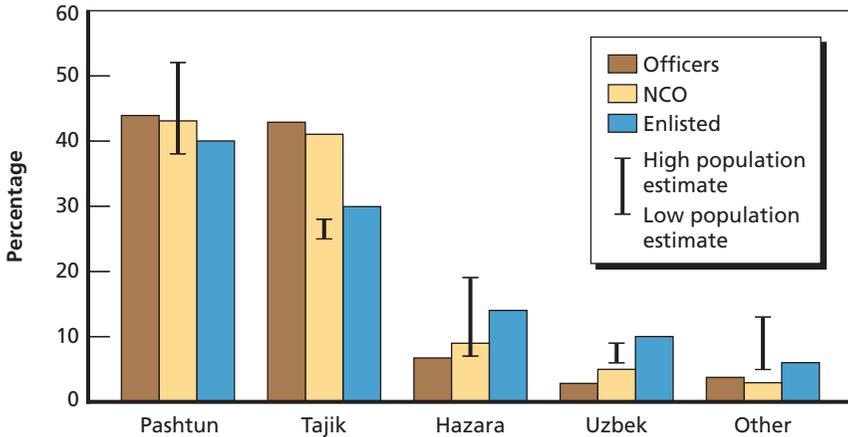
Figure 2.4
Distribution of ANA Billets by Category as of November 2007



Ethnic Composition

An enduring concern is the ethnic makeup of the ANA. Developing an ethnically balanced army was one of the key goals of the training program. After years of civil war and mistrust among various groups in Afghanistan, achieving an ethnic balance has been a significant challenge. CSTC-A and the MoD recognize that there is a surplus of Tajiks in the ANA officer and NCO corps, but it is unclear what the ethnic balance should be. We compared five estimates of the ethnic composition of Afghanistan's population, spanning 1980 to 2007, with the 2007 ethnic breakdown of the ANA officer corps, NCOs, and enlisted personnel provided by CSTC-A and ISAF. Figure 2.5 compares the ethnic mix of ANA officers, NCOs, and enlisted with that of the general population. We used a range of ethnic mixes because a reliable census does not exist. As one can observe, some ethnic groups, such as Hazaras and Uzbeks, are underrepresented, whereas Tajiks are overrepresented in the officer and NCO categories. The percentage of Pash-

Figure 2.5
Ethnic Mix of ANA Personnel Compared with Ethnic Mix of Population



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tuns falls roughly in line with average estimates of their proportion of the Afghan population.

ANA Fielding and Infrastructure

The five corps commands are located in five major cities within five regional commands (RCs), as summarized in Table 2.2 and Figure 2.6, and the fielding plan is based on the geopolitical and geostrategic needs of Afghanistan.²⁵ The United States operates in RC East; Canada, Britain, Netherlands, Denmark, and the United States operate in RC South; Italians, in RC West; and Germans, in RC North. Several other nations are also participating in supporting roles in each of the regional commands. Each corps includes a number of brigades

²⁵ Afghanistan is divided in five regional commands: RC North, RC East, RC Central, RC South, and RC West (NATO, 2008).

Table 2.2
Afghan National Army Current Deployment by Province and Area

ANA Corps Commands	Province (Area)
201 Sailab ("Flood")	Kabul (Pul-e-Charkhi) (Central Afghanistan)
203 Tandar ("Thunder")	Gardez (Eastern Afghanistan)
205 Atal ("Hero")	Kandahar (Southern Afghanistan)
207 Zafar ("Victory")	Herat (Western Afghanistan)
209 Shaheen ("Falcon")	Mazar-e-Sharif (Northern Afghanistan)

made up of five kandaks: Three infantry, one support, and one combat support kandak, respectively (DoD, 2008).²⁶ In addition to the infantry brigades, each corps has a commando kandak assigned. However, the Afghan Ministry of Defense centrally manages the commando kandaks.²⁷

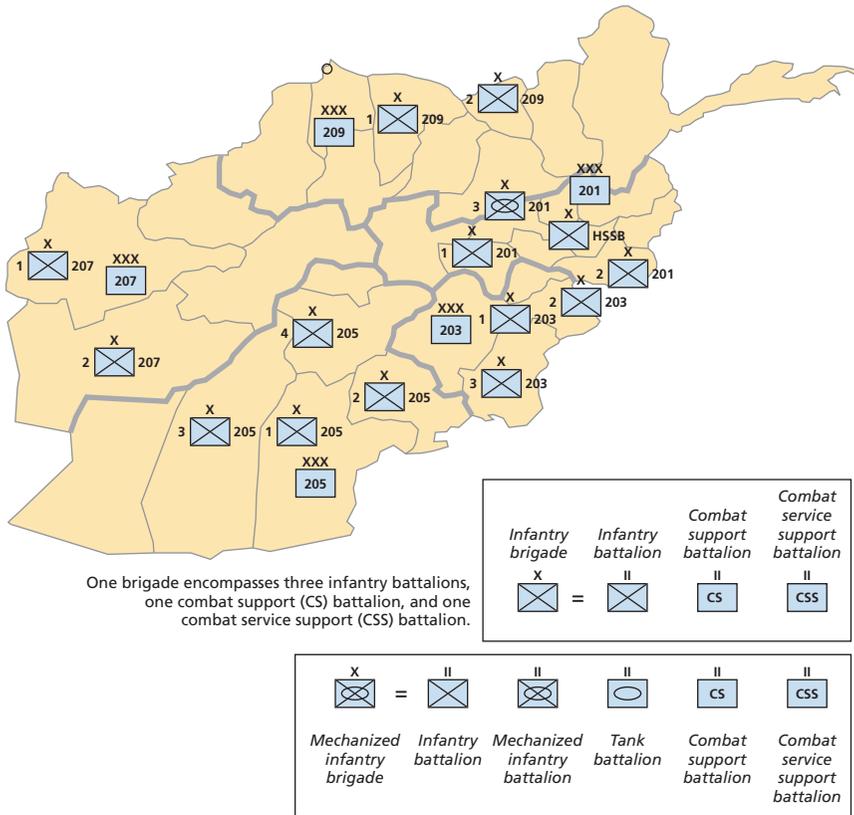
With respect to the strength increase, we do not have enough information to derive a detailed order of battle for the ANA. However, some data enable us to determine how the increased strength is to be distributed by unit type. The plan is to create four new brigade headquarters, 27 new infantry kandaks, five combat support kandaks, 11 combat service support kandaks, five engineer kandaks, and five artillery kandaks. Also, current plans call for maneuver units to be manned at 110 percent strength (ISAF, 2008f).

According to a recent Department of Defense report (DoD, 2008), ANA is currently equipped with former Warsaw Pact rifles, light and heavy machine guns, and rocket propelled grenade launchers. Its antiarmor capability includes SPG-9 recoilless rifles and direct fire with 82 mm mortar. Each brigade is also equipped with eight Warsaw Pact D-30 howitzers; however, about 40 percent of them are not functional. The same report notes that plans are in place to upgrade ANA to NATO-standard weapons, such as the M-16 and the U.S. model light and medium machine guns and 81 mm mortars. In addition, the

²⁶ *Kandak* is the Pashto word for battalion.

²⁷ A commando kandak is authorized to 685 soldiers.

Figure 2.6
Afghan National Army Current Deployment by Province and Area



NOTE: The number to the left of the box is the brigade number. The number to the right of the box is the corps number to where the brigade belongs.

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United States has committed to providing 4,100 high mobility multi-purpose wheeled vehicles (HMMWVs) with improved armor protection, which were scheduled to start being fielded by summer of 2008 to replace the light tactical vehicles that were being used. The Afghan Air Corps consists of seven Russian-made cargo planes (AN-32s and AN-26s) and 13 helicopters (MI-17 and MI-35s) with plans for future reconnaissance and light attack air-to-ground fixed-wing aircraft. ANA combat units report equipment shortages of about 40

percent in some areas, including machine guns and vehicles (GAO, 2008).

More-recent data suggest that in some categories sufficient equipment has been sent to Afghanistan and is now being fielded. For example, an ISAF briefing reports that over 55,000 M-16 rifles have been shipped to Afghanistan, and that the five corps have over 90 percent of their small arms (ISAF, 2008c).

The United States has identified estimates of required equipment to meet the ANA's goal, but infrastructure projections are less promising.²⁸ As of January 2008, out of 144 planned ANA facilities, 24 were complete and 34 were in progress, with specific shortages in garrison and logistics facilities. Infrastructure project spending is budgeted through FY11.²⁹ As of December 2007, infrastructure development costs totaled \$916 million (Cone, 2007). Projects totaling \$558 million are ongoing, with \$1.84 billion more planned for the future (Cone, 2007). Final plans for facilities include 14 brigade garrisons, nine training facilities, six air corps installations, and countrywide logistics infrastructure. In January 2008, there was an estimated shortage of 10,000 permanent billets, offset by the ability to house soldiers in Forward Operating Bases (FOBs).

For FY 2008, CSTC-A requested \$1.7 billion from DoD to develop the ANA (OSD, 2007). This funding complements the remainder of the \$4.9 billion of funding from FY 2007 that is slated to be spent in FY 2008. Of the combined FY 2007 and FY 2008 budgets, 53 percent is allocated to equipment and transportation, 21 percent to infrastructure, 17 percent to sustainment, and 10 percent to training.³⁰ CSTC-A estimates that ANA and ANP combined sustainment costs will reach \$2.0 billion per year by FY 2011 (CSTC-A, 2007a). The United States anticipates continuing this subsidy for years to come.

Plans to fund equipment for the ANA are unclear. The Equipment Fielding Plan in the May 2007 CSTC-A Campaign Plan calls for \$2 billion in FY 2008 for outfitting and sustainment of ANA equip-

²⁸ See CSTC-A, 2007a, Tab G. and Excel file.

²⁹ For complete figures, see CSTC-A Projection Data, Billeting, January 10, 2008.

³⁰ Percentages do not add up due to rounding.

ment, followed by \$1.6 billion per year for FYs 2009–2011 (CSTC-A, 2007a). However, the CSTC-A budget only appropriates \$74 million in FY 2008 to ANA equipment (OSD, 2007)³¹ and approximately \$4 million per year for FYs 2009–2011, leaving a substantial four-year shortfall of \$6.7 billion. (CSTC-A, 2007a).

The ANA will rely on foreign airlift through at least 2010 and on foreign close air support through at least 2016. As of December 2007, the ANA Air Corps was in the early stages of development, with 13 rotary-wing MI-17/35s and four fixed-wing AN-26/32s. Final plans call for a mix of Soviet and Western aircraft with 50 MI-17s, 40 T-6 variants, and 20 C-27s. Near-term goals include pilot English skills, initial infrastructure, and aircraft acquisition (Cone, 2007).

Conclusions

The ANA is on track to reach its near-term manpower goals, but there are some hurdles to achieving the increased force size. The force is not ethnically balanced now, and recruiting in Pashtun areas has been difficult. The ability to pay the salaries of an additional 40,000 soldiers is also an issue. Afghanistan's GDP is only \$11 billion, and the annual federal budget is \$4 billion, much of which is foreign aid (O'Hanlon, 2008). Increasing the army by one-third will strain an already-stretched budget. It is likely that an international commitment will be necessary to ensure that soldiers get paid. Finally, OMLTs and ETTs fall short of what is needed now, and the force increase will only exacerbate the problem. This is not to say that the force cannot be expanded to the new number, but doing so will not be easy. The issues sketched out here must be addressed for it to happen at all.

Once the ANA is fully manned, the United States will continue its concentration on the demanding task of improving the ANA's operational effectiveness. If diplomatic friction continues within NATO,

³¹ It is worth noting that \$368 million worth of equipment, originally projected for the FY 2008 budget, was paid for by FY 2007 supplemental funding (OSD, 2007, Amendment 32).

the United States will be forced to make difficult decisions about how to man ETTs and OMLTs—something that will be even more challenging with the new manpower goal of 122,000. The United States will have to decide whether to assume this burden, increase the diplomatic pressure on allies at the risk of losing what support they now provide, or perhaps abandon the concept altogether.

Infrastructure also poses a problem. The current infrastructure plan, which is based on an 80,000-man force, is underresourced and far from being on schedule. The expansion of the force to 122,000 will only put additional stress on the infrastructure program.

Trends in the insurgency suggest the ANA will be involved in combat operations for a long time. U.S. efforts through CSTC-A appear to be well organized with definitive benchmarks. Increased NATO participation would alleviate funding burdens and trainer shortages.

ANA Training

OMC-A, subsequently renamed CSTC-A, oversaw and trained the ANA. In 2005, the training load was reduced from five kandaks per month to two, because the funding did not support the higher rate, which negatively affected the quality of the force. General Eikenberry, the former commander of CFC-A, stated that the goal was to provide quality force as opposed to high numbers.¹

Kabul Military Training Center

The creation of ANA commenced on May 14, 2002 when U.S. Special Forces formed and trained the first ANA kandak (Thruelsen, 2005; Giustozzi, 2007; and Sedra, 2004). At that time, the training and the overall structure of the new army had not been agreed upon. The bulk of the ANA was to be the combat units, which at the time were to consist of approximately 45,000 soldiers. It was decided that recruitment would be voluntary, and former members of regional and warlord militias, now assembled under the Ministry of Defense as the Afghan Military Force (AMF), could join if they met the eligibility criteria (Giustozzi, 2003; Thruelsen, 2006).² The recruitment and intake to

¹ Author's interview with General Brennen, November 2005.

² The AMF was created to fill the gap between the beginning of the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) program and the creation of the new Afghan National Army. The AMF was officially abolished with the finalization of the DDR program.

the ANA were to be closely coordinated with the Afghan DDR program, called Afghanistan's New Beginnings Program (ANBP); the newly established Kabul Military Training Center (KMTC), led by the United States, was to create the facilities to accommodate that intake (UNAMA, 2003).

With the creation of KMTC in summer 2002 and the formation of the first U.S. specific task force—Task Force Phoenix—in May 2003 to be in charge of the training program of the ANA, all the initial processes were finalized and the rebuilding program slowly began to produce results.³ CJTF [Combined Joint Task Force] Phoenix mentors ANA and ANP to conduct sustained, independent Counter Insurgency operations in Afghanistan to assist the ANA to defeat terrorism within its borders. Task Force Phoenix did not acquire the mission to train ANP until 2006.

Task Force Phoenix consists of approximately 6,000 personnel (CSTC-A, 2007c). Together with the Afghan National Army Training Command (ANATC), it is in charge of education and training of all new recruits who enter the ANA.⁴ The task force has the overall responsibility of the ANA training and education, but a number of partner nations have contributed trainers to the program.⁵ The United Kingdom (UK) initially led the noncommissioned officer (NCO) training at KMTC, and France led the officer training at the National Military Academy of Afghanistan.

It was decided early on that the training of the new army should be conducted at one training site in Kabul, KMTC, and that all new recruits, regardless of origin, should pass through KMTC before being deployed to their units in the regions. This decision, combined with

³ Task Force Phoenix I consisted of soldiers from the 10th Mountain Division.

⁴ ANATC is an Afghan organization headed by a two-star Afghan general. ANATC is responsible for all ANA education, training and doctrine development. In principle, CSTC-A supports the work of ANATC. Among others, the following institutions are under ANATC command: the National Military Academy of Afghanistan, the KMTC, the Command/Senior Command and General Staff College, Kabul Military High School, Commando School, the COIN [Counterinsurgency] Academy and Afghan Defense University.

⁵ Thirteen nations contribute to the program: France, Germany, Romania, Great Britain, Netherlands, Canada, Croatia, Italy, Sweden, Norway, Slovenia, Poland and Mongolia.

the fact that the training capacity and the facilities at KMTC did not match the original goal of training a new 70,000-soldier army by the end of 2007, slowed the rebuilding process significantly. By March 2003, 1,750 soldiers had been trained; by February 2004, 7,000 soldiers; and by March 2007, only half of the ANA had gone through basic training at KMTC (ANA home page, undated).

Because of the slow progress and the urgent demand for national soldiers to be involved in the counterinsurgency campaign, it was decided to open regional training sites throughout the country. By April 17, 2007, two Remote Basic Warrior Training Sites had been opened at the 203 and 209 Corps in Gardez and Mazar-e-Sharif, and on July 28 of the same year, an additional site opened at the 207 Corps in Herat. Training capacity by then had risen to 30,000 recruits a year, with approximately 6,000 being trained at the remote training sites. By spring 2007, 3,000 to 4,000 personnel were being recruited each month.

Until spring 2007, the basic training program developed by Task Force Phoenix consisted of a 15-week program: seven weeks of basic combat training followed by six weeks of Advanced Individual Training and a two-week collective training exercise in which the soldiers were introduced to the platoon-level training and organization. The training program received good feedback from the units in the field, and it seemed to be thorough.

However, because of the slow progress and the fact that only half of the ANA had been trained, a new and shorter program was developed and introduced in summer 2007. The new program consisted of a 10-week initial training program—Basic Warrior Training—focusing on such basic soldier and infantry skills as weapon handling, shooting, tactics, guard duty, land navigation, first aid, mines, and prisoner processing.⁶ The new shorter program enabled KMTC to process 24,000 soldiers a year.

⁶ Interviews conducted at CSTC-A in December 2007. The 10-week training cycle consists of five weeks of basic combat training followed by three weeks of advanced individual training and a two-week field training exercise.

Upon graduation from the Basic Warrior Training programs, some 30 percent of the soldiers go through the Advanced Combat Training program, which KMTC developed. This program focuses on the three types of kandaks in each ANA infantry brigade—combat arms, combat support and combat service support. The course lasts for six to eight weeks and has a limited capacity of about 8,000 students per year. The program focuses on such areas as heavy weapons, field artillery, logistics, reconnaissance, medical, engineering and maintenance. When ETTs join the ranks, they stay with units after graduation.

At the NCO level, KMTC is conducting four training courses. All NCO aspirants are selected on the basis of leadership skills demonstrated when performing with their kandaks during field operations.

Table 3.1 summarizes the KTMC training programs.

Table 3.1
ANA Training Programs

Basic Warrior Training (10 weeks)	
Basic Combat Training (5 weeks)	
Basic infantry	Weapon handling, shooting, tactics, land navigation, first aid, guard duty, mines, UXO and prisoner processing.
Advanced Individual Training (3 weeks)	
Advanced infantry	Squad tactical movement, weapons training, patrol, squad assault, ambush and check point operations.
Field Training Exercise (2 weeks)	
Platoon level	Squad Attack, Squad Attack (Live firing), Platoon Attack, Day and Night Ambush
Advanced Combat Training (6–8 weeks)	
Combat arms	Infantry, heavy weapons training and special weapons training
Combat support	Engineering, reconnaissance and field artillery
Combat service support	Signals, maintenance, transport, and logistics personnel; cooks
NCO Training	
NCO course	Team Leaders Course, Squad Leaders Course, Platoon Sergeant Course and Senior Sergeant Course

A final element of the training program undertaken by Task Force Phoenix was development of what would become known as mobile training teams (MTTs). Especially in the beginning of the rebuilding program, the ANA depended on foreign equipment donations for training and operations. Donations came from a wide variety of countries, particularly countries dominated by the former Soviet Union. Equipment donated tended to be Soviet—artillery, mortars, tanks, armored personnel carriers, infantry fighting vehicles, and assault rifles—and was incorporated into the new organization. This Soviet-style equipment made it hard for the U.S. task force to train soldiers. These weapon systems were often old and obsolete, U.S. trainers lacked experience with the systems, and spare parts were hard to obtain.

The MTTs were introduced to solve this problem. Made up of military instructors from a number of countries, MTTs specialize in different systems and are in charge of the training for that equipment.⁷ The teams conduct their training programs for the ANA kandaks at the kandak training sites. The MTT solves the problems that result from external donations to the new army. However, these donations have created an army equipped with obsolete weapon systems and have only delayed the professionalization of the army.

A number of NATO and non-NATO nations are supporting ANA training initiatives. For example, Georgia is involved in a four-week mountain warfare training course for ANA officers. Turkey is sponsoring the construction of Kabul Military High School as well as the National Military Academy of Afghanistan. Luxembourg funds the training infrastructure support. Poland has offered to support the ANA central repair workshop and to provide small arms, reactive weapons, and artillery weapons repair. Greece has also offered to support operator and maintenance training for tanks. The Czech Republic is training the ANA Air Corps, as well as providing maintenance and operation of MI-24 helicopters. Finally, Germany and France are currently engaged in fact-finding to explore the possibilities of enlarging the driver and mechanic school into the Logistics Branch School (ISAF briefing, 2008e).

⁷ MTT instructors came from Romania and Mongolia, among other countries.

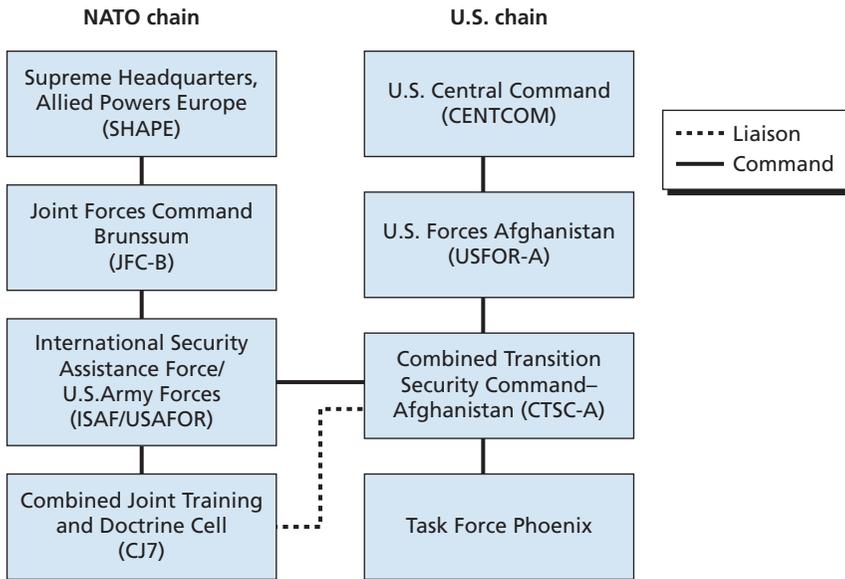
NATO Involvement in ANA—Operational Mentor and Liaison Team

NATO's involvement with the ANA largely involves assisting the Afghan government and the United States with the operational employment and training of the ANA units. An essential part of the ISAF contribution to the rebuilding program is the OMLT program. The United States as lead nation for the ANA program has the primary responsibility in all areas—from manning to basic and collective training, funding, equipping, sustainment and validation. The ISAF OMLTs fall under the operational command of the Commander, ISAF (COMISAF) but work on the ground under guidelines and directives issued by CSTC-A and Task Force Phoenix, which is also in charge of developing doctrine and regulations for the ANA. As of October 2008, COMISAF is also Commander of U.S. Forces Afghanistan, and thus has direct command over CSTC-A. CSTC-A and Task Force Phoenix retain the sole responsibility for ANA development until the authority is handed back to the Afghan authorities.

The command and control structure between the involved actors—primarily NATO and CENTCOM—is rather complex, with many actors and implementers present in the suborganizations of the structure. Moreover, the command and control between the OMLT and ANA unit during combined operations is based on agreements made between ISAF and the Afghan MoD for each operation. To some extent, this complicates the lines of communication between the actors implementing the ANA program. Figure 3.1 depicts the command structure.

The ISAF OMLT program consists primarily of officers and non-commissioned officers from a wide range of troop-contributing countries who are embedded in Afghan units as mentors and trainers to the ANA and as liaison officers to ISAF and CSTC-A. The aim of the OMLT program is to facilitate the focused development of ANA so

Figure 3.1
Command Structure Between NATO and CENTCOM



SOURCE: ISAF, 2008a.

RAND MG845-3.1

that it can take responsibility for security in the country. As described in the ISAF operation plan (OPLAN):

NATO's exit from Afghanistan is, inter alia, dependent on the successful establishment of an integrated security structure that is owned by the Afghans, capable of maintaining security within its own borders and of deterring foreign adversaries (SACEUR, 2005, p. C-2-1).

The ISAF OMLTs began to be implemented in connection with the changing U.S. focus on training the ANP. The OMLTs replaced the U.S. ETTs at all levels of command, mentoring ANA leaders on such issues as leadership, area specific functions, implementation of doctrine, operational procedures, tactics, and "on the job training"

during operations in the field.⁸ Furthermore, the OMLTs provide the crucial combat enablers such as fire support, MEDEVAC, Quick Reaction Force, command and control, and close air support. The NATO OPLAN describes the OMLTs as follows:

Accordingly, the operational mentor and liaison teams will operate in support of kandak activities: in barracks; on collective training; and closely mentoring kandak operational deployments where such activities are consistent with the ISAF mandate (SACEUR, 2005, p. 4).

An obvious gap in the ISAF OPLAN for OMLTs is that it does not address the role the OMLTs can play in combat.

The first NATO OMLT was introduced by the British in 205 Corps, 3rd Brigade, in Helmand in May 2006. As of August 2008, only 34 OMLTs out of 71 eligible positions had been validated for operational use throughout the theater, with only a few countries volunteering to fill the 37 unmanned OMLT positions.⁹ Because of the political circumstances in the troops contributing countries, ISAF has divided the 71 OMLT positions into two categories: Tier I and Tier II. The Tier I OMLTs are deployed with no restrictions attached to their use; Tier II elements have restrictions. The Tier I OMLTs are being used to train and mentor the infantry, combat support, and combat service support kandaks. These kandaks are being used in the field for operations against the enemy and have a high probability of being engaged in high-level combat operations. The Tier II-deployed OMLTs are mostly being used as mentors at the headquarters (HQ) level. They are employed at the regimental HQ, the brigade HQ, and in garrisons conducting training.

Table 3.2 shows the status of OMLTs as of January 2008.

⁸ ETTs have the same function as OMLTs. The ETT is the U.S. equivalent of the NATO OMLT. The U.S. ETTs support all ANA units not covered by NATO OMLTs.

⁹ Interview conducted at ISAF HQ in December 2007.

Table 3.2
Tiers I and II OMLT-Filled Positions

	201 Corps RC-C ^a		205 Corps RC-S		207 Corps RC-W		209 Corps RC-N	
	Authorized	Filled/%	Authorized	Filled/%	Authorized	Filled/%	Authorized	Filled/%
Tier I	20	9/45	10	9/90	8	4/50	10	3/30
Tier II	9	2/22	4	2/50	5	3/60	5	2/40
Total	29	11/38	14	11/78	13	7/54	15	5/33

SOURCE: ISAF, 2008a.

NOTE: 203 Corps, which is located in RC-E, is excluded from the table because the United States fills these teams.

^a The authorized number of OMLT in 201 Corps is higher than in the other corps because 201 Corps has more personnel than the others.

As seen in the table, not only is ISAF having a hard time filling the Tier I OMLT positions, but Tier II restricted OMLTs are also hard to fill. The program has been active for approximately two years, and over half of the teams remain undermanned. Undermanning is especially severe in RC-C and RC-N—where the security situation is relatively safer compared to the security situation in eastern and southern Afghanistan—with roughly two-thirds of the OMLTs unfilled. The reason for the lack of OMLT contributions to the support of ANA can be explained in part by the restrictions attached to the use of some NATO member troops and in part by the fact that OMLTs face high risks and a high possibility of casualties.

As the buildup and training of ANA expands toward the estimated goal of 122,000 troops at the end of 2014, the operational need for OMLTs and ETTs will increase. As of summer 2008, 119 teams (71 NATO OMLTs and 48 U.S. ETTs) were required. This requirement will progressively rise: There will be combined need of 125 teams in December 2009, 133 teams in December 2010, 141 teams in December 2011, 159 teams in December 2012, and 168 teams in December 2013.¹⁰ With only some 50 percent of the OMLT positions filled by summer 2008, the possibility of meeting the requirements concurrent with the ANA buildup seems remote. If the contributing NATO countries do not show a genuine willingness to provide more OMLTs or restructure their current troop commitment, the operational control and effectiveness of the ANA units will decrease significantly.

OMLTs vary in size and organization. A country can contribute a full OMLT consisting of enough personnel to mentor the entire ANA partner unit, e.g., a brigade, or a country can contribute smaller teams to a multinational OMLT. The smaller OMLTs normally have between 12 and 19 personnel, depending on the ANA partner unit. The British OMLT in Helmand, for instance, consists of approximately 280 officers and NCOs attached to the 3rd Brigade in Helmand of the 205 Corps in Kandahar.¹¹ The various OMLTs work on a rotational

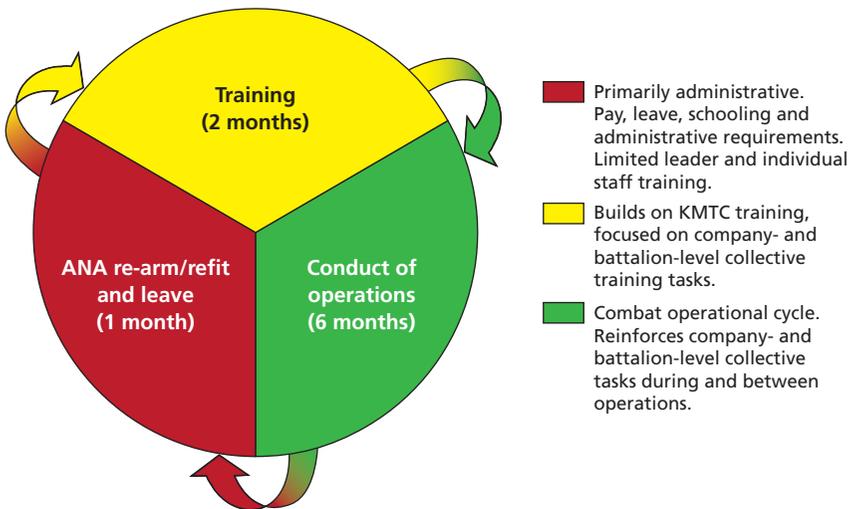
¹⁰ These numbers come from a ISAF-HQ briefing in Kabul on October 16, 2008, and an interview conducted at the OMLT HQ at 205 Corps in Kandahar, October 18, 2008.

¹¹ Discussions with British OMLT commander, Kajaki, Helmand, 2007.

basis, with roughly half conducting operations with the ANA and the other half training the kandaks at the training centers. The OMLTs on operations are normally attached to the ANA unit for six weeks before rotating to a training role. During the six weeks of operations, the OMLTs are stationed in the field at FOBs, patrol bases, or check points, or out on mobile operations with the ANA.¹²

Currently, the typical OMLT is stationed with the ANA partner unit for six months. The ANA working cycle, however, is normally nine months, which creates a problem for continuity, mentoring, and personal relationships with the ANA units. The ANA works on a Red-Yellow-Green cycle, which is broken down roughly into three periods: leave, training and operations.

Figure 3.2
Red-Yellow-Green Work Cycle for the ANA



SOURCE: ISAF, 2008a.

RAND MG845-3.2

¹² Field study conducted in April 2007 at British OMLT at 3 Brigade, 205 Corps in Helmand.

The basic concept of operations for the OMLT is to deploy to an operational area together with the ANA unit and there, before going on the first operation, to close the gap between the basic training received at KMTC and the training necessary to perform company and battalion operations against the enemy. The OMLTs fill this gap by setting up continuation training at the ANA barracks and by mentoring and facilitating on-the-job training in the field. If the OMLT rotations are not synchronized fully with the ANA red-yellow-green cycle, the effectiveness of this training and the very important relationship and trust between the OMLT and the ANA partner unit are undermined. It would therefore be more effective if the OMLT deployed were at a minimum following the yellow and green part of the cycle together with the partner ANA unit, as described in Figure 3.2.

The end state of the OMLT involvement with the ANA partner unit is reached when the ANA unit has reached Capability Milestone (CM) 1. The CM system is how the ANA unit is measured and thereby validated. When a unit leaves basic training at KMTC, it is considered to be at CM 4 and needs substantial mentoring and training assistance. As the unit receives training and is more frequently inserted into combat operations, it moves up to CM 1. At this level, only minimal external support is required for the ANA unit to function. Capability levels are described in Table 3.3.

Conclusions

The training program of the ANA has, by and large, been a success, but several lessons can be learned from the process. The slow rate of implementing the training program and the choice of only one training site, together with the lack of instructors and recruits, has slowed the program significantly. The pace of recruitment and training should have been higher in the early days of the program, and training should have been decentralized to training sites in different parts of the country. Also, the dependence on foreign equipment donations has postponed the real challenge of reequipping the ANA with new

Table 3.3
Capability Milestones

Capability Milestone 4: Training Level

Unit formed
 Significant OMLT and ETT support
 Not capable of conducting operational missions
 Manning and equipping are below 50 percent

Capability Milestone 3: Initial Operational Capability

Somehow capable of conduction operations at company level
 OMLT and ETT support and guidance
 Capable individual-specialist skills
 Manning and equipping are between 50 and 70 percent

Capability Milestone 2: Partial Operational Capability

Battalion is capable of planning and executing operations
 OMLT and ETT support and guidance
 Capable of sustaining operations
 Manning and equipping are between 70 and 85 percent

Capability Milestone 1: Full Operational Capability

Battalion is fully capable of planning, executing and sustaining operations
 No OMLT and ETT operational support
 Some external support may be required
 Manning and equipping are above 85 percent

NOTE: See Table 4.1 for a summary of ANA units by CM category.

weapons until 2008, creating a less-effective army and diverting scarce resources to outdated equipment. The dependence on donations of old and sometimes obsolete weapon systems should carefully be considered in future campaigns. Because of these problems, by 2007 the United States had decided to donate and procure new equipment for the ANA.

With respect to the OMLTs, NATO has been slow to support the United States and especially Task Force Phoenix in training, education, and mentoring the ANA. With 37 OMLTs vacant in spring 2008 and most NATO members reluctant to allocate more resources and soldiers to the training task, NATO does not appear to have made a genuine commitment. The Tier I and Tier II divisions of the OMLT have not strengthened the commitment, and most countries that are providing teams have not adapted their support to the Afghan nine-

month training cycle. These problems will increase significantly with the ongoing buildup and training of the ANA to reach the manpower goal of 122,000. ISAF estimates that approximately 168 combined OMLTs and ETTs are needed by December 2013. As shown above, only approximately 50 percent of the OMLTs needed by summer 2008 were available, indicating that genuine commitment by the various NATO countries does not yet exist. If the teams are not allocated to the mission, the operational control and effectiveness of the ANA units must be expected to decrease significantly.

ANA Operational Proficiency

Six years after its inception, the ANA is playing an active but not yet predominant role in providing security. Coalition troops still engage in the majority of combat, but, according to NATO, at the kandak level the ANA leads approximately 50 percent of all military operations and participates in more than 80 percent.¹ Still, assessing the tactical competence of the ANA poses challenges.

According to Jones (2008), ANA has been deploying with the U.S. forces to engage Taliban and other insurgent forces since 2003—for instance, in July of that year in Paktika province (as part of Operation Warrior Sweep) and in November of the same year in Kunar and Nuristan provinces (as part of Operation Mountain Resolve). ANA was also involved in quelling factional fighting in Herat and Maimana. Furthermore, ANA provided supplemental security during the 2003 Loya Jirga.² In 2004, ANA continued deployment with international forces in Operation Princess and Operation Ticonderoga in eastern and southern Afghanistan. Deployment of ANA during Operation Cadina in 2005 is another example. The ANA participation in joint operations increased considerably in 2006 during Operation Mountain Thrust and Operations Mountain Lion in southern and eastern Afghanistan respectively, where 2,500 ANA soldiers fought side by side with the coalition forces. Jones draws three main conclusions about ANA performance. First, ANA soldiers are competent fighters. Second,

¹ ISAF-HQ briefing received in Kabul October 16, 2008; ISAF, 2008b.

² *Loya Jirga* is a Pashto phrase meaning “grand council.”

they can play an important role in intelligence gathering, and lastly, their skills have improved as a result of the U.S. and coalition training (Jones, 2008).

Moreover, dozens of coalition military press releases describe triumphant Afghan-led and Afghan-supported operations.³ Yet comparatively high ANA casualty rates indicate that not all operations are as successful as the press releases suggest. Independent information tends to be anecdotal. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) recently reported that about 40 percent of the ANA is capable of conducting operations with support of the international forces (GAO, 2008). However, the consensus seems to be that the ANA has improved substantially in its ability to carry out combat operations with support but that its ability to lead operations and support itself logistically lags far behind the improvement in its operational elements. Additionally, according to a recent DoD assessment of security of Afghanistan, there have been some isolated reports of ANA members collaborating with the insurgents (DoD, 2008). In this account, ANA members either provided information or supplies to insurgents.

Recent press accounts provide additional examples of ANA operational performance. One account of ANA operations with Canadian forces points to the success of one Afghan commander whom the Canadians grant “considerable latitude, deferring to him as the commander” (Lubold, 2008). The same article claims that the ANA is “still not able to perform many logistical functions.” Another source, focused on the elite Afghan commando unit that is mentored and equipped by U.S. Special Operations Forces, describes its performance as a “bright spot” with the commando units able to plan and carry out operations with U.S. Forces in an advisory role (Tyson, 2008). The commando units have advantages in terms of equipment and training that normal ANA units do not, and their mentors tend to be some of the U.S. Army’s most highly trained forces. The Capability Milestone assessment of the five commando kandaks assess two to be at CM 2, two at CM 3 and one at

³ Numerous examples can be found at the Department of Defense Web site.

CM 4.⁴ These ratings show progress when taking into account the fact that the commando kandak buildup only commenced in 2007.⁵

A recent positive experience with the ANA was seen in the aftermath of the Kandahar prison break in June 2008, when approximately one ANA kandak was airlifted to the province to lead an operation to retake some villages that had been overrun by a number of the freed Taliban fighters. The ANA units were part of the quick-reaction force from 201 Corps in Kabul who deployed to the Arghandab district in Kandahar Province on June 17 to retake the area. Within 24 hours, the ANA units had been deployed from Kabul and inserted in the area and had restored security together with ISAF units. Representatives from RC(S) HQ described this event as a decisive turning point for ISAF's understanding of the importance of cooperating closely with the ANA and of transferring security responsibilities to the local population.⁶ This use of the ANA was also seen in Helmand Province after a Taliban attack on the provincial capital Lashkar Gah in mid-October 2008. Again, approximately one ANA kandak was airlifted to the capital to convince the local population that the Taliban could not take the city.

These examples illustrate the successful incorporation of ANA units at times when the local population needs to see that Afghan forces are in the lead and that there is a trustworthy alternative to the international security forces. ANA kandak commanders have also shown competence when conducting operations without international support. Here the differences between international and Afghan military culture becomes visible. Especially when planning operations, ANA commanders are more averse to long-term planning but eager to implement and conduct operations. In spring 2008, a local ANA kandak commander in Zabul Province received information concerning foreign fighters being assembled in an area near the Pakistan border. The OMLT attached to the kandak advocated a deliberate planning process, but the ANA commander wanted to take action immediately.

⁴ Table 3.3 defines the capability milestones.

⁵ ISAF-HQ briefing, Kabul, October 16, 2008.

⁶ Interview conducted at RC(S) HQ in Kandahar October 18, 2008.

He planned and implemented a kandak-size attack against the foreign fighters within one day. The kandak executed a relatively sophisticated attack on the enemy, assaulting simultaneously from different directions under cover of mortar fire, killing the foreign fighters, and again bolstering trust in the ANA within the local community. In addition to combat proficiency, this example illustrates the willingness of the ANA to take risks and its eagerness to defeat the insurgents.

The local fighting spirit is also beginning to show in the reenlistment numbers. In September 2008, 74 percent of the ANA soldiers up for reenlistment at 203 Corps agreed to new contracts. At 205 Corps the number was 48 percent.⁷

Regardless of combat effectiveness, the simple presence of Afghan troops lends legitimacy to the counterinsurgency effort. Polls show that Afghans have a positive perception of the Afghan security forces and view them as the primary providers of security. To aid their own legitimacy, coalition commanders frequently use ANA troops to interact with civilian populations. After the highly publicized battle for Musa Qala in December 2007, for example, humanitarian and reconstruction operations were delegated to the ANA. This bolstered the local reputation of the ANA and freed coalition troops to conduct security operations elsewhere. Sources in ISAF HQ describe ANA as at brigade level in plans and company and battalion in execution of operations.⁸

Lt Col Kim Kristensen, former commander of the Helmand Battle Group Centre, described his interaction with the ANA as follows:

The importance of having ANA with us on operations was obvious in relation to the local support. ANA was by no doubt one of the most positive experiences of my time in Helmand. The locals received the ANA very positively when entering areas and towns we had liberated from the Taliban. Also, the ANA commander of 3 Brigade, 205 Corps was a great experience for me. He seemed very dedicated to his task. He was very professional and capable

⁷ ISAF-HQ briefing, Kabul, October 16, 2008.

⁸ Interview conducted in December 2007 with SSR representatives at ISAF HQ.

of planning operations and he also had a very good understanding of the need to help the local population in a positive way.⁹

At the tactical level, the ANA seems to be performing professionally both in the field and when it is involved in larger operations with international forces. Generally, its fighting spirit seems high, morale is good, and most soldiers perform professionally. For some years now, the ANA has been an important element in creating stability and security throughout the country; however, the ANA still has a long way to go before it can take over the tasks of the international forces. As Table 4.1 shows, as of September 2008, only seven of the 42 formed ANA infantry kandaks had reached CM 1, and reports from the southern and eastern parts of Afghanistan, especially, indicated that some ANA units had become somewhat run down because of the heavy fighting they had engaged in and because of the lack of reinforcements. In Helmand province, for example, the “over commitment of 3 ANA brigade”¹⁰ was seen as a problem, because units did not have time to rebuild their strength between battles (Thruelsen, 2008).

Table 4.1
Military Unit Capabilities

ANA Unit/ Kandak	Total	CM 1	CM 2	CM 3	CM 4	Not Formed
Infantry	42	7	13	14	3	5
Commando	9	0	2	2	1	4
CS	14	2	3	5	1	3
CSS	19	3	6	3	1	6
Total	84	12	24	24	6	18

SOURCE: ISAF-HQ briefing, Kabul, October 16, 2008.

⁹ Interview with Lt Col Kim Kristensen, commander, Danish Battle Group Centre under Task Force Helmand, August 2007–February 2008.

¹⁰ Interview conducted at RC(S) HQ in Kandahar, October 18, 2008.

An interview with Danish officers working with the Afghan troops provides insight into the current capabilities of the ANA.¹¹ Their comments were generally positive about the tactical skills of the Afghan units. The officers were also impressed with the relationship between the ANA and the local populace (the Danish team operates in the south in Helmand, one of the least secure places in Afghanistan). They did note that combat service support was weak, with supplies failing to reach frontline units, in part because the CSS troops had difficulty reading a map, a weakness confirmed by interviews at ISAF HQ.¹²

Conclusions

Evidence of operational proficiency is largely anecdotal, although there are some quantitative indicators. Numerous anecdotes attest to the operational capability of the ANA units. Quantitative ratings present a more restrained endorsement—for example, only seven of 42 infantry kandaks (17 percent) have reached CM 1. Although progress is apparent, the ANA still has a long way to go. Unfortunately, the road may be bumpy. The Taliban has regrouped, filling its ranks with capable fighters, and coalition forces are struggling to keep the Taliban at bay, let alone pass the job of security to a nascent army.

¹¹ Officers included a Danish battle group commander, a mechanized infantry company commander and a battle group intelligence officer.

¹² Interview conducted in December 2007 with security sector reform representatives at ISAF HQ.

Public Perception of Security and the ANA

A key item of interest in counterinsurgencies is how the population views its security situation and the army. To gain some insight into the Afghan view of these topics, we compared 12 nationwide surveys of Afghanistan from 2004 to 2007. The Asia Foundation conducted three polls during this period with a focus on democracy, reconstruction, and perceptions of local media. The Asia Foundation changed the questions from year to year making chronological comparisons difficult. ABC, BBC, and ARD News sponsored three polls from 2005 to 2009 through Charney Research of New York.¹ These polls surveyed fewer Afghans but asked identical questions each year to chart changing perceptions.

MRA conducted five polls from 2005 to 2007 for NATO commanders in RC-South. MRA's methodologies are unknown, but the surveys are useful because they probe perceptions of how well ISAF and Afghan forces are providing security and break results down by region. Altai Consulting conducted a very detailed single poll in early 2006, but because it is a stand-alone poll, it does not chart changing attitudes over time. Table 5.1 summarizes the polls we reviewed.

¹ ABC, BBC, and ARD just completed another poll of Afghans in February 2009. See the ABC News Web site.

Table 5.1
Comparison of National Polls

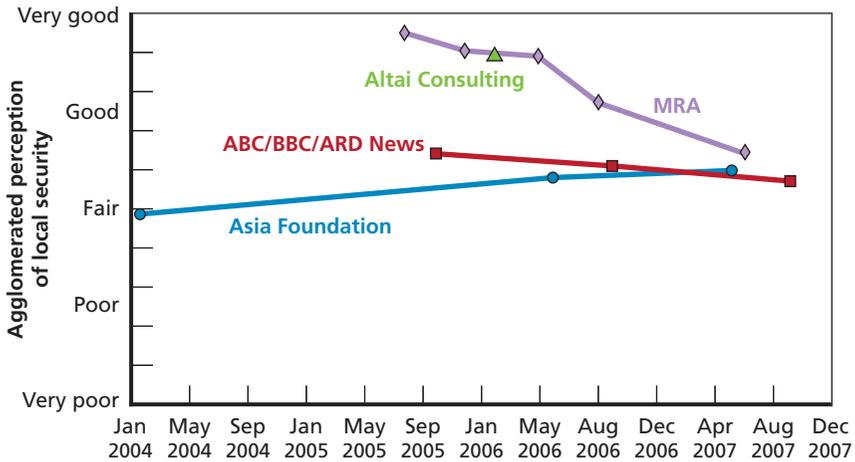
Organization	Title of Survey	Survey Date	Respondents	Provinces (out of 34)
The Asia Foundation	Democracy in Afghanistan 2004	February–March 2004	804	29 (of 32 in 2004)
The Asia Foundation	Afghanistan in 2006	June 2006	6,226	32
The Asia Foundation	Afghanistan in 2007	June 2007	6,263	34
Charney Research of New York	ABC News Poll	October 2005	1,039	31
Charney Research of New York	ABC/BBC News Poll	October 2006	1,036	31
Charney Research of New York	ABC/BBC/ARD News Poll	October–November 2007	1,377	34
MRA	Security & ANSF Selected Findings	August 2005	UNK	UNK
MRA	Security & ANSF Selected Findings	December 2005	UNK	UNK
MRA	Security & ANSF Selected Findings	May 2006	UNK	UNK
MRA	Security & ANSF Selected Findings	September 2006	UNK	UNK
MRA	Security & ANSF Selected Findings	July 2007	UNK	UNK
Altai Consulting	Nationwide Research and Survey on Illegal State Opposing Armed Groups	December 2005–April 2006	8,672	34

NOTES: UNK = Unknown; ANSF = Afghanistan National Security Forces.

Security

The polls show differing results on Afghan perceptions of security over time. All twelve polls ask respondents about security in their local area. The polls differ in how questions are phrased and the potential responses

Figure 5.1
Comparison of National Polls: Perceptions of Security over Time



Asia Foundation 2007

Question: "Would you rate the security situation in the village/neighborhood where you live as very good, quite good, quite poor or very poor?"

Results: Very good 25%, quite good 41%, quite poor 23%, very poor 10%.

Asia Foundation 2006

Question: "How would you rate the security situation in your area: excellent, good, fair, or poor?"

Results: Excellent 17%, good 49%, fair 26%, poor 8%.

Asia Foundation 2004

Question: "How would you rate the security situation in your area: excellent, good, fair, or poor?"

Results: Excellent 15%, good 38%, fair 26%, poor 20%.

News: ABC/BBC/ARD 2005–2007

Question: "How would you rate the security situation in your village/neighborhood: very good, somewhat good, somewhat bad, or very bad?"

Results:

November 2007: Very good 16%, somewhat good 50%, somewhat bad 24%, very bad 8%.

October 2006: Very good 20%, somewhat good 49%, somewhat bad 25%, very bad 6%.

October 2005: Very good 28%, somewhat good 45%, somewhat bad 19%, very bad 5%.

MRA 2005–2007

Question: "How is the security situation in your area?"

Results:

July 2007: Good 40%, fair 49%, bad 11%.

September 2006: Good 64%, fair 27%, bad 9%.

May 2006: Good 82%, fair 14%, bad 3%.

December 2005: Good 82%, fair 17%, bad 1%.

August 2005: Good 92%, fair 6%, bad 2%.

Altai Consulting 2006

Question: Perception of feeling "very unsafe" and "a little unsafe."

Result: National average: 11%

given to respondents. To compare the polls, we calculated a weighted average² for each poll in each year, as seen in Figure 5.1. Although the polls asked somewhat different questions, the questions were similar enough that the trend analysis provides a useful illustration. The MRA and news polls show that aggregate perceptions of security declined from 2004 to 2007, whereas the Asia Foundation polls show small but steady increases. Since violence increased over this period, the Asia Foundation's results stand out as especially remarkable.

From 2005 to 2006, the Asia Foundation and news poll results were significantly less positive than those of the MRA and Altai Consulting polls. It is unclear why the national polls show differing perceptions of local security. By 2007, the polls had converged at an aggregate perception of security between "fair" and "good." However, a new poll by ABC, BBC, and MRA, released in February 2009, suggests that support for U.S. and ISAF forces has plummeted to an all-time low, with worsening perception of security.

ANA Contribution to Security

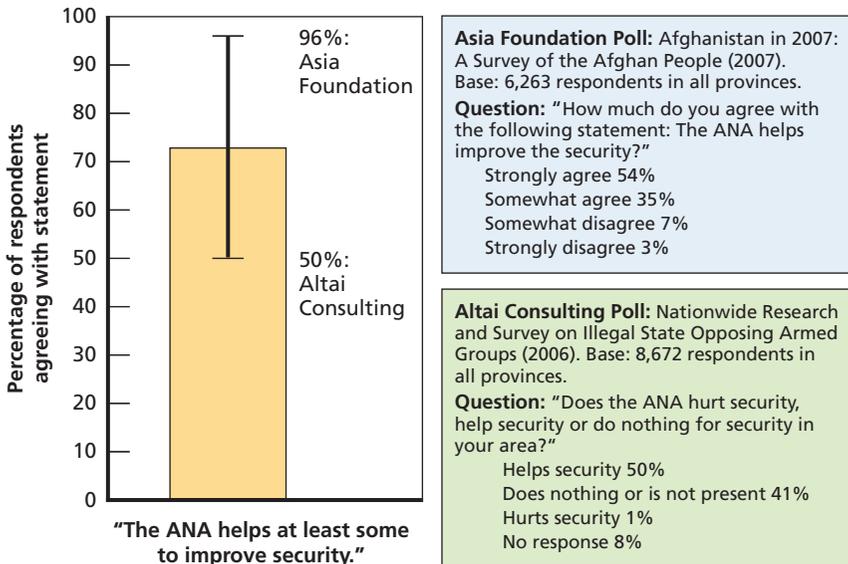
Two of the 12 polls address the ANA's contribution to security with widely different results. In early 2006, Altai Consulting asked "Does the ANA hurt security, help security, or do nothing for security in your area?" and found that 50 percent of polled Afghans felt that the ANA helped. A year and a half later in June 2007, the Asia Foundation asked "How much do you agree with the following statement: The ANA helps improve the security?" and 96 percent of polled Afghans responded that the ANA helps to some degree. Figure 5.2 compares the poll results.

Two factors may account for the difference in poll results. First, in the year and half between the polls, the ANA expanded its pres-

² To calculate weighted averages, we weighted each response such that the most negative possible response was zero and the most positive response was one. Responses in between were weighted between zero and one. The percentage of respondents providing a given answer was multiplied by the weight. These calculations were summed to create an aggregate perception for each poll.

ence throughout the country and increased its operational tempo. This effort may account for some of the 46 percent improvement in the perceived contribution to security. Second, the phrasing of the questions may explain the disparity in responses. The Asia Foundation asked about “security” whereas Altai Consulting asked about “security in your area,” giving respondents the option to answer that the ANA was not present in their area. It is possible that some Afghans believe that the ANA contributes to national security but not to their local security. In either case, the individual polls tell an incomplete story. A more recent Asia Foundation poll suggests a high degree of confidence in the ANA. In fact, the poll reports that 88 percent of the Afghan-people have a great deal or a fair amount of confidence in the ANA (Asia Foundation, 2007).

Figure 5.2
Comparison of National Polls: ANA Contribution to Security

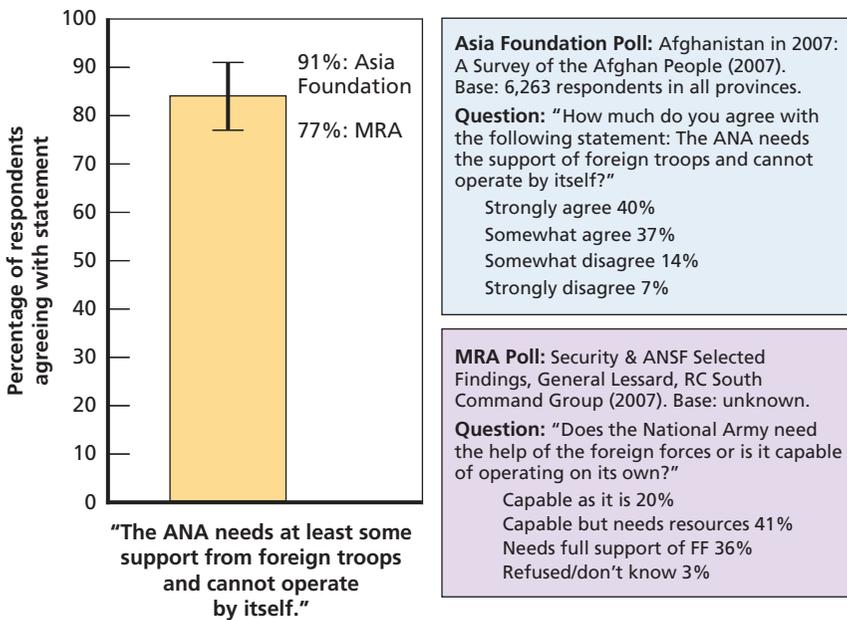


Afghan Support for Foreign Forces

Two polls from 2007 examined opinions on the need for foreign support for the ANA. The Asia Foundation asked “How much do you agree with the following statement: The ANA needs the support of foreign troops and cannot operate by itself?” and found that 91 percent of polled Afghans agreed to some degree. MRA asked “Does the National Army need the help of the foreign forces or is it capable of operating on its own?” and 77 percent of respondents said that the ANA needed at least some foreign support. Figure 5.3 compares the poll results.

A recent poll of Afghans, released in February 2009, suggests a different picture. It reports that only 37 percent of Afghans support U.S./NATO/ISAF forces in their area. The polls do not imply that Afghans acknowledge foreign forces as legitimate providers of security.

Figure 5.3
Comparison of National Polls: Support from Foreign Forces



Conclusions

With respect to how Afghans view the overall security situation, polling data show a declining trend in the security situation and in support for foreign forces. Generally, the ANA is seen as contributing to the national security, but a fairly large fraction of those polled think that the ANA continues to need at least some support from foreign forces.

Conclusions

This chapter presents our summary conclusion about the ANA in four areas: manpower, infrastructure, and equipment; training; operational proficiency; and the public's perception of the army.

Manpower, Infrastructure, and Equipment

The ANA appears to be on track to reach its manpower goals. With some 79,000 men already trained, the 122,000-man army appears possible, if difficult. The recruiting mechanisms in place appear to be successful in producing an adequate number of recruits. Thus, from a simple numerical perspective, the ANA seems capable of reaching its goals.

This is not to say that there are no manpower issues. With respect to the expansion to a 122,000-man force, several obstacles must be overcome. These include the challenge of achieving ethnic balance given the difficulty of recruiting in the Pashtun area, finding a source of funding to pay the salaries of an additional 40,000 soldiers, and funding the necessary infrastructure, which has not been a bright spot thus far. Also problematic is staffing the OMLTs and ETTs. They are not filled for the current force, and filling them for an expanded force will be challenging. AWOL troops remain a problem. Generally, their numbers are too high overall, averaging about 12 percent, and they are even higher (approaching 20 percent) for units operating in the most contested areas. However, the most recent available figures (May 2008) indicate a decline. It remains to be seen if this decline continues or is

a short-term effect.¹ There are also some indications that manpower levels are not sufficient to replenish units that have combat losses.

The ethnic balance of the officer corps remains an issue. Currently, Tajiks are overrepresented based on their share of the population, and Hazaras and Uzbeks are underrepresented. Pashtun representation is in line with that group's share of the population. Because accurate census figures indicating the ethnic makeup of the country are not available, we are unable to make any observation on the force itself.

Work on infrastructure lags the goals set. Only 40 percent of planned projects are complete or under way. Still, military infrastructure is being put in place and represents a much higher standard than that for the general population. Completion of infrastructure projects will likely take longer than planned and cost more than is currently budgeted. The current program does not take the expanded force into account.

Equipment also remains an issue. Initial fielding included donations from several sources and led to a mix of equipment that caused training and maintenance problems. According to the GAO, combat units are missing a substantial fraction of their major items of equipment. Subsequent commitment (and deliveries) on the part of the United States to provide additional equipment promises to ease the situation somewhat. Specialized units, such as the commandos, appear to be well equipped.

Training

After a slow start, training appears to be improving. The capacity of the KMTC, coupled with that of the regional training centers, appears to be adequate to meet the needs. The programs of instruction are appropriate for the type of force being developed.

The most glaring shortfall in the training area is the shortage of OMLTs that are staffed by NATO countries other than the United

¹ More-recent data show a rise to about the 10 percent level followed by a drop back to about 8 percent (ISAF briefing, 2008c).

States. Although the program is important to the ultimate success of the effort to build an independent ANA and has been in existence for two years, only about half of the NATO OMLTs are staffed. This problem will increase significantly with the ongoing buildup and training of the ANA to reach the 122,000 manpower goal. ISAF estimates shows that approximately 168 combined OMLTs and ETTs are needed by December 2013. The current lack of OMLTs indicates that genuine commitment by the different NATO countries does not yet exist. If additional teams are not allocated to the mission, the operational control and effectiveness of the ANA units must be expected to decrease significantly. A lesser but still significant issue is that the staffing cycle of the OMLTs differs from the operational cycle of the kandaks, causing some continuity issues.

Operational Proficiency

Judgments about operational proficiency are problematic since there are few objective measures. Interviews and open source information suggest that the ANA has improved substantially from its early days but that ANA assumption of primary responsibility for national security is still a long way off. Still, given the very substantial hurdles that the ANA has surmounted, there is cause for cautious optimism. Special units, such as the commando battalions, appear to show a relatively high level of proficiency, and some line infantry units appear capable. But the requirement for NATO or U.S. support will not end anytime soon, particularly for embedded teams and air support. A reinvigorated Taliban makes this requirement even more problematic.

The logistic capability of the ANA is universally seen as falling short. Both planning and execution are deficient, and improvement seems slow in coming. There appears to be a tendency to look to embedded forces to solve logistical problems. Arguably, developing a logistic capability is more complicated and difficult than gaining combat proficiency. Unlike the combat units, which have a basic understanding of infantry tactics, the ANA has no recent tradition of logistics to draw on, so it must be developed from scratch.

Public Perceptions of Security and the ANA

Polls indicate that Afghans' perception of security and support for foreign forces are on the decline. Perhaps the most promising result of the polls is the positive perception that the Afghan people have of the ANA. Ultimately, the battle for Afghanistan is one of perceptions, and the fact that the ANA is perceived positively is important. This is particularly true in light of the fact that the Taliban are widely perceived negatively. The ANA is thus seen as important to security.

The Way Forward

Successes notwithstanding, the ANA is a long way from being able to assume primary responsibility for Afghanistan's security. How long it will take for the ANA to develop such a capability is an open question, but clearly it is a matter of years. Equally clear is the fact that NATO and the United States cannot simply walk away from Afghanistan without jeopardizing everything that has been accomplished so far. Some form of security assistance will have to continue for the foreseeable future, and it will likely include unit advisors at some level and sophisticated combat support in the form of close air support (Thaler et al., 2008). Finally, the size of the ANA remains an issue. Afghans continue to foresee a need for a much larger force than even the force being trained and equipped to maintain their sovereignty and security. Lastly, Afghanistan's GDP is only \$11 billion, and the annual federal budget is \$4 billion, much of which is foreign aid (O'Hanlon, 2008). Opium cultivation and trafficking constitutes a large part of the country's economic activity. Thus, it is likely that an international commitment will be necessary to ensure that the ANA and its equipment and infrastructure are sustained for the foreseeable future.

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