

# DEALING WITH THE GROWING AFGHAN AND US TENSIONS THAT ARE LOSING THE WAR

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The US, its allies and Afghanistan face a war-losing crisis over the growing tensions between them. These tensions exist at many levels and on both sides. They include Afghan fears that they will be abandoned; concerns that they are subject to constant, unfair criticism by the US and its allies; anger at the way the US and ISAF fight; and a perceived disregard for their culture and religion.

They include US and allied concerns over corruption, Afghan politics, and Afghan governance. There are critical debates to come over how much aid the US and its allies will provide to the Afghan economy and forces, how long and how many troops and advisors will stay, how to manage peace negotiations, how to plan and manage the overall transition process, and every other aspect of transition.

The immediate crisis, however, is much narrower. We now face basic questions as to whether the US and ISAF can reach a workable arrangement with President Karzai and the Afghan government that allows both side to cooperate in fighting the war during the coming year and through 2014. President Karzai's demand that US and ISAF troops quit the villages and operate from main bases is only one of a series of potentially crippling demands that reflect very real Afghan fears and concerns over the way the US and ISAF are fighting, but where the Afghan government's current demands will rapidly lose the already limited chance of making enough military and civil progress to make a successful transition possible.

Even a summary list of these demands, the problems involved, and how they interact with the other tactical and strategic problems in Afghanistan illustrates just how crippling they can be to the military effort in Afghanistan:

### ***Reducing the Use of Airpower:***

The US and ISAF have already made major cuts in their use of airpower and established very restrictive rules of engagement. These ROEs are workable as long as the US surge and high levels of allied forces are in place, and might continue to be workable if the US and allied withdrawal were slower and Afghan forces had until 2016 and beyond to become effective enough to replace them in a phased, carefully tested manner that meant air power would not be needed to moment ground forces got into trouble.

The fact is, however, that the US and its allies that we are going to make the second major set of force cuts since the surge during June-September 2012, and do so in the middle of the 2012 campaign season. This will leave outside forces thin relative to the mission and the Afghan forces clearly are not ready to replace them.

Moreover, both the US, ISAF, and Afghan forces will become steadily more dependent on airpower. We are rapidly headed back to the point where there will be too few combat forces on the ground during 2013-2014 to avoid using airpower decisively the moment US, ISAF, and Afghan forces risk defeat on the ground, and Afghan forces will remain dependent on airpower to tilt the balance until and effective Afghan air force is ready – which cannot happen before 2016 at the earliest.

Better tactical intelligence and targeting systems can help, but air power will become progressively more critical to force protection and particular to ensuring that inexperienced Afghan units can maintain the tactical advantage.

### ***Night Raids***

Night raids do violate Afghan custom and anger Afghans in the field. The problem is that so do sweeps through Afghan villages and areas during the daytime, and night raids are far more effective in actually capturing and defeating insurgents. Although open fighting between ISAF/ANSF forces and insurgent forces may be more culturally acceptable to Afghans, night raids keep the insurgents from controlling the countryside and populated areas at night and reduce total civilian casualties and collateral damage relative to open fire fights.

If Afghan forces could be fully ready in 2012 or 2013, having Afghan forces perform such missions would be preferable -- particularly if there were enough capable, honest Afghan army and police forces to hold the countryside and provide lasting security after the Taliban and other insurgents were driven out. Afghan forces are not ready, and the best elements in Afghan forces will be stretched even more as US and allied are cut during 2012-2014.

Giving up night raids and US/ISAF efforts to secure high risk areas will mean ceding large areas back to Taliban and insurgent control. The insurgents -- not US, ISAF, and ANSF forces -- will often come to own the countryside at night and this means isolating the Afghan government, police and aid efforts and making the insurgents the de facto ruling authority.

Moreover, cosmetic agreements with Pakistan that do not really end the insurgent sanctuaries in Pakistan will allow the insurgents to wait out the successes that US, ISAF, and ANSF forces do have, infiltrate back, and keep up constant pressure at night with the ability to retreat and regroup when they come under pressure. The Afghan forces will have no such sanctuaries, and less and less back up as US and ISAF forces withdraw.

### ***Transfer of Detention Facilities***

The transfer of detention facilities to Afghan control is equally premature. There have been US and ISAF abuses, but Afghan run facilities are a recipe for breakouts, corruption, releases based on payment and political influence, chronic abuses of prisons and visitors, and prisons that become indoctrination and training centers for the insurgents.

A process that needs time, training, and far more attention to make transition effective is again being rushed forward too quickly and in ways that increase the risk to US, ISAF, and ANSF troops -- as well as Afghan civilian as detainees escape and are prematurely released.

The report on Afghan management of Afghan prisons released by the Afghanistan Independent Human rights Commission and Open society Foundation on March 17, 2012 makes the human rights risks all too clear. The military risks are just as great.

### ***Pulling US and ISAF Forces Back to Base; Transfers of Responsibility to Afghan Security Forces***

There is nothing wrong with formal transfers of responsibility to Afghan security forces. It is their country, our forces are leaving, and such transfers are the best way to develop real capability over time. The fact is, however, the US and ISAF already lack enough

forces and civil aid workers to execute the original 2012 campaign plan, make the planned gains in the East and hold on to – and fully secure – gains in Helmand and Kandahar in the south.

**The Unacceptable Tactical Burden on US, ISAF, ANSF  
Forces and the Impact on the Targeting of Aid Workers,  
NGOs, and Afghan Civil Government Officials**

The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) are far from ready to carry out all of the key combat missions in the East, South, and other high risk areas, and lack enough capable and honest police forces to secure and hold key areas. They may be ready in enough areas to at least contain the insurgents in key areas by the end of 2014 – although 2016 seems far more likely – but then only if they get the money, trainers, and advisors/partners.

Accelerating an already unworkable schedule for Afghan force development, pulling US and ISAF forces back to their larger bases, and forcing the transfer of responsibility to be immediate rather than phased in on the basis of success all combine to increase the risk of failure to the breaking point. It also exposes embedded trainers and partners in Afghan units, aid workers, NGOs, and Afghan civil governance officials even more quickly to the Taliban and other insurgents.

Both will have to deal with Afghan forces under high stress, some of which will fail to carry out their missions or protect foreign advisors and aid workers. It will allow the insurgents to focus on killing a relatively small number of aid workers and advisors with the knowledge this has a major impact on the media in the West and on public support for the war. It also will interact with the growing limit Pakistan is putting on the use of UCAV strikes and border combat – all of which increase the load on the US, ISAF, and Afghan forces in Afghanistan.

At the same time, pulling US and ISAF forces back to bases means they lose tactical intelligence and contact with the Afghan people in ways that may well make all of the political, cultural, and perceptual problems affecting their operations even worse.

Barring some massive restructuring of the US and ISAF partnering and advisory effort in the field which would now have to be far too quick to be credible, the US and ISAF become the kinetic reserve, lacking situational awareness and effective ties to their ANSF partners. They become localized targets, and an invitation to their host country for more rapid force cuts.

**Acting While Afghan Force Development is in Turmoil**

Weak and unready Afghan forces will often react by staying safe, remaining on post, patrolling during the day, and making deals with the Taliban and insurgents. Desertions will go up, Afghan government and aid workers will have less protection, and there will be more and more incentive for the ANSF to divide in ways that recreate the Northern Alliance, divide Pashtun areas and give the Taliban and insurgents de facto control.

This may happen anyway. It is the most probable real world result of their current transition effort, and “successful” peace talks are more likely to accelerate the process than delay it. Making it into a premature certainty, however, is a road to defeat and leaving an unstable and divided Afghanistan. It not only pushes the ANSF far too quickly,

it makes it almost impossible to secure Afghan government and aid efforts at a time when they too are extremely fragile.

ISAF and its training mission, NTM-A, have made progress in developing the Afghan forces since 2009, and this progress has accelerated over time. Yet the problems in the Afghan security forces are far more serious than simply listing the number of combat-ready battalions indicates.

It may be possible to expand all the different elements of the ANSF to over 352,000 men during the period of transition. Successful transition will depend, however, on whether the US and its allies are willing to fully fund the necessary development effort through 2014 and for as long as it takes after this time to achieve lasting security and stability – a time-scale that almost certainly will extend to at least 2020 unless there is a valid peace settlement and that requires truly massive funding effort that so far has dominated total aid expenditures in Afghanistan.

This effort is now failing on two sides. The US and its allies are not providing the numbers of qualified trainers and advisors that are needed, and are not reporting the real world readiness problems that the new CUAT system is revealing. The key ISAF training command -- NTM-A -- has stopped all meaningful public reporting on progress, shortfalls in trainers, and problems like attrition.

There is no stable plan for ANSF development, and funds are being sharply cut at the moment efforts are being made to rush plans that history indicates are based on time scales that are roughly two years too fast. The US aid funds for this effort have been cut from over \$11 billion in FY2012 to some \$6 billion in FY2013, and US plans are being discussed that could put the future level at around \$4.5 billion a year – but with the US spending only \$2 billion and the rest supposedly coming from allies and the Afghan government.

### **The Afghan Military Are Not Ready**

The depth of the problems involved in the Afghan military are all too clear from US official reporting – even though the US, ISAF, and NTM-A increasingly “spin” such reporting to exaggerate the level of progress. The *Department of Defense Report on Progress Towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan* for October 30, 2011 makes it clear that there are still many limitations to the force development effort for the Afghan Army and Air Force:

- Even with this progress, the growth and development of the ANSF continues to face challenges, including attrition above target levels in the ANA and some elements of the ANP, leadership deficits, and capability limitations in the areas of staff planning, management, logistics, and procurement. The ANSF continues to require enabling support, including air (both transport and close air support), logistics, ISR, and medical, from coalition resources to perform at the level necessary to produce the security effects required for Transition. The influence of criminal patronage networks on the ANSF also continues to pose a threat to stability and the Transition process. Further, the drawdown of U.S. and international forces increases the risk of a shortfall of operational partnering resources, which could reduce the ANSF-ISAF operational partnership and may impede ANSF development (p. 12).
- Successful Transition of the lead for security responsibilities to the ANSF is heavily dependent on

- a healthy, sustained partnering and advising relationship. These security assistance relationships create the conditions by which ANA and ANP forces can develop and become effective in defeating the insurgency, providing security for the local population, and fostering legitimacy for the Afghan Government. These relationships provide the ANSF with the ability to operate in a complex, counterinsurgency environment while also providing operational space and timing to man, equip, and absorb critical training.
- As the ANSF continues to grow and the U.S. and coalition forces begin to draw down, the gap between the requirements for partnering and available resources will grow. This gap threatens to undermine force development and may pose a risk to the Transition process. As a result, IJC is currently reviewing all partnering relationships to align with projected force levels and ensure resources are used to the greatest effect in the areas where they are most needed. As of September 30, 2011, there are seven critical shortfalls for the ANA and 88 shortfalls in the ANP in focus districts (31 AUP, 22 ANCOP, and 35 ABP). These shortfalls do not account for U.S. forces departing theater without backfills due to the ongoing surge recovery, and shortfalls are expected to increase as U.S. and coalition forces continue to draw down (p. 40).
  - As of September 2011, the MoD is assessed as requiring some coalition assistance to accomplish its mission (a rating of CM-2B, a status it achieved in October 2010). Overall, NTM-A/CSTC-A anticipates the MoD moving to CM-1B by early 2013, with full Transition of most offices and functions to CM-1A by mid-2014 (p. 16).
  - Although progress is being observed and assessed in a number of areas across the MoI, challenges remain that must be addressed. Civil service reform, both in personnel management and pay, is a recurring deficiency, both in the MoI and the MoD. The September 3, 2011 Ministerial Development Board recommended that Public Affairs be held in the CM-1B testing phase until civilian pay reform is achieved. The MoI Civil Service Department remains behind schedule largely because it lacks a permanent director and empowerment to effect change, as well as adequate office space, logistical support, office equipment and Internet connectivity needed to accomplish its basic functions. The Civil Service Department also requires support from the MoI senior leadership to implement the Afghan Government Public Administration Reform Law and to include conversion to the reformed pay scale. A strong partnership with provincial governors is required to improve hiring at the provincial level. The challenges surrounding civil service reform have already impeded Public Affairs' advancement and could obstruct overall MoI capacity, progress, and sustainment (p. 18).
  - Shortfalls in the institutional trainer requirements set forth in the CJSOR still exist and continue to impede the growth and development of the ANSF. CJSOR v11.0 is the current document supporting trainer requirements. As of the end of the reporting period, the shortfall in institutional trainers is 485, a decrease of 255 from the March 2011 shortfall of 740, with 1,816 deployed trainers currently in-place against the total requirement of 2,778. The United States currently sources 1,331 non-CJSOR trainer positions. In order to temporarily address the NATO CJSOR shortfall and fill the U.S.-sourced non-CJSOR requirements as quickly as possible, the United States has implemented a series of requests for information from other coalition partners, including unit-based sourcing solutions to address short-term training needs. (p. 18-19).
  - In order to maintain the accuracy of personnel figures, NTM-A/CSTC-A continues to review and revise the end-strength reporting process. During the reporting period, this constant review process highlighted a failure to report training attrition, which has resulted in a large discrepancy between actual and reported ANA end-strength numbers. After agreeing upon an accurate end strength for September, NTM-A and ANA leadership implemented new policies and procedures to ensure training base attrition is accurately reported in the future. Strong leadership within the ANA Recruiting Command (ANAREC) and effective and mature processing within National Army Volunteer Centers, which induct recruits into the ANA, has enabled adjustments to current recruiting plans in order to prevent delays in achieving the objective end-strength levels. NTMA/CSTC-A continues to work closely with and support the ANA in rectifying manning issues to ensure growth to the JCMB-endorsed ANA end-strength goal of 195,000 personnel by the end of October 2012 (p 22).

- Although recruiting and retention are continuing at a strong pace, if the high levels of attrition seen during this reporting period continue, there is a risk that the ANA will not be able to sustain the recruitment and training costs currently incurred to achieve the October 2012 growth goal. Historic trends show that attrition is seasonal, rising in the fall and winter and declining in the spring. The main causes of attrition in the ANA are poor leadership and accountability, separation from family, denial of leave or poor leave management, high operational tempo, and ineffective deterrence against soldiers going absent without leave (AWOL) (p. 22). Nevertheless, President Karzai issued a decree in April 2011 renewing the policy of amnesty for AWOL officers, NCOs, and soldiers who return to their units voluntarily until March 2012. This extension has the potential to impede the ANA's ability to decrease attrition.
- The ANA is projected to still have only 57,600 NCOS to meet a requirement of 71,900 in November 2012.
- The AAF's long-term development strategy includes the creation of an air force that can support the needs of the ANSF and the Afghan Government by 2016. This force will be capable of Presidential airlift, air mobility, rotary and fixed-wing close air support, casualty evacuation, and aerial reconnaissance. The AAF also plans to be able to sustain its capacity through indigenous training institutions, including a complete education and training infrastructure. The air fleet will consist of a mix of Russian and Western airframes. Afghan airmen will operate in accordance with NATO procedures, and will be able to support the Afghan Government effectively by employing all of the instruments of COIN airpower. This plan, however, is ambitious, and is indicative of the tension between Afghan Government aspirations, necessity, and affordability (pp. 31-32).
- In August 2011, the total number of reporting ANA units in the field increased to 204, and the number of units achieving an operational effectiveness rating of "Effective with Assistance" or higher was sustained at 147; alternatively, 37 units (18 percent) of fielded ANA units are in the lowest assessment categories, "Developing" or "Established," due to an inability to perform their mission or the immaturity of a newly-fielded unit. Even the ANA's highest-rated *kandak*, 2<sup>nd</sup> *kandak*, 2nd Brigade, 205th Corps, which achieved the rating of "Independent," remains dependent on ISAF for combat support and combat enablers. In locations without a large ISAF footprint, the ANA has exhibited little improvement and there is little reporting on their operational strengths and weaknesses. These units are typically located in the west and far northeast regions (p. 43).

### **Far Deeper Problems with the Police Forces**

The *Department of Defense Report on Progress Towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan* for October 30, 2011 makes it clear there are far more serious limitations to the development effort for the various Afghan police forces – even though it again “spins” some of the reporting and ignores that fact that the justice system, courts, detention facilities, and level of governance that is essential to successful civil police operations lags even further behind that the progress in the Afghan National Police:

- Despite indicating positive developments in ANP force generation, NTM-A recently determined that 3,940 officers and 6,733 patrolmen were filling NCO billets; large numbers of officers and patrolmen placed against vacant NCO positions overstates the development of the NCO ranks. Removing officers and patrolmen from NCO-designated positions would result in an actual officer strength at 102 percent, patrolmen strength at 113 percent, and NCO-assigned strength at 66.7 percent against authorized positions. NTM-A and IJC, along with ANP leadership, will focus on growing the NCO corps by 12,700 in order to close this gap (p. 34).
- Untrained patrolmen remain the biggest challenge for the AUP and NTM-A/CSTC-A, and the MoI continues to push the recruiting base in order to ensure all available training seats are used. As of September 2011, the AUP had a total of 11,919 untrained patrolmen and NCOs. AUP attrition remains the lowest of all police pillars at 1.3 percent, and has consistently remained below the monthly attrition objective of 1.4 percent for the last 11 months (November 2010 -September

2011) (p. 36).

- As of September 2011, the Afghan Border Police (ABP) end strength was 20,852 personnel. The ABP remains on schedule to meet all growth objectives for officers and patrolmen, but remains short of NCOs, with only 3,800 of an assigned total of 5,600. This shortfall, as well as the shortfall of untrained patrolmen, remains the primary focus for training efforts.
- Although overall attrition in the ANP has remained near target levels for the past year, high attrition continues to challenge the ANCOP in particular, which has experienced an annual attrition rate of 33.8 percent; although this has decreased significantly from 120 percent annual rate in November of 2009, it remains above the accepted rate for long-term sustainment of the force. As a national police force rotating from outside areas, it has avoided the corruption that was once seen in other police pillars. Although ANCOP units' effectiveness initially suffered from runaway attrition that stemmed largely from extended deployments and high operations tempo, the adoption of a 12-week recovery and retraining period between deployments has improved this situation.
- Building a capable and sustainable ANP depends on acquiring the equipment necessary to support the three basic police functions: shoot, move, and communicate. Accordingly, significant equipment uplift for the ANP began during the reporting period, which is expected to increase the ANP's on-hand equipment to approximately 80 percent by the spring of 2012. Despite progress, however, the ANP remains underequipped as a result of fielding challenges. Due to these shortages, the MoI has developed fielding priorities based on operational requirements. To address the delay in processing supply/equipment requests, the MoI Material Management Center established a Customer Care Center in April 2011. This single point-of-entry clearing house for supply/equipment requests has been a success, significantly reducing response times (pp. 37-38).
- The ANP's logistics system remains particularly limited, both in facility development and in assigned and trained logistics personnel. The biggest challenge in developing logistics support to the ANP is the hiring and training of civilian personnel, as civilians make up 50 percent of the logistics workforce. Civilian hiring will continue to be a challenge until the MoI institutes civil service reforms (p. 39).
- The ANP has demonstrated improvement in its ability to conduct limited, independent policing operations and to coordinate operations with other ANSF elements. These improvements are largely attributable to a number of exogenous factors, including low insurgent threat levels in the given operating environment and ISAF enablers. ISAF mentor reporting shows that the majority of ANP units still rely heavily on coalition assistance, especially in contested areas. As with the ANA, the operational performance of ANP units is also suffering from U.S. and coalition force reductions. Each of the three ANP pillars saw an increase in the number of units that were not assessed due to recently-fielded units that are not reporting or not partnered due to lack of available coalition forces. Within the ABP, 11 of the 12 units were not assessed due to long standing partnering shortages. Additionally, four ANCOP *kandaks* located throughout theater were not assessed. Finally, within the AUP in key terrain districts, 17 of the 22 units not assessed were in RC-C (p. 44).
- Currently, the MoI Force Readiness Report is the Afghan system for reporting ANP data. Unfortunately, at this time, the report only focuses on the statistics for personnel and equipment: shoot, move and communicate. There are no ratings associated with the data and no commander's assessment or narrative comments to describe issues and challenges. The positive aspect of the report is that the MoI collects, aggregates, and builds its own reporting products with minimal coalition oversight (p. 46).

The entire police development effort is limited by the lack of progress in governance, creating the other elements of a rule of law, and the permeating climate of corruption, interference by power brokers, and the impact of criminal networks. Moreover, political pressure is already growing that can divide the ANSF by ethnicity and may be a prelude to post-withdrawal power struggles.



These are not casual issues, and here the present compartmentation of the police development effort, and efforts to improve governance and the rule of law may be fatal. Police forces cannot operate in a vacuum. They need a successful government presence and popular governance to win the support of the people and support for their justice efforts. There must be prompt justice of a kind the people accept and find fair enough to support or tolerate. Incarceration must set acceptable standards and jail must not become training and indoctrination facilities for insurgents and criminal networks.

The present systems for reporting on progress in the police are almost solely oriented towards force generation and support of counterinsurgency. They are not tied to the weak, ineffective, and/or corrupt patterns in governance and the justice system in far too many of Afghanistan's 403 districts.

### ***Impacts on the "Local Police" Other Forms of Security Forces***

The growing differences between the US and ISAF, and the Afghan government, go much further, however, than the regular ANSF. ISAF has made real progress in selected areas in combining efforts create local police that do respond to the regular police and government, and where the creation of such security forces is part of a broader effort to create civil governance and economic aid efforts. The effort goes far beyond simply creating a militia, and potentially offers a key way to address the critical transition problems in providing effective security and reasons to be loyal to the central government at the local and district levels.

The problem with these efforts is that they cannot be set up or made stable and given lasting capability without a major presence from high skilled SOF, military, and aid workers in the field. The history of local police forces is also one of relatively rapid collapse when that presence (and money) leaves and all of the problems in governance, local corruption, and local custom return. Pulling US forces back to base almost ensures these efforts will often collapse or become yet another independent, corrupt, and self-seeking militias.

President Karzai has already reinforced the problem of ethnic divisions within Afghan security forces by disbanding another force called the Critical Infrastructure Police that was set up by ISAF in Afghanistan's four northern (and largely non-Pashtun) Balkh, Kunduz, Jowzjan and Faryab provinces.

Elements of these forces were certainly corrupt and supported northern leaders like the governor of Balkh Province that had little loyalty to Karzai. They had some 1,200-1,700 members per provinces and were paid as much to not extort the population as to give it security. Nevertheless, the net effect was to compound ethnic tensions – particularly as Karzai did little to deal with the corruption and abuses of regular and local police that were Pashtun or more directly under his control.

### ***Disbanding Private Security Forces***

Another crisis was due in June – although an announcement was made on March 18<sup>th</sup> that the June deadline would slip by up to 30 days. Afghans have every reason to resent corruption and abuses of the private security forces that the US, ISAF, and many aid groups now rely on – but do almost nothing to supervise. However, President Karzai has created another, potentially greater problem by trying to rush the disbandment of private

security forces in ways that seem more oriented toward enhancing his power over security contracting and key aspects of government, military, and aid spending than security.

The US Department of Defense reported in October 2011 that Private Security Companies (PSCs) in Afghanistan are responsible for securing ISAF sites and convoys, diplomatic and non-governmental organization personnel, and development projects. ISAF and diplomatic missions, along with their development partners, employed some 34,000 contract security guards from PSCs, of which some 93 percent were Afghans.<sup>1</sup>

No one doubts that such forces are a problem, but so is setting impossible standards for replacing them and putting security functions into the hands of new, corrupt, and incapable central government forces. The Department of Defense reports that,

By 2010...many PSCs were operating outside of Afghan law and customs as well as U.S. Government requirements, and PSC performance was often marked by poor discipline and safety. As a result, President Karzai issued Presidential Decree 62 in August 2010 directing many PSCs to be disbanded by December 2010 and replaced by the Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF). ...Although the decree included exceptions for Embassies and diplomatic personnel, it soon became clear that the APPF could not adequately replace PSCs in such a short time period. In order to allow time for the APPF to develop, the Afghan Government, together with the international community and ISAF, developed a 12-month bridging strategy for the further implementation of Decree.

A new study by ISAF and the Afghan Interior Ministry, reported in November 2011, found a whole new range of problems, and that 63 of 166 “essential” criteria if the government was able to recruit, train and sustain the guard force could not be met at all and less than a third could be fully met.<sup>2</sup>

A report in the *New York Times*, based on reading the study found that the MoI program “has no money available to procure necessary supplies and equipment.” It also found that the training center was not teaching leadership skills and could not generate enough guards to meet the forecasted demand. It also found that the MoI failed to provide the seed money — about \$10 million — to prop up a state-owned business to run the program. The program had already failed to supply personnel and equipment for some of its contracts, the report said. Its authors concluded that the police protection force “is not on track” to assume the responsibilities of the private security companies by March.

An official working for Gen. John R. Allen, the commander of NATO forces in Afghanistan, stated on background that, “It’s become a top priority because if it doesn’t work, everything grinds to a halt...If it isn’t sorted out, everyone will pull out because they don’t want some fly-by-night security protecting them.”

Once again, rushing to impossible deadlines puts a strain on every aspect of operations in Afghanistan. Moreover, even partial success will leave many areas weak or uncovered, and the insurgent will quickly learn these weaknesses and how to attack them.

### ***Moving Towards a Different Solution***

It may be too late to solve these problems. For all of the talk of dialog, mutual agreement, unchanging commitments, there are just too many problems and issues – many of which involve Pakistan, future aid levels, problems in the Afghan civil government rather than aspects of warfighting.

What is clear, however, is that we cannot go on with the current strategy -- if only because we cannot afford the current ANSF development plan and it is not working. We cannot meet president Karzai's current demands, but we also do need to be far more responsible to Afghan sensitivities and show that we are in ways that are convincing to the Afghan people.

There are two ways we may be able to deal with these issues:

#### **Create a Joint ANSF Development Plan**

Stop creating US-only and ISAF-only plans and create a joint planning effort that makes the Afghan Ministry of Defense and Ministry of the Interior a full partner. Begin by finding the best joint compromise on all of the above – potentially war losing – issues. Then go on to address the real world options for funding, advisors, partnering, and facilities in a manner that can be made transparent to Afghans, and to the legislatures and publics in the US and ISAF countries.

Make this group the nucleus for a transition to a true joint command over time. Let the Afghans take the lead and do it their way wherever possible and as soon as possible. Make it clear where the US and ISAF had red lines in terms of what is feasible, but listen to the Afghans, keep President Karzai in the loop, use the effort in strategic communications to counter Taliban propaganda, but be honest in communicating real problems and the need for realistic funds and time scales.

#### **Put Afghans in the Loop**

It may be years before the Afghans are fully ready to assume every aspect of their security, but there already are many qualified and competent Afghan officers and officials. Afghans can be made part of the ISAF headquarters and field operations. They can be embedded in our forces just as we are embedded in theirs.

Rather than relying on translators, put Afghan officers and NCO into every operation and decision making loop, particularly in high sensitivity areas like night raids, village and field operations, air operations, etc. Given them “red card” ability to halt operations if they present major problems, and bring them into the rules of engagement process.

The US and ISAF also need to develop far better ways to work with Afghans in developing integrated strategic communications. At least part of these current problems are the result of the fact that the US and ISAF focus more on home country sensitivities, or on protecting the US and ISAF image, than winning the support of Afghans and time and communication gaps constantly emerge between the US/ISAF and Afghan government sides.

This can't be done overnight. It requires careful vetting and building trust over time. It is, however, likely to pay off just as quickly as it can be made effective, it will do a great deal to give Afghans the experience they really need to take over responsibility for their

security, and does a great deal to convince them that a lasting security agreement has merit.

Put differently, if we can't make something like this work over the next few months, what on earth will make things work in the future?

### **Rush Forward a Modified “Afghan Hands” Program**

It is all too obvious that the US and ISAF badly need more forces with the experience gained from multiple tours, practical experience working with the Afghans, and practical as well as formal experience in dealing with Afghan values and sensitivities. The problem is that this means US and allied trainers, advisors, and partners that are willing to take on long tours at higher risk.

So far, it has not been possible to get the basic numbers needed and quality has often had to be ignored. This is partially workable at the basic training level where Afghans can take over – albeit at risk at the pace now being forced on NTM-A. It will not be workable if Afghan force development continues to be rushed as resources are cut and the withdrawal of US and ISAF forces is rushed as well.

Major incentives are needed to get the best personnel with proven success, and the US should be careful to make this an ISAF effort stressing allied support in areas like paramilitary police training where Italian and French experts have experienced the US lacks. It is also an area where contractors cannot do the job. Experience with profit-driven contract groups in both Iraq and Afghanistan makes this all too clear.

For additional CSIS reporting on the current crisis in Afghanistan, see:

“The Real Issues in Afghanistan: Looking Beyond Undefined Policy Statements and Slogans,” <http://csis.org/publication/real-issues-afghanistan-looking-beyond-undefined-policy-statements-and-slogans>

“Afghanistan: The Failed Metrics of Ten Years of War,” [http://csis.org/files/publication/120209\\_Afghanistan\\_Failed\\_Metrics.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/120209_Afghanistan_Failed_Metrics.pdf).

“Transition in the Afghanistan-Pakistan War: How Does This War End?,” [http://csis.org/files/publication/120111\\_Afghanistan\\_Aspen\\_Paper.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/120111_Afghanistan_Aspen_Paper.pdf)

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Towards Security and Stability in Afghanistan*, October 30, 2011, pp. 66-67

<sup>2</sup> Ray Rivera, *Obstacles Hinder Formation of Afghan Security Force, Report Says*, New York Times, November 1, 2011