

HELPING Afghans HELP THEMSELVES

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In the post-Cold War era, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization has renewed relevance in training Afghanistan's security force.



After the fall of the Berlin Wall and collapse of the Soviet Union, analysts and pundits predicted NATO would slide into irrelevance. The past two decades have shown that the opposite has occurred. As the alliance's security challenges changed, NATO changed and adapted as well. The organization continues to ensure the collective security of 28 nations in Europe through the deployment of servicemen and women around the globe, conducting eight major operations. Today, NATO leads a 48-nation coalition—the largest in modern history—working to stabilize Afghanistan and thereby the security of nations worldwide.

Of particular relevance in Afghanistan, NATO's lead in the development of the Afghan National Security Force, a key element of the strategy to create a stable and secure nation, has contributed greatly to the ability of the Afghan government to control the use of force within its borders and thus protect its populace.

To appreciate the impact, one must look beyond the numbers each nation provides. This war is part of a global effort to defeat transnational terrorist organizations and help establish security and stability in regions where terrorist groups would otherwise flourish. For more than 50 years, NATO exhibited its great strength in such efforts by containing the Soviet Union. The challenge of building a capable and professional Afghan National Security Force while engaged in an active

war demands not only operational capabilities, but the equally important ability to organize, train, sustain, and imbue professionalism in the Afghan Army and Police.

To this end, NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan (NTM–A) was activated in November 2009 to bring better cohesion to the efforts supporting the growth and development of the Afghan National Security Force. Previous efforts to develop both the Afghan Police and Army under a NATO command were designed to pull together multinational expertise into unified action. Years of interoperability experience in staffs and commanders provide a strong foundation on which the International Security Assistance Force/NTM–A organizations are built. No other entity could lead such a complex effort, with challenges ranging from literacy and leadership deficits to logistics issues. The collective will of the 28 members and their international partners is a strength that far outweighs the challenge of pulling together many diverse countries.

'Capable and Professional'

NATO's contributions to the development of the security force have covered three fundamental areas. First is the development of a capable and professional Afghan National Security Force. To fully understand the impact of NATO, one must look at the environment of Afghan army and police development prior to the activation of NTM–A. Before November 2009 the effort was hampered by a lack of resources and uncoordinated operations throughout the international community, leading to slow, inconsistent, and insufficient growth. The focus was on recruiting and assigning as many soldiers and police as quickly as possible, leaving the measures required to develop an enduring force for another time. Factors preventing the improvement of quality within the army and police, including weak leader development, losses from attrition, and illiteracy of soldiers and police, were not addressed.

In the past 19 months, significant progress has been achieved. The growth of the Afghan National Security Force in 2010 was the largest in its history. Truly the untold story is the surge in Afghan forces of more than 70,000 new soldiers and police, a 59 percent increase in the Afghan National Army alone. This would not have been possible without the contributions of trainers from NATO nations and their international partners.

An improvement in the quality of Afghan soldiers and police paralleled the increase in quantity. More numbers of NATO trainers directly contributed to the overall quality of the force. Examples include police-training programs of instruction standardization that led to a national force trained to the same parameters; a dramatic increase in the basic rifle marksmanship of the army and police, from under 35 percent qualification to over 97 percent; and the expansion of overall capacity at training centers, to include adding more than 14,000 seats at army centers. The focus of NTM–A this past year was bolstering the foundation of the force. This



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An Afghan National Army sergeant major reviews a new unit preparing to deploy recently. According to the authors, the NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan was established in November 2009 “to bring better cohesion to the efforts supporting the growth and development of the Afghan National Security Force.” Training the trainers appears to be working.

included expanding the number of training sites, Afghan army bases, and Afghan police stations, and equipment procurement to enhance capability.

Partner Nations Step Up

Examples of the diversity and impact of NATO's contribution can be seen throughout the training command. NTM-A's deputy commander in charge of Afghan police development is a general officer from Canada. His deputy for police training is an Italian Carabinieri general. Our key senior leaders for Afghan army development are a British brigadier and a Canadian brigadier general, respectively. At the lower levels, NATO and partner contributing nations lead and run key training facilities across the country. Those include a police training site in the west headed by the European Gendarmerie Force, consisting of the Italian Carabinieri and Polish Gendarme, French Gendarmerie-led training at the National Police Training Center in the east, the Afghan National Army Artillery Branch School in Kabul run by Australians, and the German-run engineer branch school in the north.

Consider this: When NTM-A was established only 30 trainers from two countries were training the Afghan National Security Force. As of February 2011, 32 countries with more than 1,300 trainers were committed to training

the force. Those nations represent one-sixth of the countries of the world to have recognized the importance of a secure and stable Afghanistan.

While NTM-A, along with our Afghan and coalition partners, made significant progress over the past year, we cannot be satisfied with our accomplishments to date, as they have brought about a new set of challenges. Progress must be accelerated to set the conditions in 2011 necessary to achieve NATO's longer-term end state—namely, a self-reliant and professionally led Afghan National Security Force that generates and sustains enduring police, army, air, medical, infrastructure, and logistics capabilities with accountable and effective Afghan ministries that are responsive to the Afghan people.

Vision for the Future

To achieve that, NATO must sustain NTM-A to continue building on all that was accomplished over the past year—and more. The Afghan army and police will continue to grow to an end-strength of 305,000. Once that is achieved, those forces will proceed toward the 2012 objective decided by the international community and the Afghan government. Essential to this effort is assisting Afghans to arrest attrition, the endemic enemy to growth and eventual professionalization of the force. Realizing



A NATO map of Afghanistan illustrates the diverse distribution of the International Security Assistance Force there. A subset is the training mission led by trainers from, among other countries, Canada, Italy, Great Britain, Poland, France, Australia, Germany, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, and of course, the United States.



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As a good illustration of how well the training mission is working, here with the police force in Afghanistan, an Afghan National Civil Order Police noncommissioned officer (background, right) trains new officers in tactical techniques. By the end of 2012, the authors say, “the Afghans will be in the lead, training recruits as well as trainers.”

that growth alone will not set the necessary conditions to achieve our longer-term goal, the focus must shift this year to achieving results in five critical areas.

First, train Afghan trainers and instructors. Developing the quality of Afghan trainers is the priority of our efforts in 2011. They must be capable of leading and training their force, and eventually of assuming responsibility for the training base. This is critical to moving the training mission toward transition. Building a quality train-the-trainer system in 2011 will be part of a multiyear effort to create a self-generating and self-sustaining system that can be maintained by the Afghan Ministries of Interior and Defense. It will take time to develop enough trainers of sufficient quality to reach the tipping point when there are more Afghan trainers than their coalition counterparts. We expect this program will reach full capacity by the end of 2012, at which time Afghans will be in the lead, training recruits as well as trainers.

The Afghan National Security Force must be able to self-generate such professionals if they are to play their full part in achieving our collective long-term security objectives in Afghanistan. Critical will be the continued presence of NATO trainers with the experience, specialized skills, and discipline to serve as role models, teachers, instructors, and mentors to our Afghan partners.

Second, NTM–A must accelerate leader development. To set the conditions this year to achieve a professionally led Afghan National Security Force, NATO forces and their Afghan partners must aggressively continue to develop Afghan leaders and close the leadership gap that currently exists in both the army and police. To accomplish this in the army, six new officer-candidate-school courses will expand officer-training capacity, while training resources will

be reallocated from basic warrior instruction to team-leading courses. This is meant to increase the number of noncommissioned officers. In addition, in partnership with the United Arab Emirates and France, we will train 1,800 more noncommissioned officers, and we are working to establish a similar model in Turkey.

By the end of 2011, the Afghan army officer corps will grow to 23,000, and the noncommissioned officer corps will expand to 52,000. For the police, we will enlarge noncommissioned officer and officer training course capacity and open six new national training centers, which will offer additional NCO training. Concurrently, we are working to establish an officer-candidate-

school course in Turkey, which will graduate at least 500 new officers this year. By the end of the year, we will grow the police officer corps to 22,000 and the noncommissioned officer corps to 51,000. This new generation of leaders is critical to our mission and will underpin the professional force that will take the lead by the end of 2014.

Toward a Literate Force

Third, NATO trainers must build literacy and vocational skills. In 2010 a basic literacy program and specialty branch schools were built, and this year they must be exploited to produce a force capable of supporting and sustaining itself. The literacy program is crucial to the professionalization of the force members, providing them the foundation for stability and prosperity, while also increasing recruitment and improving retention. They also create a system of lifelong education for the Afghan National Security Force. The program has tripled its capacity over the past year to 62,000 personnel in training at any one time and has the objective of reaching a total of 100,000 in training by the fall of 2011. To accomplish this, more than 1,800 Afghan instructors teach their countrymen in all of our institutional courses in Afghan National Army Corps operational areas and 300 police districts, and they will soon be included as part of the Afghan Local Police training curriculum. The goal is to educate every member of the army and police to at least the first-grade level, and eventually to the third-grade level.

Vocational training will also be a primary focus this year, exposing soldiers and police to specialty skills required to execute necessary support functions and operate the systems that sustain the force. NATO forces built and are currently running 12 Afghan Ministry of Defense

specialty branch schools. Through a cross-ministerial agreement, these schools will train both army and police personnel in critical vocational skills such as logistics, communications, engineering, law, intelligence, and finance. Together the literacy and vocational training will provide the Afghan National Security Force with a higher-



Afghan Air Force ground personnel guide a helicopter during a recent landing. Afghanistan's air force, according to the authors, is an example of the need to allow more time for training. In fact, "as of today," they write, "the Afghan Air Force will not meet its approved growth until 2016." Training and equipping soldiers and police officers, they indicate, is much different from acquiring aircraft and teaching pilots to fly them.

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and transition the lead for security to the Afghan National Security Force. To accomplish this, NATO must work with the ministries to further enhance their ability to conduct strategic planning, budgeting, and resourcing, and improve the operation of the national-level systems necessary to sustain the forces. NATO trainers must also begin to generate and field the necessary units and personnel

to execute the sustainment functions at the operational level and below. These will round out the Afghan National Army Corps structures and Afghan National Police units, significantly improving the ability to sustain themselves from the national to the tactical level.

Time and Money

The cost of these dramatic improvements has been steep, but is a mere fraction of what is spent to sustain U.S. service members in this faraway land. As the importance of building a national force, made up of both police and military organizations, increased after the fall of the Taliban and its subsequent insurgent activities, so did the cost of developing them. The required size of the force

grew over the past decade, increasing costs for everything from infrastructure and equipment to training and sustainment. When there was little recognition of a large standing force (primarily from 2003–06), costs were lower, ranging from \$154 million in 2003 to \$1.9 billion in 2006.

quality and more professional force able to sustain itself. Just as important, a generation of Afghan men and women who were denied these opportunities under Taliban rule will be learning lifelong skills.

Fourth, NATO must inculcate an ethos of stewardship in the Afghan National Security Force. The monetary investment in its development has been tremendous, a sum equal to that spent during the previous seven years of the training effort. To protect this investment, our Afghan partners must be taught the importance of accountability and maintenance at all levels of training and education. This cannot be done without the dedicated oversight and training by NATO and its partners. These values of stewardship must be reinforced by immediately implementing polices in the security ministries that validate accountability within their systems. The literacy programs play a critical role in stewardship and will continue to expand and improve the curricula for both institutional and operational units.

Finally, NATO must work to develop institutions and systems required for a self-sustaining and professional force. There must be a continued focus on the development of the capacity within both Afghan security ministries to execute the strategic-level functions necessary to sustain the fielded force

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As the insurgency grew, so did the costs to develop larger Afghan army and police forces, rising from \$7.4 billion in 2007 to \$11.6 billion for Fiscal Year 2011. This increase was vital not only to the growth in the quantity of soldiers and police available to secure the country, but also to increase their quality as protectors of the people. Because of these resources, the Afghan National Security Force is now able to field not only basic infantry forces with Warsaw Pact-style weapons, but large formations of infantry, field artillery, engineers, and air forces. While recent costs have been large enough to ensure the development of a professional and sustainable force, future required expenditures will drop about two-thirds by 2017, as up-front capital expenditures for the security force growth are completed and their development enters a sustainment mode.

In addition to financial resources, time was necessary, and will continue to be necessary. The increased attention and time given to the development of the Afghan National

Army and Afghan National Police, as well as the ministries that oversee them, has resulted in a security force more and more capable of securing its sovereignty and protecting its people. The NATO Secretary General himself has been clear that the NATO training mission must go beyond 2014.

An example of the need for more time is the Afghan Air Force. The time required to acquire the programmed aircraft and train pilots to fly them is much longer than merely training and equipping a basic soldier or police officer. As of today, the air force will not meet its approved growth until 2016. Because of these long lead times for the acquisition of equipment and training of specialized personnel, support to training and developing the Afghan National Security Force will be required into the future, whether it's in the form of financial or material aid, or training personnel.

The Payoff

NATO contributions of specialized trainers have made great strides to build a professional force that can serve and protect the people of Afghanistan, improve NTM-A's capacity to invest in Afghanistan's human capital through literacy courses and vocational-skills training, and develop a whole new generation of Afghan leaders—a sort of “Greatest Generation” for Afghanistan. There is nothing more relevant today than the mission to create a self-sustaining indigenous force in that country, and NATO is leading the way.

One nation alone cannot accomplish the objectives set out by the international community at the London Conference in January 2010 and the Lisbon Summit in November. Afghanistan represents a global effort, requiring the contributions of many nations, and NATO's strength is measured not in numbers, but in organization, expertise, and commitment to a secure Afghanistan and an Afghan National Security Force that can protect its people.

Accomplishing the mission in Afghanistan demands collective commitment and effort. NATO has stepped up to the challenge by committing to complete the mission. We do not know what challenges will arise in the wake of our departure. What we can predict is that challenges to global security and stability will emerge, requiring an organization with the agility to respond to any contingency, from humanitarian-assistance missions to major regional conflict. The end of the Cold War has not led to a lack of relevance. But NATO's combined efforts exhibited within NTM-A illustrate how important the organization is to both today's challenges and those in the future. ❁

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U.S. NAVY (R. WOLFKEL)

Afghan workers refurbish rocket-propelled grenade launchers on 9 May at the Central Workshop, the national depot-level maintenance facility for the Afghan National Army in Kabul. NATO's mission in Afghanistan is “to create a self-sustaining indigenous force in that country.” According to the authors, “there is nothing more relevant today.”