

Policy Options for State Building in Afghanistan

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The Afghan National Army: Enabled for a Counterinsurgency?

SUMMARY

The Afghan National Army and its coalition military efforts have entered the eighth year of conflict in Afghanistan and have not achieved the levels of success in counterinsurgency efforts in comparison to Iraq, against a resurgent al-Qa'ida linked Taliban. History has shown that foreign conventional armies have never been able to exert its authority over the multicultural Afghan society. The Afghan National Army (ANA) remained mission ineffective in providing national security through 2008, because it was ill-trained to wage a successful counterinsurgent effort. The ANA, a western modeled conventional military force, failed to capitalize on lessons learned from recent Afghan military history in which guerrilla tactics proved a successful model for military engagement.

INTRODUCTION

The underlying question to keep in mind, in the context of the Afghanistan paradigm, can a western modeled conventional force be successfully enabled in order to engage the Taliban insurgency? Due to the contemporary fluidity of this topic, the paper will focus on the time period between 2002 through 2008. This paper attempts to address the shortcomings of a western modeled army as being the wrong solution for the Afghan insurgency, by covering the following: 1) define and layout the foundations of insurgency in Afghanistan by defining the battlefield environment specifically looking at the implications of Afghanistan's terrain on the conduct of operations; 2) to analyze the modus operandi of the resurgent al-Qa'ida backed Taliban; 3) to review the currently conceived Afghan

National Army training plan; 4) to review critical historical lessons from counterinsurgency military history as well as the Anglo-Afghan Wars and the Soviet invasion on the significance of guerrilla tactics; and finally 5) to synthesize data and findings in support of the hypothesis.

BACKGROUND

The Afghan people, a mosaic of ethnicities, have inherited a long history of tenacious fighting and bravery in battle. However, the ANA has not enjoyed the same tactical success in comparison with the tribal upswells against foreign invaders. Ali Jalali states that, “This is the fourth time in 150 years of Afghanistan's turbulent history that the country is recreating the state military following its total devastation caused by foreign invasions or civil wars.”¹ As an institution, the ANA has been historically weak and has to rely on tribal military pluralism in order to repel foreign aggressors. The Afghan jihad of the 1980's is an example in which local tribal elements known as the Mujahideen were able to eventually repel the Soviet Union after a nearly decade long campaign. The Afghan success in routing the Soviet invasion as well as the three wars against the British in the Anglo-Afghan Wars was made possible by utilizing guerrilla or irregular warfare tactics. Guerrilla literally meaning *little war*, derived from the activities of Spanish irregulars against occupying French forces between 1808-1814, is unconventional warfare and combat with which a small group of combatants use mobile tactics (ambushes, raids) to combat a larger and less mobile conventional force. Irregular warfare has the qualities of not belonging to or engaging with regular army forces with tactics utilizing asymmetric elements in order to undermine the will of the opponent. Regular warfare is characterized by legitimate states fighting each other, international law governing the role of combatant and non combatant, uniformed service members, conventional tactics, branches of the military, clear delineated rear and front battle areas, mechanisms for maintaining manpower strength and a clearly delineated endstate.

¹ Ali A. Jalali. Rebuilding Afghanistan's Army. *Parameters*, 2002. (URL: <http://www.carlisle.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/02autumn/jalali.pdf>)

The current domestic security situation in Afghanistan may be classified as irregular or non conventional .

The West views the security of Afghanistan and the ability of the Afghan National Army (ANA) to be fully mission capable in order to defend itself as inherently the key to success in fighting the counterinsurgency struggle within this country. The strategic role of the Afghan Ministry of Defense and the ANA is to defend and deter aggression against Afghanistan, support and defend the Afghan Constitution, defeat the insurgency and terrorism, and support Afghanistan's reconstruction and reintegration into the regional and international community. In 2002, the international community endorsed the decision of the Afghan government to create an ethnically balanced and voluntary ANA force with training responsibilities delegated to various sundry countries, such as the U.S., France, Britain, Germany, etc. However, the June 2008 United States Government Accountability Office Report to Congressional Committees entitled “Afghanistan Security” reported that only 2 of 105 army units are assessed as being fully capable of conducting their primary mission despite over \$10 billion invested by the U.S. to develop the ANA since 2002.² The definition of success is grounded in a western paradigm set forward by the U.S. Department of Defense as well as NATO. The ANA must set the parameters for its own mission success; however, all ranks would concur that being mission capable is the foundation of enabling security. A fully manned and mission capable ANA is the right starting point for engaging a successful counterinsurgency effort.

The Obama administration realizes that the success of Afghanistan is linked to the success of the United States in the *Long War*. Although most Americans believe that the “War on Terror” began September 11, 2001, the people who chose to attach the United States that day, as well as their allies and fellow fighters, have a radically different perspective. For this group, collectively known as “Salafi

² US Government Accountability Office, “Afghanistan Security.” June 2008, p.3.

jihadis,” the war began many years before, either in the Middle Ages with the crusades or in the post-World War I peace settlements. Therefore, the term *Long War* is contemporarily replacing the *Global War on Terror* by academics and bureaucrats, as to reflect the much longer timeline associated with the roots of this ongoing conflict. The recent appointment of Ambassador Richard Holbrooke as a Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan underscores the significance of the ongoing policy struggle as well as its priority in the civilian agencies. The current U.S. administration has increased its troop commitment by an additional 21,000 U.S. troops to augment the ground situation in Afghanistan. Yet the funding, staffing and financial support of this war still pales in comparison to the Operation Iraqi Freedom. Vice President Joe Biden is on record as saying, “The U.S. has spent the same amount on aid and development in Afghanistan over the past five years as the military burns through in Iraq every three weeks.”³ President Obama's National Security Advisor, General (retired) James Jones has said, “There is a loss of momentum in Afghanistan that could lead to a backsliding if not regained. If we are correct and there's a spiraling situation in an unfavorable direction, the ultimate solution is not a military problem, but it could become one.”⁴

Ali Jalali, the former Afghan Minister of the Interior as well as a former colonel in the Afghan Army during the Soviet resistance, provides a top-down approach by suggesting that the first step in building the ANA is broadening the base of the government as well as a reconstruction of the Afghan economy. The counterpoint to this argument is the bottom-up approach, in which a strong defense, security and the reinstatement of the rule of law is the basic essential ingredient in providing for a nascent government to succeed as well as providing the estuary for a reconstructed economy to begin to grow. The October 2006 Summary Report by the Liechtenstein Institute on Self Determination at

³ Mark Thompson, “Is the U.S. Failing in Afghanistan?”, *Time*, 31 January 2008 as found: <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1854859,00.html>

⁴ Mark Thompson, “Is the U.S. Failing in Afghanistan?” *Time*, 31 January 2008 (URL: <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1854859,00.html>)

Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs reports that the best remedy against the Taliban is international support for reform in security and government apparatus at the local levels and to refocus the security concern to include human security.

Afghanistan and its allies must develop a dynamic bottom-up approach in which a strong defense and the reinstatement of the rule of law are the basic essential ingredients in providing for a nascent government and reconstructed economy to succeed. The legitimacy of a uniformed conventional force as offered by the western-trained Afghan National Army proves well on the international stage as a potential lexus of stability; however, Afghan history tells differently. Afghan military success has never been in the form of a uniform military but in the stirred emotions of the rural farmer called to arms. Counterinsurgency successes in the Philippines, the U.S. Civil War as well as the Boer War in South Africa may have applications in the Taliban counterinsurgency. The proposed thesis sits to the left of available literature as it will advocate that a large standing conventional force is not the appropriate solution to the Afghan counterinsurgency. The behemoth Soviet military might with over 100,000 men did not succeed in quelling the Afghan jihad in the 1980s. This paper is not advocating the dismemberment or unimportance of a standing conventional military force like the ANA; however, the current unconventional threat warrants a different strategy. The strategy should reflect critical military lessons learned from the Anglo-Afghan Wars as well as the Soviet occupation. A large standing urban garrisoned army is not the model force needed to wage a successful counterinsurgency in the rural rugged mountainous terrain along the unrecognized international border with Pakistan.

I. Insurgent Geography

Geography can weaken the strongest political regime or strengthen the weakest one. The role of geography is critical during a war and has the potential to condemn to failure any operation. David

Galula in his seminal work *Counterinsurgancy Warfare Theory and Practice*, examines various geographic variables and their influence in warfare. Galula identifies the following factors: location, size, configuration, international borders, terrain, climate, population and economy as having the most significant effects on the battlefield.

Location

Afghanistan is situated at a crossroads of Central Asia, South Asia and West Asia. It has been a conduit for invaders since the earliest Aryan invasions from Central Asia into the Indian subcontinent six thousand years ago. Easy to pass through, the country has been impossible to conquer.⁵ The geography of Afghanistan contains deserts and many of the world's highest peaks, thus rendering the terrain inhospitable for the resident population and invaders alike. Afghanistan sits isolated by natural barriers to include high altitude deserts and the Hindu Kush. Despite the harsh geography, Afghanistan was a vital intersection of the ancient world. Religions, inventions and ideas traversed the old networks of the ancient Silk Road. Each invasion left behind the residue of social, cultural, and ethnic legacies that each contribute to cultural mosaic of modern day Afghanistan.

Size

In comparison to Iraq, Afghanistan's landmass is a third larger (647,500 sq km), contains rugged mountainous terrain and has a population that is larger by approximately 4 million people; however, there are three times more soldiers and police in Iraq than Afghanistan. Peter Bergen reports that Iraqi security services number around 550,000 and there are some 140,000 American soldiers stationed in the country. In contrast, Afghanistan (roughly the size of Texas) has only 140,000 soldiers and police in total, and around 70,000 U.S. and NATO troops.⁶ In terms of financial resources being committed,

⁵ Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos* (New York: Viking, 2008) p.6.

⁶ Peter Bergen, "How Not to Lose Afghanistan." 10 October 2008 www.peterbergen.com

the US spends about \$10 billion per month in Iraq compared to \$2 billion expended in Afghanistan.

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Counterinsurgency is manpower and resource intensive which woefully had been underestimated by the Bush administration and Secretary Rumsfeld's “light foot print” approach.

Configuration

If the Clausewitzian “center of gravity” of any insurgency is the civil population, then establishing security and control over the population, especially in rural areas, is essential. The rule of law is the binding agent to achieve control; therefore, the implementation of sustainable bureaucratic institutions, such as: a civilian-controlled military, police force, courts and penal institutions are prerequisites for stability. The presence of the rule of law is a major factor in assuring voluntary acceptance of a government's authority and ultimately its legitimacy. Layers of essential bureaucratic infrastructure in Afghanistan are lacking. The complete demise of the government following the Soviet occupation followed by years of civil war resulted in a lawless vacuum. Nearly a decade of Taliban control deprived Afghanistan of basic civil institutions, bureaucrats as well as the rule of law. The US Government Accountability Office's April 2008 Report to Congressional Committees found that only 2 of 105 Afghan National Army units were assessed at fully mission capable. In regards to the Afghan National Police (ANP), no unit is currently fully capable of performing its mission. The ANP consistently experiences problems with police pay, corruption, and attacks from insurgents. In addition, Afghanistan's weak judicial system hinders effective policing and rule of law. The Taliban backed by al-Qa'ida have reasserted themselves in areas by reinstating their version of justice and local order. The Taliban, predominately a rank and file ethnic Pashtun group, have provided al-Qa'ida a

⁷ Mark Thompson, “Is the U.S. Failing in Afghanistan?”, *Time*, 31 January 2008 as found: <http://www.time.com/time/nation/article/0,8599,1854859,00.html>

guests welcome in their country through the ancient tribal Pashtun tradition of the Pashtunwali code. “Asylum cannot be refused; the Pashtun must spare even his enemy if intercession is made. The outlaw seeks refuge by *nanawatai*; he cannot be given up to the authorities.”⁸ This unending hospitality gives al-Qa'ida the tribal legitimacy needed to sustain this insurgency.

International borders

The Islamic Republic of Afghanistan shares borders with 6 countries, but the 2,640 kilometer (approximately 1,500 miles) international boundary with Pakistan, known as the Durand Line, remains unrecognized by Afghanistan. There are over 200 mountain pass border crossing points, the best known being the Khyber Pass. This unstable border region provides the screen for which Afghan insurgent efforts conduct cross border movement to sanctuaries in Pakistan, receive external support in the form of munitions and reinforcement troops, as well as financial funding through the smuggling of narcotics. David Kilcullen, a former senior counterinsurgency adviser to Gen. David Petraeus in Iraq, says the U.S. must change its policy in Afghanistan from chasing the enemy to protecting the people. Kilcullen says “routing Taliban extremists from their sanctuaries in neighboring Pakistan is critical to success in Afghanistan.”⁹ Galula states, “The border areas are a permanent source of weakness for the counterinsurgent whatever his administrative structures, and this advantage is usually exploited by the insurgent, especially in the initial violent stages of the insurgency.”¹⁰ Isolating insurgents from foreign support is critical to counterinsurgency success. Cutting an insurgency off to die on the vine is easier than killing every insurgent. Dynamic insurgencies regenerate quickly, so an effective counterinsurgency must sever the sources of that recuperative power. External ideological support may also be nullified by redressing the grievances that fuel the insurgency while physical support can

⁸ William Barton, *India's Northwest Frontier* (London: John Murray, 1939) 17.

⁹ Jackie Northam, *Troops Must Gain Afghans' Trust, One Expert Says*. NPR, Washington, D.C. 23FEB2009.

¹⁰ David Galula, *Counterinsurgency Warfare Theory and Practice*. (London: Praeger Security International, 2006) 23.

be terminated by sealing international borders. “U.S. strategic planners must recognize that the places where the Taliban are in control, but not fighting, are essential logistical bases for the insurgency. Logar (province) enables insurgents to enter the country from Pakistan, and conduct intelligence and strike preparations against targets in Kabul.”¹¹ Impeding insurgency's external support through physical control of a state's borders is a maxim for successful counterinsurgency practice. The porous eastern Afghanistan border shared with Pakistan is a major security threat to Afghanistan.

Terrain/Climate

Historically and contemporarily, Afghanistan's rugged terrain and often harsh climate have impeded but not deterred foreign invaders. Contrary to general belief, severe climates favor the counterinsurgent, which generally have better logistical and operational facilities. Afghanistan is an extremely mountainous country, with elevations over 7,000 meters above sea level. In comparison, Mount Everest, which has the highest elevation in the world, stands 8,853.5 meters above sea level. The mountains of the Hindu Kush diminish in height as they stretch westward. Toward the middle of the range, near Kabul, they extend from 4,500 to 6,000 meters above sea level. In the western portion of the range they attain heights of 3,500 to 4,500 meters and at the extreme western border are lower still. The average altitude of the Hindu Kush is 4,500 meters. The Hindu Kush runs about 966 kilometers laterally, and its median north south measurement is about 240 kilometers. Yet the land is not generally lush, and a dearth of water has been and continues to be one of Afghanistan's most pressing problems. The terrain enables the insurgent insofar as it is rugged and difficult; therefore, allowing cover, concealment and the ability to evade the ANA.

Population

¹¹ Gilles Dorronsoro, “Taliban Strategy in Afghanistan is Smart Politics, So U.S. Needs to Wise Up.” *U.S. News and World Report*, 20FEB2009.

The Afghan -guerrilla war against the Soviets affected has not only their own country but regional stability. By late 1985, Afghanistan was severely depopulated; about one third of the population had departed, and the war had claimed many lives. The dramatic drop in population within Afghanistan, coupled with the influx of Afghan refugees to Iran and Pakistan had created a tremendous labor shortage within the country and a potentially volatile situation in the entire region. Current demographics suggest that 50% of the population speak Persian/Dari, 35% Pashto, Turkic languages (Uzbek and Turkmen) 11%, and minor languages (Balochi and Pashai) 4%.¹² Relations among Afghan ethnic groups have tended toward interethnic violence. Groups that live in close proximity often have complex and hostile relations, a situation that is exacerbated by the fact that a multiplicity of ethnic groups may reside in the same region. The Taliban, comprised predominately of Pashtuns, have capitalized on existing ethnic fault lines to propel their agenda in the insurgency.

Economy

Afghanistan's economy is recovering from decades of conflict. The economy has improved significantly since the fall of the Taliban in 2001 partly because of the infusion of international aid, the recovery of the agriculture sector, and service sector growth. GDP growth exceeded 7% in 2008. Despite the progress of the past few years, Afghanistan is extremely poor, landlocked, and highly dependent on foreign aid, agriculture, and trade with neighboring countries. An underdeveloped country, like Afghanistan, is less vulnerable to terrorism but much more open to guerrilla warfare, if only because the counterinsurgent cannot count on a good network of transport and communication facilities of a fully developed economy and because the population is more autarchic. Afghanistan is the world's largest producer of opium and this trade helps fund the Taliban as well as other anti-government groups. "Poppy cultivation decreased 22% to 157,000 hectares in 2008 but remains at a

¹² As found <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html>

historically high level; less favorable growing conditions in 2008 reduced potential opium production to 5,500 metric tons, down 31% from 2007.”¹³ The corrupting effect of drugs and the steady revenue stream provided by the narcotics trade fuel the insurgency and corruption, eroding Afghan aspirations for security, government probity, and economic development. The inability of the ANA to deny the opium backed insurgent economy creates a vicious circle that further strengthens the Taliban to fight the counterinsurgency. The effective rule of law and security that ought to be provided by the ANA being fully mission capable would help deter this source of insurgent funding.

II. A Resurgent al-Qa'ida linked Taliban

The October 2006 Summary Report by the Liechtenstein Institute on Self Determination at Princeton University's Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs reports a recent dramatic increase of Taliban activity (use of IEDs, suicide bombings as well as administering their own form of social justice) since July 2006. “The political map in Afghanistan indicates that the Taliban strategy is much better planned and more homogeneous than is generally thought. The insurgents are more than local groups fighting for economic interests. They have strategic aims: to pressure Kabul and its surroundings, and perhaps bomb the capital.”¹⁴ The strategies, operations and tactics of the al-Qa'ida network since 9/11 are influenced more by a pragmatic reading of the developments on the ground. al-Qa'ida is based upon the Salafi tradition which is a fundamental religious interpretation of Islam. Four essential components that are the bedrock of the Salafi tradition include the following: jihad, da'wa, tawhid, and the establishment of the caliphate. al-Qa'ida's interpretations of Salafi teachings continue to provide direction to the jihadists; however, the effects of the global counterterrorism struggle are serving as the catalyst to which the jihadists are reacting and pragmatically reformulating their modus operandi.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Gilles Dorronsoro, “Taliban Strategy in Afghanistan is Smart Politics, So U.S. Needs to Wise Up.” *U.S. News and World Report*, 20FEB2009.

Abu Mus'ab al-Suri, a Syrian Jihadi ideologue, in his most recent book *The Call for a Global Islamic Resistance* advocates a decentralized system of jihad waged by many local autonomous units globally. Al-Suri also advocates the importance of waging a truly global war simultaneously in both Muslim and Western states. Al-Suri, a careful student of failed modern jihads and of the Western counterterrorism strategy, has identified five critical failures of recent jihads. To ensure jihad success, al-Suri recommends the following 5 point strategy, 1) mount many global attacks (Bali 2002, Madrid and London 2005); 2) pay attention to local ethnic minorities and co-opt them as much as possible; 3) give the best possible training to the foot soldiers of the jihad, 4) propaganda is vital, but lies and exaggerations must be avoided; and 5) recruit clerics to lend legitimacy to the cause. The review and analysis by al-Suri suggests a prior unseen doctrinal review in direct response to the Western efforts in counterterrorism. These violent extremists are analyzing their efforts and continually refining their grand strategy on how to best achieve a victory.

Al-Qa'ida was ill prepared and not anticipating the US invasion of Afghanistan following 9/11, and was therefore, stunned at the US response and unable to mount a counterattack. However, the Al-Qa'ida leadership maintains that their grand scheme to draw the US into Afghanistan, the “graveyard of empires,” is to decimate them. Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, also known as Sheikh Saeed, is an Egyptian Islamic militant and the al-Qa'ida commander of operations in Afghanistan is a key proponent of this grand vision. In an interview with the al-Sahab Media Center on May 26, 2007, al-Yazid stated, “our plan was to draw America into a war of attrition outside its borders in Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere.”¹⁵ Al-Qa'ida has responded in a practical manner to the lack of its strategic depth on the battlefield. It acknowledges that their enemy is behind them, in front of them, to the right and the left of their positions; al-Qa'ida does not have a secure rear to operate from. Lack of an offensive front has

¹⁵ al-Sahab Media Center, “Interview with Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, General Official of al-Qa'ida in Khurasan,” May 26, 2007, w-n-n.com

led to classic insurgent guerrilla tactics of hit and run, storming operations, as well as raids and attacks against allied bases. Also, al-Qa'ida promises a strike for strike match with its primary tool being martyrdom for its jihadists as an economy of force tactic to compensate for the lack of parity in the ground situation.

Al-Qa'ida has also shown remarkable resilience and organizational ability. It has maintained an image of coherent leadership with a strategic plan despite forced decentralization. Unity of command/effort remains an attribute with a focused limited objective of attriting the US in a long protracted war. Since 2003, Iraq has developed as the central pole of attraction for global jihad, drawing new recruits of Salafi jihadism from the whole of the Muslim world as well as diverting jihadists from other fronts. Abu-Mus'ab al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian militant Islamist that ran a militant training camp in Afghanistan as well as founded the al-Tawhid wal-Jihad (al-Qa'ida in Iraq); in an interview posted on a jihadist website in December 2006, referred to the US efforts in the Muslim world as a *crusade*. In the May 26, 2007 interview, Mustafa Abu al-Yazid said, "Our program at the present time is to encourage the Muslims in all the countries of Islam to fight the Jews and the Crusaders because if the leaders of Kufr [infidelity] fall, then their hirelings and the agents will fall with them, and at that point the Islamic state will arise."¹⁶ The pragmatic response to the events post 9/11 fuel the cause for jihad recruitment and networking as well as reinforce the aspect of da'wa for Muslims to fight against the *crusaders*. Therefore, it is even further critical for the ANA to be fully mission capable in order to be Afghans fighting this cause as opposed to Americans and a western coalition that further contributes to the notion of a western crusade against Islam.

The lack of an al-Qa'ida regular army and limited material resources limits the conduct of their jihad. Al-Zarqawi acknowledges the disparity between the jihadists and the Americans. He says that

¹⁶ al-Sahab Media Center, "Interview with Mustafa Abu al-Yazid, General Official of al-Qa'ida in Khurasan," May 26, 2007, w-n-n.com

“sacrifice is unavoidable. There can be no jihad without pain and wounds.”¹⁷ Al-Qa’ida and its leadership are posturing themselves for an ultimate fight to the ends of their means. Al-Zarqawi also recognizes that his resources are few; however, God the Almighty will bring them victory and they only fear their own weaknesses. The 29 night siege of Fallujah, Iraq, is used by al-Qa’ida to demonstrate victory over the 30,000 strong US in spite of ammunition deficiencies as God’s will for their success. Therefore, it is practical to reassure the jihadist foot soldiers not to be afraid of the tactical odds because God the Almighty is the true reinforcement and will come to their aid. This rhetoric is fodder for the bulwark of the al-Qa’ida information operations scheme (mass media and the Internet) in order to keep the goal of the caliphate alive in the hearts and minds of the believers and new recruits. A resurgent Taliban through the increase of attacks, gaining of territory under its influence, ability to adapt, vitality, moving into ungoverned spaces and the inability for local governments to cope provides al-Qa’ida a recruiting mechanism that strengthens the cause as well as further destabilizing Afghanistan. A more attuned ANA, fully mission capable, that is trained to wage a counterinsurgency effort through small unit tactics outside of the urban centers will help to quell a burgeoning insurgency.

III. ANA Training

“We can help train an army, we can help equip an army, we can help build facilities for the army, but only the Afghan people can breathe a soul into that army.”¹⁸

- Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry

¹⁷ Translation of Old Al-Zarqawi Interview, Says God's Law Must Rule 'Entire World, OSC Report in Arabic 06 Dec 06.

¹⁸ Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry, speaking to the press on 16 January 2007 in Kabul, Afghanistan
http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2007/01/17/terror/main2366189.shtml?source=RSSattr=HOME_2366189

The June 2008 US Government Accountability Office Report to Congress reported that approximately 58,000 army personnel received training and were assigned to the ANA.¹⁹ Defense planning called for the overall creation of an indigenous 80,000 person ANA force structure that includes Ministry of Defense personnel, sustaining institutions, and infantry forces capable of accomplishing its mission with limited assistance from the international community. President Obama announced on March 27, 2009, plans to accelerate U.S. efforts to build the ANA to 134,000 and a police force of 82,000 by 2011. At present, the ANA is at a 72% manning rate. The majority of the soldiers fill the ANA's five Corps headquartered in Kabul (201st ANA Corps), Gardez (203rd ANA Corps), Kandahar (205th ANA Corps), Herat (207th ANA Corps) and Mazar-e-Sharif (209th ANA Corps), with the remaining strength assigned to the Afghan Air Corps, sustaining institutions, and the Afghan Ministry of Defense. It is estimated that a 120,000 person strong ANA will be the appropriate force level ratio needed in order to combat the current insurgency and bring security back to Afghanistan.

In theory, each Afghan Army corps is assigned three brigades, but only the 201st and 205th Corps are fully manned. The 203rd Corps stationed along the Durand Line, or the eastern international border with Pakistan, has two brigades, while the corps in the relatively calm western and northern regions currently command one brigade each. The ANA is essentially an infantry centric force, most of the brigades consist of three infantry *kandaks* (Dari for battalion), one combat support (CS) *kandak* and one combat service support (CSS) *kandak*. The only exception is the 201st Corps' Third Brigade, which has been designated a Quick Reaction Force (QRF), comprising one commando *kandak*, one mechanized infantry *kandak* and one armored *kandak* in place of the three infantry *kandaks*. Lieutenant General Sher Mohammed Karimi; the ANA Chief of Operations as well as a graduate of the US Army Ranger and Special Forces courses, said, "This is not a question of using a big force against

¹⁹ US Government Accountability Office, "Afghanistan Security." June 2008, p.19.

this enemy...in fact, it is very important to use a smaller force, well trained, professional for the special operations to deal with the enemy.²⁰ To further enhance the ANA's strike capability, it is provisioned that each corps shall eventually have a commando *kandak* under its organizational control. Guerrilla tactics indicate that smaller strike or commando units are more suited for the harsh terrain of Afghanistan. Fielding a full *kandak* in the along the Durand Line is impossible; however, small light infantry patrols and commando strike platoons would certainly make in-roads to decreasing insurgent strike capabilities.

The training and mentoring of the ANA falls under the responsibility of the Combined Security Transition Command– Afghanistan (CSTC-A) under the auspices of the United States Central Command and its commander General David Petraeus. Coalition partners, to include the following: United Kingdom, France, Canada, New Zealand, Romania, Bulgaria and Mongolia, have participated at various stages of the training of the ANA. The majority of formal ANA training courses are conducted at the Kabul Military Training Center, the National Military Academy of Afghanistan or the Command General Staff College. ANA officer training is patterned on the U.S. Military Academy model in a year comprehensive university/military education in comparison to the majority of general enlisted troops in receiving only approximately 2 weeks of training. The ANA has the capacity to commission 300 officers a year; however, the demand currently surpasses the supply. President Obama's National Security Advisor, General (retired) James Jones said to the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee that, “the Afghan National Army is the most successful pillar of our reconstruction efforts to date, and it is clear that there is still a tremendous amount of work to be done.”²¹

In addition to domestic training institutions, ANA officers and non commissioned officers

²⁰ Al Pessin, “Afghan General Wants Special Forces to Fight Terrorists”, *Voice of America*, 4 May 2006, www.voanews.com/english/archive/2006-05/2006-05-04-voa62.cfm?CFID=65393472&CFTOKEN=64585192.

²¹ DoD News Briefing with General Jones, 20 September 2006, found at: <http://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/news/2006/09/mil-060920-dod02.htm>

participate in cultural military exchanges in friendly host countries. ANA officers and cadets are currently participating in training outside of Afghanistan in countries like the U.S., Turkey and India. At Fort Bliss, Texas, Afghan aviators have been trained on Mi-17 helicopters in support of anti-narco terrorism operations.²² India is currently sponsoring 14 cadets annually at the National Defence Academy in Pune, Maharashtra. India has also just recently made an agreement to train the ANA in counterinsurgency operations. External infrastructure in host countries is in place and becomes an attractive alternate viable source of military training. The force multiplying effects of training ANA personnel in friendly host countries enables a resource and time constrained model to qualify more personnel efficiently.

It takes time to build an Army. Training is a crawl - walk - run process and no short cuts can be made. A firm commitment from the United States Department of Defense to increase the number of culturally cognizant trainers in order to make young illiterate Afghan boys into trained ANA soldiers ready to defend their country. Senior officers and staff development require mentoring, training and requisite time in order to cobble an embryonic understanding of mission essential tasks, training plans as well as combat operations. U.S. Military Training Teams (MiTT) are the key for successful mentoring of senior officers and staffs on the battlefield and enables stability while not sacrificing time required for training while war efforts are on going. U.S. Army special Forces Teams combined with the U.S. Marine Corps and even U.S. Army Foreign Area Officers versed in small unit tactics deployed to train the ANA is ideal given the terrain and enemy. Time is critical to build the mobility and technological sophistication required to compensate for the ANA small size. The increased number of military training teams is a viable solution to an otherwise resource constrained strategic global environment.

²² Virginia Reza, "Afghan Aviators Train in Texas", *Soldiers Online*, 12 June 2006, found at www.army.mil/soldiers/view_story.php?story_id_key=9154.

IV. Military History

The *Great Game* of the nineteenth century placed Afghanistan at the forefront of the power struggles between the British Empire and Imperial Russia. The Great Game captured the essence of the strategic rivalry between Tsarist Russia and the British Empire for supremacy in Central Asia. The British attempted to conquer Afghanistan three times but were unable to occupy the country. The British capitulated and ultimately decided to pay off tribal chiefs and created a client state rather than an imperial dominion.²³ Imperial Russia conquered Central Asia and also sought to buy its way into Afghanistan in order to undermine the burgeoning British Empire. The following excerpt from a letter written in Afghanistan first appeared in the April 4, 1842, *London Times* and addresses the British Army of the Indus fate in Afghanistan. The letter dated March 1, 1842, and brings the narrative of events to the departure of the mail:

“The insurrection, which is described as participating in a great measure of the religious enthusiasm to which the fanatical Moslems can be excited by the preaching of their Imauns, broke out on the night of the 1st of November, when Sir Alexander Burnes, and his brother, and Captain Broadfoot of the 44th were killed....The infuriated populace attacked the Commissart Fort, which lay immediately to the North of town, between in and the cantonment, and as it was weakly defended, soon became masters of it. This was a dreadful blow to the troops, as at time there was flour but for two days remaining in the cantonment....a panic appeared to have seized the troops, who found themselves in the beginning of winter shut up in their cantonments in a valley 200 miles from the Indus, without sufficient clothing or food, and amidst a fanatical Mussulman population.”²⁴

Foreign militaries attempted to control Afghanistan by military interdiction and force, but never succeeded. The clandestine Great Game played itself out, but Kabul never fell and Afghanistan remained autonomous.

²³ Ibid, p.8.

²⁴ Harlan, Josiah, *A Memoir of India and Afghanistan, with Observations on the Present Exciting and Critical State and Future Prospects of Those Countries* (Philadelphia: J. Dobson, 1842) 197. as found <http://books.google.com/books?id=VtMWAAAQAAJ&dq=A+Memoir+of+India+and+Afghanistan>

From the British perspective, the First Anglo-Afghan War was an unmitigated disaster, although it proved surprisingly easy to depose legitimate Afghan leadership (Dost Mohammad ousted and the enthronement of Shuja). “Every man is an adept at guerrilla warfare. These facts indicate that the military difficulty of subjugating this group of tribes.”²⁵ The destruction of the British garrison prompted brutal retaliation by the British against the Afghans and touched off yet another power struggle among potential rulers of Afghanistan. In the fall of 1842, British forces from Kandahar and Peshawar entered Kabul long enough to rescue the British prisoners and burn the great bazaar. All that remained of the British occupation of Afghanistan was a ruined market and thousands of dead. The British also attempted to buy influence through local tribes, something that strikes a contemporary note. The British ultimately failed in this scheme, due to corruption. “Much of the money spent on allowances and tribal entertainments remained in the pockets of the middlemen. What was wanted was that British officers should deal directly with the tribes, win their confidence and inspire respect. Even before the Afghan War of 1878 it had become obvious that the policy of the close border had been a hopeless failure.”²⁶ Although the foreign invasion did give the Afghan tribes a temporary sense of unity they had lacked before, the accompanying loss of life and property was followed by a bitterness and resentment of foreign influence that lasted well into the twentieth century, and perhaps is even relevant today.

The final throws of the Cold War were fought inside Afghanistan. The Christmas Eve 1979 Soviet invasion and subsequent occupation of Afghanistan would be the impetus for the final downfall of the Soviet Union. Afghan mullahs and political leaders, secretly backed by President Reagan and the United States, declared a jihad against the Soviet Union. OPERATION CYCLONE was the code name for the United States Central Intelligence Agency to arm the Afghan insurgents or Mujahideen

²⁵ William Barton, India's Northwest Frontier (London: John Murray, 1939) 53.

²⁶ *Ibid*, 61.

during the Soviet Afghan War of the 1980's. By 1987, the Mujahideen annually received \$670 million per year in external support from the USA. The Mujahideen relied heavily on the Pakistani Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) as an intermediary for funds disbursement, arming, training and financing their resistance. The Afghan insurgents also received international aid from Britain, Saudi Arabia and China. The Mujahideen were also supplied with SA-7 man portable ground to air missiles as well as over 500 US produced man portable Stinger missiles in which Afghans destroyed over 40 rotary wing aircraft and several fixed wing aircraft. The external arming and funding of the Mujahideen assisted greatly in the defeat of Soviet air domination. Afghans also received cross border sanctuary and military training in the Pashtun dominated Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan. The behemoth Soviet Union Army committed nearly 620,000 men to their failed Afghanistan cause during its ten year occupation, and in essence became the Soviet Union's Vietnam. President Jimmy Carter's National Security Adviser, Zbigniew Brzezinski wrote, "The day the Soviets officially crossed the border, I wrote to President Carter: We now have the opportunity of giving the Soviet Union its Vietnam War."²⁷ Official Soviet casualties totaled 13,836 men, or an average of 1,537 men a year. In modern times, as well as in antiquity, great armies passed through Afghanistan, establishing at least temporary local control but ultimately the central government was ineffective to establish permanent control over the multicultural society.

V. Current Operating Picture

Since its inception, the ANA has taken an increased responsibility in major operations with the coalition forces, including planning joint operations. However, the nascent force is still very dependent

²⁷ Interview with Zbigniew Brzezinski, Le Nouvel Observateur, Paris, 15-21 January 1998
Posted at globalresearch.ca 15 October 2001.

on coalition forces for combat support and combat service support, including the following: artillery, engineers, signals, medical and logistics. US Army General (retired) Barry McCaffrey stated in a report to the Department of Social Sciences at the United States Military Academy, that “the Afghan Army is miserably under-resourced. This is now a major morale factor for their soldiers...Army field commanders told me that they try to seize weapons from the Taliban who they believe are much better armed...Many soldiers and police have little ammunition and few magazines...no body armor or blast glasses...no Kevlar helmets...no up armored vehicles or light armored track vehicles.”²⁸ Retired General McCaffrey also suggests that the appropriate amount required for the ANA to become a “well equipped, disciplined, multi ethnic, literate and trained first line counter-insurgency force” is approximately US\$1.2 billion annually for 10 years – the ticket to be fully out of Afghanistan by 2020.²⁹ The United States has provided Afghanistan US\$16.5 billion from fiscal years 2002 through 2008 to support the training and equipping of the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF), which is comprised of the ANA and the Afghan National Police (ANP).³⁰ Despite funding, the Afghan National Army remains at an abysmal statistic of 2% of ANA units that are fully mission capable.

Information from the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), American aid to Afghanistan in 2006 totaled US\$ 3.26 billion: US\$ 2.48 billion (76%) to the development to the ANA and ANP, US\$ 587 million (18%) for reconstruction, US\$ 120 million (4%) for humanitarian and other assistance, and US\$ 73 million (2%) for democracy and governance.³¹ Since the commencement of Operation Enduring Freedom, military operations have received US\$ 82.5 billion, compared to US\$ 7.3 billion for development and reconstruction.³² The ANA has made some progress despite the complete absence of a self sustaining operational budget. However, former U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan,

²⁸ Barry R. McCaffrey, “Academic Report – Trip to Afghanistan and Pakistan (19-26 May)” in *Memorandum for COL Mike Messe and Col Cindy Jebb*, 3 June 2006, p.6.

²⁹ *Ibid*, p.7.

³⁰ US Government Accountability Office, “Afghanistan Security.” June 2008, p.10.

³¹ “Three-quarters of U.S. Aid to Afghanistan Going on Security”, *Agence France-Presse*, 10 August 2006.

³² Jason Motlagh, “Taliban Viewed in a New Light”, *Asia Times*, 11 October 2006.

Ronald E. Neumann, has written, “ The Afghan Army is slowly growing, in both size and competence, but it is still too small to protect a frightened, war weary population.”³³ Despite budgetary issues, the U.S. Department of Defense profess an insufficient number of U.S. trainers and coalition mentors in the field as the major impediment to providing the ANA with the training to establish capabilities, such as advanced combat skills and logistics, necessary to sustain the ANA force in the long term. Providing training is the key binding ingredient for success to increasing combat capability and military self sufficiency of Afghanistan, as well as gaining an advantage in the global war on terror.

In the June 2008 GAO report to Congress entitled “Afghanistan Security,” the Department of Defense reports that 37,866 combat troops have been trained and assigned to the ANA as of April 2008, compared with 18,300 troops in March 2005.³⁴ Although these numbers demonstrate a twofold increase in the amount of combat troops, it is still approximately 5,000 forces less than the Department of Defense had predicted would be trained by the beginning of FY08. While more troops have received training, only two of 105 ANA units are assessed as Combat Mission 1 – *fully capable*. Thirty six percent of ANA units (38 out of 105 units) are assessed at Combat Mission 2 and are capable of conducting their primary mission with routine international support. The remaining ANA units are less capable. Thirty one percent (32 of 105 units) are Combat Mission 3, capable of partially conducting their primary mission, but reliant on international support; 11 percent (11 of 105 units) are Combat Mission 4, formed but not yet capable; and 21 percent (22 of 105 rated units) are not yet formed.³⁵ Failure to bolster American military trainers will lead to a stagnation and rapid decline of the ANA and will further destabilize the region. Afghanistan is an important country in the region and security and stability in Afghanistan is critical for the stability of South Asia as a whole.

³³ Ronald E. Neumann, “Afghans, Report For Duty”, *New York Times*, 14 January 2008, www.nytimes.com/2008/01/14/opinion/14neumann.html

³⁴ US Government Accountability Office, “Afghanistan Security.” June 2008, p.19.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p. 20.

Although the ANA has grown in numbers, it faces manning challenges, including absenteeism, recruitment of leaders and specialists, and the retention of personnel. The 4,600 strong British Army contingent in southern province of Helmand, has assumed the mantle of mentoring and training ANA units within their area of operations. British military leadership has reported that the ANA soldiers display cowardice under fire, a dislike for patrols, extortion of locals and smoking of illicit substances. A local tribal elder estimated that on any given day, as many as half of the ANA soldiers in Helmand are stoned on hashish.³⁶ One third of ANA recruits from Taliban strongholds within Kandahar and Helmand provinces are testing positive for heroin, opium and cannabis. The ANA does not yet have a comprehensive drug policy, and throughout the country hashish is not considered to be a drug and is much more accepted than alcohol.³⁷ Illicit drug use in the military is a combat detractor and destabilizes the camaraderie within the unit. The low morale of the post-Vietnam U.S. Army was partially contributed to rampant unchecked drug use by its soldiers and officers.

The Department of Defense reported in February 2008 that nearly 20 percent of combat personnel assigned were not present for duty. The term AWOL is a military acronym that stands means *Absent Without Leave*, and is a personnel classification used to help account for all active duty personnel. DoD's assessment reports show between 8-12 percent of combat unit personnel were officially AWOL. For the ANA to achieve sustained growth, doctrine states that AWOL rates cannot be higher than 8 percent.³⁸ Afghan officials have attributed these absences to a variety of causes, such as soldiers leaving their units to take their pay home and lack of significant penalties for such absences. Proper military indoctrination through an increased Initial Entry Training system in which military

³⁶ “Afghan Army Taking Drugs Says British Soldier”, *Daily Mail* 14 August 2006 as found: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-400581/Afghan-army-taking-drugs-says-British-soldier.html>

³⁷ Kim Barker, “Drug Abuse Rising Among Afghan Police, Soldiers”, *Chicago Tribune*, 25 October 2008, as found: <http://www.inrich.com/cva/ric/entertainment.apx.-content-articles-RTD-2008-10-25-0001.html>

³⁸ US Government Accountability Office, “Afghanistan Security.” June 2008, p.22.

values and esprit d' corps are taught by trainers could have a positive effect on the higher levels of AWOL ANA personnel.

Finding qualified candidates to join and fill the ranks of the ANA in the capacity of leadership and specialized positions has proven difficult. Afghan and Department of Defense officials have cited low levels of literacy as a problem in obtaining recruits to fill the ANA ranks. According to the CIA World Fact Book, the overall literacy rate in Afghanistan is 28.1 percent, with 43.1 percent of males literate. Recruits who only spoke Pashto had difficulties because instructions were given through interpreters who spoke Dari.³⁹ Another challenge for ANA recruiters is preventing infiltration of Taliban spies or soldiers willing to sell information. Despite the ANA's stringent screening process, three anti-government infiltrators have been caught “trying to get information that was inappropriate for their job descriptions” but thus far there are no known situations where infiltrators have obtained information that have compromised an operation.⁴⁰ To prevent undesirable elements infiltrating the ANA, more stringent security checks are being implemented. Recruitment is also an area that is a difficulty for the ANA. While basic recruitment for the infantry is fulfilled annually, specialized recruitment for logistics, medical support and engineering often go unfilled. The lack of permanent educational institutions severely affects the available quantities of the population that are able to adequately fill these critical positions within the ANA.

Retention of quality trained military personnel is a contributing enabling factor of any military success. The ANA faces challenges in retaining personnel. A traditional military enlistment in the ANA is for a 3 year period. Between 2006-2008, only half of the eligible soldiers to re-enlist, did so.⁴¹ Bonuses are often an incentive used in soldier retention. However, additional military training or the

³⁹ “Afghanistan – Army”, GlobalSecurity.org 7 August 2005, as found: www.globalsecurity.org/military/world/afghanistan/army/htm.

⁴⁰ David Zucchini, “Afghan Army Could Help Unify a Nation”, *Los Angeles Times*, 13 November 2006

⁴¹ *Ibid*, p.24.

chance to participate in an international military educational exchange may also be an incentive or reward for a soldier that commits to the ANA for another tour of duty. The continuity that comes with the retention of a non commission officer training cadre is a vital component to the success and stability needed in the ANA to foster the successful development of this force.

To compound hardship and military culture issues that plague the ANA, the individual soldier also faces problems with the most basic benefit taken for granted by many First World militaries – *salary*. An ANA company commander said that “he was starting to see attrition among his forces. He said that because it was a voluntary army, the soldiers would occasionally leave, never to return, and that he was currently at about 70 percent strength. He also said that a lot of the soldiers were barely literate, and the reason a lot of the soldiers were leaving was that the pay was extremely poor.”⁴² In the summer of 2006, the Taliban exploited this weakness and stepped up recruitment efforts by offering three times the daily pay of the ANA; the Taliban offering up to \$300 a month whereas a first year ANA soldier only earns \$70 a month. An Afghan official said that the “basic pay of \$70 a month was a lot of money three years ago, but it is harder to recruit people to fight in a bitter insurgency now.”⁴³ At the other end of the chain of command, the monthly salary for a senior enlisted soldier is \$180 a month, \$160 for a Second Lieutenant, while a General receives \$850 for compensation. In many instances, general grade officers have not been paid in months, but continue to serve. Morale suffers greatly when a soldier is unable to provide for the welfare and needs of his family. Salary has a direct link to recruitment and retention as well as the overall health of the ANA. Pay and incentives, regardless of a soldiers' nationality, is vital to the morale and success of an army. The ANA will be able to attract and draw from an estimated 40% Afghan unemployed population by utilizing funding to attract and retain trained personnel to fill billets. A fully manned ANA is a step in the right direction for assuming the

⁴² Charles DiLeonardo, “Training the Afghan National Army”, *The Infantry Magazine*, March-April 2005.

⁴³ Rachel Morarjee, “Taliban Goes For Cash Over Ideology”, *The Financial Times*, 25 July 2006.

mission from foreign troops as a way of de-legitimizing the insurgent's propaganda of a western crusade against Islam.

The current ground reality for the uniformed members of the Afghan National Army is bleak. The ANA is running high levels of absent/AWOL personnel from their ranks during a bitter insurgency. The army faces illicit drug use within its ranks which affects the morale and camaraderie of the unit as well as high levels of illiteracy and troops that do not speak common languages. The ANA leadership also faces recruitment and retention problems, as well as pay and incentives concerns. Despite these obstacles, the ANA represents the best indigenous solution for Afghanistan, as an effective tool of the central government in waging an effective counterinsurgency.

Counterinsurgency and the Way Ahead

Josiah Harlan, perhaps the first American to set foot in Afghanistan, made some telling observations as a foreign intermediary while serving as a soldier of fortune and eventually as aide-de-camp to Dost Mohammed Khan in Kabul from 1835-1839. Upon returning to the United States in 1841, Harlan penned an account of his time in South Asia entitled, *A Memoir of India and Afghanistan, with Observations on the Present Exciting and Critical State and Future Prospects of Those Countries*. The following passage provides harsh criticism of the British while simultaneously providing a base to draw contemporary similarities.

“Mark the result- they planned an Avghan war – they marched into the country, with scarcely any opposition, when had a thousand rifles taken possession of the mountain passes, they could not have set their feet in that country. The Lord allowed them to go in and set themselves down. Depending on their own strength they felt secure; they thought of sending home some of the troops, and lo! When they thought they had by their own arms accomplished a great victory, they find themselves surrounded by countless warlike men, many of whom will take their heart's blood rather than surrender their land to Christians; and now, they have got into difficulty, how shall they get out?...There they are, they went on their own accord. How they will get out, or what they will do time alone will

make manifest.”⁴⁴

Inadequate commitment of resources (troops and money) may frequently be traced to an underestimation of the task at hand. Counterinsurgent campaigns need to establish and maintain their will and desire to win. Historically, counterinsurgent doctrine requires a minimum force ratio of 10:1 over the opponents to win. Adequate funding and economic resources must also be paired with troop strength in order to achieve success against an insurgency. Finding the right balance of troop strength in relation to just the right amount of financial commitment by the counterinsurgency is necessary to wage an effective campaign.

An effective counterinsurgent campaign from the annals of history is the model of the British during the Boer War in South Africa at the end of the nineteenth century. The British during the Boer War successfully implemented a blockhouse system, eventually encompassing over 8,000 blockhouses and some 6,400 kilometers of barbed wire; which effectively secured the porous boundaries. The success of the French in securing their borders within Algeria, against external support from Tunisia and Morocco, enabled French forces to concentrate efforts elsewhere as opposed to border security. Similarly, a negotiated border settlement between Afghanistan and Pakistan in order to officially demarcate the *de facto* border of the Durand Line would foster better control and deny external support from breaching the Afghanistan border. A current relevant paradigm is the Indian efforts in securing their international boundary with Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK). Violent activities in the Indian state of Jammu & Kashmir have been on a steady decline since the completion of the 550 kilometer long fence built along the Line of Control (LoC) with Pakistan in 2004. The Indian Union Minister of State, Chaman Lal Gupta, has said that insurgency would not survive when routes are blocked and the supply of arms and ammunition is cut off. The Indian constructed LoC fence has enhanced the Indian

⁴⁴ Harlan, Josiah, *A Memoir of India and Afghanistan, with Observations on the Present Exciting and Critical State and Future Prospects of Those Countries* (Philadelphia: J. Dobson, 1842) 207-208. as found <http://books.google.com/books?id=VtMWAAAQAAJ&dq=A+Memoir+of+India+and+Afghanistan>

Army's capability to detect and intercept infiltrators offering external support to the Kashmiri insurgents. History is replete with historical examples that demonstrate defended and sealed borders during a counterinsurgency effectively severs international support of insurgents by denying cross border safe havens and resupply. Securing the borders enables the ANA to cut the wellspring of insurgent reinforcements and reorient domestically at quelling insurgent violence.

The U.S. has reasserted under the Obama administration that cross border strikes by unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) will continue to strike at cross border camps in Pakistan. However, Operation Enduring Freedom efforts in Afghanistan are not encountering the levels of success in comparison to efforts in Iraq. The United States and its coalition military efforts have entered the eighth year of conflict. Operation Enduring Freedom casualties as of 19 December 2008 were 625 fatalities and 2,605 wounded in action.⁴⁵ U.S. and coalition forces remain garrisoned primarily in urban centers while lawlessness in the rural areas still exists. A resurgent al-Qa'ida linked Taliban has regained a foothold in the country and are increasing their insurgency efforts. Three viable options of counterinsurgency success as drawn from military history that warrant further consideration in this struggle include the following: isolate and prevent external assistance, reestablish the rule of law in order to provide security to the local populace and for the U.S. led coalition to commit sufficient resources.

Current requests from U.S. military commanders on the ground in Afghanistan are for approximately 20,000-30,000 additional troops to fight the counterinsurgency. "The U.S. military is stretched so thin-there are still 150,000 troops in Iraq- that it simply may not have the reinforcements available anytime soon. "Unfortunately, we don't have them all sitting at the ready," Pentagon spokesman Geoff Morrell said. It has been estimated that about 70 ANA soldiers can be trained, paid

⁴⁵ <http://www.defenselink.mil/news/casualty.pdf>

and equipped for the cost for one U.S. soldier for a year.”⁴⁶ The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Mike Mullen has said that Afghanistan is an economy of force operation. The U.S. and its coalition will get far more value for their defense dollar spending in Afghanistan if they incorporate the training program for the ANA with a surge in military trainers. David Kilcullen says the current U.S. approach is "enemy-centric."⁴⁷ Kilcullen says the U.S. needs to isolate the militants from the rest of the population — in large part by creating links with the local people by learning their ways, their relations with other tribes and trying to provide justice. “He says that often it is the Taliban that has filled that vacuum. The best way to build those links, Kilcullen says, is to deploy in the communities.”⁴⁸ The ultimate goal must be to fully train the ANA and make it a self sustaining force and able to stabilize and defend Afghanistan by the end of FY2010. The June 2008 Government Accountability Office Report to Congress calls for a time line of U.S. troop withdrawal by FY2019. An economy of force operation can be achieved only through an efficient training plan out of sheer necessity as the U.S. simply does not have enough active duty troops to wage a two front war. Therefore, it remains fundamental that a priority must be placed on the enabling of the ANA to assume mission readiness across the board in order to become an effective agent of change. Afghan military history has proven that a foreign military force will not be successful; however, the verdict remains undetermined if a legitimate Afghan military force can succumb its own fellow kinsmen in an effort to restore peace and tranquility to this war torn nation.

VI. Conclusion

“Success is in Afghanistan (inside of Pakistan) that we have defeated al-Qa'ida and international terrorism which threatens our country and therefore, in order to achieve that creating the conditions in

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Jackie Northam, *Troops Must Gain Afghans' Trust, One Expert Says*. NPR, Washington, D.C. 23FEB2009. <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=102353803>

⁴⁸ Ibid.

Afghanistan so that we don't have the environment which pervaded in the 1990's, which allowed al-Qa'ida and international terrorists to have open sanctuarie...an open safe haven in Afghanistan”⁴⁹

-Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry

Without adequate training or mentoring the ANA's ability to take the lead in security operations will be delayed. There is an undercurrent in defense circles that an increase in U.S. combat troop strength will actually turn the tide of Afghan public opinions against President Karzai and his western oriented government as well as further inflame the Taliban insurgency. The Taliban could capitalize on Karzai as a western puppet influenced by the West. President Karzai's attempt for early elections was a feeble attempt to show the world otherwise; however, the powers that be kept the election slated for August. This power play perhaps indicates that Karzai is a weak and ineffective ruler and strengthens the rhetoric of the insurgency. The ANA needs time to grow and come into its own, but there is no better legitimizer than “trial by fire.” The Government Accountability Office Report to Congress specifically cites a clear insufficient number of embedded trainers and coalition mentors deployed to assist specifically with the training of the ANA. According to the June 2008 GAO report, “in August 2007, Defense officials stated 73 U.S. embedded training and coalition mentoring teams were needed to assist the development of the ANA; however, Defense officials projected that by December 2008, 103 teams would be needed. Without additional training and mentoring personnel to meet this increased need, delays in ANA development will likely be exacerbated.”⁵⁰

History provides many examples of failed foreign invasions and occupations in Afghanistan. The United States of America must study the history of Afghanistan and not fall into the trap of hubris and operate under the false notion that it can alone win the counterinsurgency here. To the contrary, the

⁴⁹ Karl Eikenberry , Afghanistan Ambassadorial Confirmation Hearing to Senate Foreign Relations Committee 26MAR09. (URL: <http://www.cspan.org/watch/watch.aspx?MediaID=HP-R-16789>)

⁵⁰ US Government Accountability Office, “Afghanistan Security.” June 2008, 26.

U.S. will not win the counterinsurgency effort; however, it can enable the ANA through embedded trainers so that Afghans may defeat their own countrymen and deny the foreign militant extremists that foster instability. The Afghan people must invigorate new institutions created with foreign aid donations. The Afghan insurgency can only be overcome with the support of the Afghan people, because they hold the key to legitimacy. In the 1939 book *India's Northwest Frontier*, Sir William Barton made an ominous statement, “The Afghans of the Frontier have waited for over a century and a half for the great leader to weld together once more the empire of the Durani from the Sutlej or at least the from the Indus to the Persian border. The man and the hour are not yet. But should the British Empire collapse as did the empire of the Mughals, then it is certain that the Afghans and Pashtuns together would make a bid for the empire of the north.”⁵¹ Security in Afghanistan and true military self sufficiency can only be achieved with the increased commitment of military training teams not additional combat troops of conventional armies garrisoned in urban centers. An ANA trained in small light infantry tactics is the best approach for gaining ground in the insurgency. Only the Afghan National Army, not a conventional foreign army, deployed away from urban garrisons has the legitimacy and wearwithall to be successful in securing Afghanistan. Security is a bottom-up process in so that a secure Afghan population will be enabled to foster an effective Afghan economy and Afghan government. Furthermore, the U.S. Department of Defense must fully commit the allotted number of training teams in order to fulfill its pledge to train the ANA. “Afghanistan has, after all, stymied would-be conquerors since Alexander the Great. It’s always the same story; the invaders (British, Soviets) control the cities, but not the countryside. And eventually, the invaders don’t even control the cities, and are sent packing. Think Iraq was hard? Afghanistan, former Secretary of State Colin Powell argues, will be “much harder.”⁵²

⁵¹ William Barton, *India's Northwest Frontier* (London: John Murray, 1939) 101.

⁵² Helene Cooper, “Fearing Another Quagmire in Afghanistan,” *New York Times*, January 24, 2009. (URL:

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