

**A FORCE IN FRAGMENTS:  
RECONSTITUTING THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY**

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## A FORCE IN FRAGMENTS: RECONSTITUTING THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

For nearly a decade, the Afghan military has been promoted as the cornerstone of counterinsurgency in the country. Billed as a rare success story in a conflict with few bright spots, the Afghan armed forces will undoubtedly prove pivotal to stabilising Afghanistan. Yet nine years after the fall of the Taliban, there appears to be little agreement between the government of President Hamid Karzai and its international backers on what kind of army the country needs, how to build it or which elements of the insurgency the Afghan army should be fighting. Persistent structural flaws meanwhile have undermined the military's ability to operate independently. Ethnic frictions and political factionalism among high-level players in the Ministry of Defence (MOD) and the general staff have also stunted the army's growth. As a result, the army is a fragmented force, serving disparate interests, and far from attaining the unified national character needed to confront numerous security threats. There is a strong need to strengthen civilian input into military development, confront corruption and factionalism within the MOD and general staff and to place sustainability of the armed forces at the forefront of Afghanistan's national security strategy.

The Afghan National Army's (ANA) strategic role in stabilising Afghanistan should not be underestimated. History has shown that failure to build a cohesive national army has often led to the diffusion of state force among disparate actors, hastening the collapse of governments in Kabul. The push to build a unified national military in service of a civilian government has frequently clashed with the tendency to create militias in a bid to insulate the state from internal and external threats. The tension between these polar conceptions has had far reaching implications not only for internal security but also for Afghanistan's relationships with external actors.

ANA development and deployment have dragged under these tensions as well as patchwork command structures, with little coordination between NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), U.S. forces and the MOD in the early years of army development. The lack of consensus between Kabul, Washington and Brussels

has hobbled the Afghan military's capacity to respond effectively to threats confronting the state. Failure to develop a sustainable, comprehensive long-term defence posture could risk the army's disintegration after the withdrawal of international forces. Similarly, tensions between the Afghan military's historical roots in Soviet-style over-centralised and top-heavy command and control structures and the more fluid organisation of Western militaries has often pitted the U.S. and NATO against the very Afghan officials they seek to influence and support.

Despite billions of dollars of international investment, army combat readiness has been undermined by weak recruitment and retention policies, inadequate logistics, insufficient training and equipment and inconsistent leadership. International support for the ANA must therefore be targeted not just toward increasing the quantity of troops but enhancing the quality of the fighting force. Given the slow pace of economic development and the likelihood of an eventual drawdown of Western resources, any assessment of the future shape of the army must also make fiscal as well as political sense. Although recent efforts to consolidate the training command structure under the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) are encouraging, the U.S. emphasis on rapid expansion of the army, in response to the growing insurgent threat, could strain NTM-A resources and outpace the capacity of Afghan leaders to manage an inherently unwieldy system.

These shortcomings, combined with the international community's haphazard approach to demobilisation and reintegration (DR) has undermined the army's professionalism and capacity to counter the insurgency. The proliferation of weaponry provided by Kabul's international backers also feeds an illicit shadow economy, which further empowers patronage networks within the military. Kabul powerbrokers are distributing the spoils of increased NATO spending on army development among their constituents in the officer corps, fuelling ethnic and political factionalism within army ranks.

These developments are all the more problematic in light of current proposals to reintegrate and reconcile elements of the insurgency. Limited progress on dissolution of illegal armed groups and reintegration of insurgents has given Kabul wide berth to continue its time-honoured tactic of exploiting divisions to consolidate the government's hold over power. Government-backed reintegration programs have emerged as little more than distribution of patronage by a few Afghan elites. With Taliban groups in control of large swathes of the country since around 2007, many Afghan military leaders believe that in the current climate of high instability, the time is not right for negotiating with the insurgents, and that to do so would be from a position of weakness and not strength. Most also strongly reject proposals to reintegrate the Taliban into the ANA.

Where the Afghan government might once have had limited potential to be a legitimate guarantor of a broad negotiated peace, the Karzai regime's unrestrained pursuit of power and wealth has bankrupted its credibility. Under these conditions, reconciliation and reintegration, as currently conceived by Kabul and the U.S.-led coalition, does not represent a route to a permanent peaceful settlement of the conflict. Nor is it an exit strategy. Rather, it is an invitation for the country to descend further into the turmoil that led the Taliban to give succour to al-Qaeda and other violent extremists in the first place. The current debate on reconciliation with the Taliban also threatens to widen factionalism within the army.

Greater civilian control of and input into the Afghan military is imperative. The Afghan government must be encouraged to strengthen its Office of National Security Council (ONSC) and to forge more dynamic institutional links between its members, the defence ministry and parliament. Failure to increase civilian input in shaping the army will heighten Afghanistan's historic dependence on external actors and make it a permanent pawn of regional and international power games.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **To the Government and President of Afghanistan:**

1. Reshape the management of the ANA and MOD by strengthening legal and administrative frameworks to depoliticise the military, including:
  - a) implementing policies and administrative procedures with the aim of delegating authority to the field, giving greater operational control to the chief of army staff, and corps, battalion and company commanders;
  - b) conducting a thorough review of MOD and ANA general staff leadership with the goal of reducing factional tensions; and
  - c) ordering a full review of military justice codes and procedures, in consultation with parliamentary committees on defence, internal security and justice.
2. Prioritise oversight and accountability within the ANA and MOD by:
  - a) making appointments of the MOD inspector general and deputy inspector general subject to parliamentary approval, with time-limited terms. Criteria for nomination and appointment should emphasise higher education including graduation from university or the military academy and proven administrative experience;
  - b) authorising the MOD inspector general's office to issue orders requiring respondents to produce material, information, files, and/or evidence deemed relevant to a particular audit or inquiry while imposing stiff penalties for non-compliance; and
  - c) enhancing and enforcing penalties for embezzlement, misuse of equipment and dereliction of duty.
3. Institute regular and broad national review of defence policies by:
  - a) ensuring professionalism and proper vetting of members of the ONSC by requiring council leaders to hold university degrees; requiring parliamentary approval for appointments for both the National Security Adviser and the Deputy National Security Adviser; and enforcing prohibitions against nepotism;
  - b) authorising the ONSC to issue orders requiring respondents of any government agency to produce material or information deemed relevant to its work, which should include publishing regular national threat assessment reports and national security strategy policy papers; and
  - c) creating special, term-limited parliamentary liaisons for the upper and lower house of parliament, tasked with transmitting legislative positions on defence policy to the ONSC and regularly reporting back to the defence, internal affairs and justice committees of both houses.
4. Suspend reintegration and reconciliation programs until benchmarks for implementation can be established and agreed in consultation with civil society and all three branches of government, the executive, legislature and judiciary, which should include:

- a) repealing the amnesty law and establishing a transitional justice mechanism to ensure that potential candidates for reintegration and reconciliation can be held accountable for past actions;
- b) creating rigorous vetting and verification mechanisms to ensure that participants adhere to guidelines formulated in consultation with the ministry of justice, the ministry of defence and civil society organisations; and
- c) an intra-ministry assessment of the broad political and economic impact of potential reintegration and reconciliation programs at the local, provincial and national levels.

### **To the Ministry of Defence:**

5. Streamline administrative structures and clarify lines of authority by defining departmental and staff roles and responsibilities, creating job descriptions and linking appointments, promotions and benefits to merit.
6. Tighten controls on allocation of resources, particularly weaponry and fuel. Enforce rules regarding the misappropriation of military resources and implement tighter inventory procedures and tracking mechanisms for the storage, transfer and repair of weaponry and other materiel.
7. Adopt and implement a comprehensive pension plan to facilitate opportunities for promotion and advancement.
8. Institute and enforce more vigorous review of contracting and procurement procedures to discourage nepotism and corruption.
9. Support military investigators, prosecutors and defence attorneys by ensuring that all are accorded full and proper access to evidence, including transport to and from investigative sites, access to documents and/or individuals related to a particular inquiry.

### **To the Parliament:**

10. Parliament must play a more proactive role in responding to the country's defence needs by:
  - a) urgently enacting pending legislation to standardise ANA personnel management;
  - b) guaranteeing the welfare of ANA personnel during and after their term of service;
  - c) enhancing the role of the ANA general staff and field commanders in appointments, promotion and disciplinary measures, including termination of duty; and
  - d) consulting regularly with the ONSC on legislative issues pertaining to national security and defence.

### **To NATO and the U.S.:**

11. Increase investment in MOD reform and building the ONSC's capacity by:
  - a) assigning additional civilian advisers to MOD and regional field counterparts on the general staff, with particular emphasis on advisers with expertise in accounting, procurement, logistics, supply and engineering; and
  - b) prioritise training for ONSC leaders and for leaders of interagency working groups assigned under the ONSC.
12. Consider expansion of the NATO Trust Fund to increase funding for the army's infrastructure development and the financing of army pensions, while assessing the financial sustainability of the ANA, including necessary funding for pensions and benefits, particularly for the rank and file.
13. Conduct a broad review of the training curriculum with a view to eliminating illiteracy among new recruits as well as implementing remedial reading courses for enlisted soldiers and increasing the army's logistical capacity.
14. Outline benchmarks for transition to full Afghan control of the military, including the adoption of appropriate status of forces agreements.

**Kabul/Brussels, 12 May 2010**

## A FORCE IN FRAGMENTS: RECONSTITUTING THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY

### I. INTRODUCTION

Since the ouster of the Taliban in 2001, the Afghan National Army (ANA) has developed its operational capacity and increased its numbers under the international community's direction.<sup>1</sup> The ANA is generally perceived as far more competent and functional than other state institutions, particularly the Afghan National Police (ANP). The army is believed to play a vital role in stabilisation despite slow progress in developing its full potential. Within two months of his appointment as ISAF Commander in June 2009, General Stanley A. McChrystal identified the under-resourcing of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) as one of the chief obstacles to a successful "population-centric" counterinsurgency campaign. Subsequently, he called for "a radically improved partnership at every level"<sup>2</sup> with Afghan forces and an increase in ANA troop strength from the estimated 90,000 forces to 240,000.<sup>3</sup> While a positive change from the "light footprint" approach of the early years of the U.S.-led intervention, a greater investment of resources in ANA development will fail to yield the desired results without comprehensive security sector reform.

The U.S. has contributed more to security sector development than other nations with \$25.2 billion provided to the Afghan Security Forces Fund from the beginning of the U.S. engagement to April 2010, of which more than half has targeted the ANA.<sup>4</sup> Despite the billions of dollars

spent, the army's expansion is likely to yield diminishing returns because of the Karzai government's failure to check ethnic factionalism, with senior military commanders, backed by powerbrokers, engaged in dangerous political rivalries. The ministry of defence (MOD), in particular, which manages many of the military's main administrative functions,<sup>5</sup> while the general staff oversees operations, has played the role of spoiler rather than facilitator of army development.

The MOD's early domination by commanders loyal to the predominantly Tajik Shuray-e Nazar-e Shamali, founded by late Northern Alliance leader Ahmad Shah Massoud, combined with the bureaucratic stagnation inherited from the Soviet era, impeded initial reform efforts. The parceling out of army resources among a handful of powerbrokers has further reinforced ethnic factionalism, weakening the military's fragile foundations. These systemic flaws have undercut institutional loyalty, resulting in high attrition rates, and limiting the army's operational effectiveness. In the words of a retired military officer: "From the lower officers upward, it is not a national army. It is a political army. You have people working for different factions within the ministry of defence, so today what you have is an army that serves individuals not the nation".<sup>6</sup>

With the U.S. focused on its much larger military engagement in Iraq, the ANA's development occurred hap-

<sup>1</sup> For earlier Crisis Group analysis on ANA development and security sector reform in Afghanistan, see Crisis Group Asia Report N°65, *Disarmament and Reintegration in Afghanistan*, 30 September 2003 and Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°35, *Afghanistan: Getting Disarmament Back on Track*, 23 February 2005.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, "Commander's Initial Assessment", Commander NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), Afghanistan, U.S. Forces, Afghanistan (Reference Secretary of Defence Memorandum, 26 June 2009; Subject: Initial United States Forces-Afghanistan) 30 August 2009.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, Annex G-1.

<sup>4</sup> Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 30 April 2010, p. 6 and Appendix B. The supplemental and regular

appropriations request for FY2010 and FY2011 in the Obama administration budget would add another \$14 billion for the ANSF. In 2007, the NATO ANA Trust Fund was established to assist with the costs associated with the delivery and installation of donated equipment. In March 2009, the fund was expanded to long-term support of the ANA, including funding for infrastructure projects. NATO estimates an annual requirement of \$1.8 billion to sustain an army of 134,000. According to an October 2009 NATO factsheet, about \$32 million has been contributed to the fund since 2007 and about \$298 million pledged.<sup>5</sup> The Afghan army includes the MOD, command staff, combat units and the army air corps. Combat forces are assigned to six regional corps commands based in Kabul, Gardez, Lashkar Gah, Kandahar, Herat and Mazar-e Sharif as well as the Capital Division in Kabul and Special Operations Forces distributed across the country.

<sup>6</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 12 November 2009.

hazardly and with limited international funding and manpower. Timelines and troop level targets were subject to the whims of President Hamid Karzai's government, which exploited divisions among NATO partners. From 2005 onwards, NATO and the U.S., through the Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan (CSTC-A), have increased training and equipment, essentially attempting to revamp the ANA from scratch.

Although the U.S. has provided more than \$10 billion to develop the ANA between 2002 and 2008,<sup>7</sup> and 46 NATO and non-NATO nations have donated \$822 million in equipment to the ANSF,<sup>8</sup> this considerable investment has failed to achieve the desired results because of chronic shortfalls in training personnel, faulty equipment, slow infrastructural development, poor logistics, and the crippling army attrition rates.<sup>9</sup> A recent U.S. Department of Defense review concluded that these shortcomings “have stretched CSTC-A’s current train and equip system to the edge of acceptable limits”, and has jeopardised the army’s “force quality and long-term viability”.<sup>10</sup> These concerns also come at a time when both ISAF and the UN are reporting an increase in insurgent attacks and a 40 per cent increase in security incidents in the first quarter of 2010.<sup>11</sup> The Afghan military is currently incapable of fighting the insurgency on its own and is far from attaining the num-

bers and operational capacity needed to transition from international to full Afghan control. With the ANA now slated to grow from a reported 100,131 to 134,000 by October 2010, and to 171,600 by 2011,<sup>12</sup> the Karzai government and its international allies could be tempted to prioritise quantity over quality. The short-term need for a force large enough to combat the insurgency could trump the long-term need for a professional military.

Troop strength, operational milestones, ethnic composition, attrition rates and other quantitative assessments have dominated analysis of the army. These elements are important but they are not on their own credible yardsticks of progress. Scant attention has been paid to qualitative evaluations or the legal, political and strategic foundations on which the military has been built. MOD’s ability to combat corruption, reduce waste, enhance its administrative capacity, grow credible leadership and account for and manage both inventory and personnel are equally important indicators of progress as is the Afghan government’s ability to accurately assess its long- and short-term national security needs and to meet those needs in a timely manner.

With insurgent infiltration into the ANA reportedly on the rise,<sup>13</sup> new programs aimed at reintegrating insurgents into the Afghan mainstream and reconciling with upper echelon Taliban commanders, as announced during the London conference in January 2010, will undermine efforts to reform the military. Given the failure of past reintegration programs, any new initiative may well expand rather than reduce the threats the army is training to combat, as well as further complicate the overall security picture.

Many Afghan military leaders argue that in the current climate of high instability, the time is not right for negotiating with the insurgents, and that to do so would be from

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<sup>7</sup>“Afghanistan Security”, U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO), GAO 08-661, 18 June 2008.

<sup>8</sup>“United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghanistan National Security Forces”, Report to Congress in accordance with the 2008 National Defence Authorisation Act, June 2008, p. 10.

<sup>9</sup>U.S. Ambassador Karl Eikenberry, State Department Cable, Kabul 3572, 6 November 2009, p. 2. The current attrition rate is around 25 per cent. Methods of calculating ANA attrition rates have varied widely over the years. Attrition rates can represent an amalgam of figures that include or exclude measures such as the annual absent without leave (AWOL) rates, reenlistment rates, casualty rates and estimated desertion rates. In a 6 January Crisis Group interview in Kabul, Major General Zahir Azimi, chief spokesman for MOD, estimated the annual attrition rate at around 10 per cent. In a Crisis Group interview in November 2010 in Kabul, however, a senior U.S. diplomat placed the figure at 19 per cent. In a media interview in March 2010, Lt. General William B. Caldwell, IV, commander of National Training Mission–Afghanistan (NTM-A)/CSTC-A, estimated an 18 per cent attrition rate. See David Brunnstrom, “Reluctant Pashtuns hamper Afghan recruitment drive”, Reuters, 3 March 2010. The rate of 25 per cent is based on a 2009 analysis conducted by Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, which include AWOL, reenlistment, casualty and desertion rates. See Thomas H. Johnson and M. Chris Mason, “Refighting the Last War: Afghanistan and the Vietnam Template”, *Military Review*, November–December 2009, p. 5.

<sup>10</sup>“Report on the Assessment of U.S. and Coalition Plans to Train, Equip and Field the Afghan National Security Forces”, Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Defense, Report No. SPO-2009-007, p. 89.

<sup>11</sup>SIGAR, 30 April 2010, op. cit., p. 51.

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<sup>12</sup>Estimates of the actual number of soldiers on the army rolls vary widely and data provided by MOD about active force numbers is unreliable and inconsistent. According to a fact-sheet produced by the NTM-A, circulated in January 2010, the number of Afghan troops had reached 100,131 by 6 January 2010. In Crisis Group interviews from June 2009 to January 2010 in Washington DC and Kabul, U.S. and Afghan officials indicated that the actual number of soldiers on the rolls was often considerably less than reported because soldiers on leave or those believed to have deserted were often included in estimates. In a 23 June 2009 Crisis Group interview in Washington DC, a senior U.S. military official said that there were reports that Afghan commanders in the south had continually reported absentee soldiers as present on their rolls in order to collect the soldiers’ pay. Accounts of such “ghost soldiers” were corroborated in subsequent Crisis Group interviews, including a 22 January 2010 interview with an Afghan army officer in Mazar-e Sharif.

<sup>13</sup>Crisis Group interviews, senior Afghan military officers, Herat, 19 January 2010.

a position of weakness and not strength. Most also strongly reject proposals to reintegrate the Taliban into the ANA.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, corruption and poor governance have sorely eroded the Karzai government's legitimacy, and Karzai's personal standing is at an all-time low after the fraudulent presidential election. The president therefore lacks the credibility to guide, let alone guarantee, a broad negotiated peace. Under these conditions, reintegration and reconciliation, as currently conceived by Kabul and the U.S.-led coalition, would not result in a peaceful settlement of the conflict.

This report examines the ANA's development, assesses the corrosive effects of an arcane military bureaucracy, ethnic factionalism and corruption, and identifies measures to improve cohesion through legislative initiatives and the empowerment of government institutions. Interviews were conducted in Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, Kandahar and Washington DC with Afghan and international government and military officials.

## II. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

### A. MODERNISING THE MILITARY: 1929-1979

Since King Amanullah's reign (1919-1929),<sup>15</sup> the evolution of Afghanistan's military has been marked by several fitful formations and rapid disintegrations. Foreign interventions and regional tensions have often exacerbated longstanding factional strains among Afghan elites, with disastrous effects on the army. Historically, internal competition for control over the state's security apparatus has shaped the army's relations with external powers such as Russia, Pakistan and the United States, and resulted in the proliferation of rival military factions, whose dependence on foreign patronage has often negated allegiance to the state.

From the late 1920s to the early 1970s, national security agendas were determined by internal struggles for power among Afghan elites, the leveraging of external military aid to gain or retain power and conflict with neighbouring states over disputed borders. Coming to power after the 1928-1929 civil war, King Nadir Shah launched the first twentieth century attempt to scale up the military to a modern, national force. After being drastically cut to 11,000 by Nadir's predecessor, Amanullah, the army reached 70,000 by 1933,<sup>16</sup> with conscription ensuring a steady stream of recruits. In 1941, the army adopted a more comprehensive draft system that diversified its ranks.<sup>17</sup> As Afghanistan's conflict with Pakistan over the Durand Line escalated after the partition of British India in 1947, the Cold War was to shape national security imperatives and transform the Afghan military.<sup>18</sup>

As Pakistan joined the U.S.-led Cold War alliances, the Southeast Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO) and Central Treaty Organisation (CENTO) in 1954 and 1955 respec-

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<sup>15</sup> While the creation of modern Afghanistan began under Amir Abdul Rahman (1880-1901) the British controlled the country's external relations and dominated internal politics until the Anglo-Afghan Treaty of 1921 solidified independence from Britain's control. It also reinforced the southern and eastern borders, created by the 1893 treaty between Afghanistan and British India, which formed the basis for what has since been known as the Durand Line.

<sup>16</sup> Ali A. Jalali, "Rebuilding Afghanistan's National Army", *Parameters*, Autumn 2002, pp. 76-77.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 79-80.

<sup>18</sup> For more on the impact of Pakistan's independence and the Cold War on Afghanistan, see Amin Saikal, "The Afghanistan-Pakistan Border and Afghanistan's Long Term Stability" in Wolfgang Danspeckgruber and Robert P. Finn (eds.), *Building State and Security in Afghanistan* (Princeton, 2007), pp. 215-225; Barnett Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan*, 2nd edition (New Haven, 2002), pp. 58-73; and Stephen Tanner, *Afghanistan: A Military History from Alexander the Great to the Fall of the Taliban* (New York, 2002), pp. 221-242.

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<sup>14</sup> Thomas Harding, "Afghan army to accept former Islamic militants", *The Telegraph*, 5 March 2010.



tively, Afghan Prime Minister Sardar Mohammad Daoud Khan looked towards the Soviet Union for military aid. Although the U.S. provided millions of dollars in developmental assistance to Afghanistan, the Soviets became the principal donor of military aid from the 1950s to 1979,<sup>19</sup> with the balance of external influence tipping decisively toward the Soviet Union, particularly after the 1956 aid agreement. The Afghan army and air force subsequently came under strong Soviet influence, leaving a lasting imprint on Afghanistan's defence posture.

The 1956 agreement led to the addition of key military assets such as T-54 and T-34 tanks, and various rotary and fixed wing aircraft. By 1965, the air force had 100 aircraft — all Soviet supplied — including several MiG-15 jet fighters.<sup>20</sup> From 1956 to 1979, Soviet military aid reached about \$1.25 billion. While rank-and-file soldiers were pressed into service under a compulsory draft, hundreds of officers obtained military training and scholarships in the Soviet Union, with more than 3,700 Afghan military personnel trained there.<sup>21</sup> During the 1960s as Soviet aid and influence increased, troop numbers shot up to 98,000.<sup>22</sup>

Military factions also developed in this time. From 1965 to 1979, structural flaws and internal power clashes made the armed forces vulnerable to outside influence. These factions were also a fundamental cause of the Afghan state gradually losing its monopoly over the use of force. Although troops were prohibited from participating in politics, the military played an active role, helping Daoud, for instance, to depose his cousin King Zahir Shah in July 1973. Promoting handpicked officers and purging those believed to be of dubious loyalty, Daoud restructured the military high command. Members of the Peoples' Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA), a radical leftist party, represented in the military through Soviet-trained personnel, were also included in his government.<sup>23</sup> Although he subsequently turned on his leftist allies, the PDPA's access to power enabled it to penetrate the armed forces further.

In April 1978, the PDPA ousted Daoud in a coup,<sup>24</sup> with internal splits between the party's Parcham and Khalq factions subsequently echoing the splits among military elites.<sup>25</sup> The officer corps was depleted by the political purges that followed, marking a sharp decline in the army's coherence and functioning. Indeed the army had shrunk to less than half of its authorised size of 90,000 by the time the 17th Infantry Division revolted against the PDPA government in Herat in March 1979.<sup>26</sup> With internal divisions threatening the PDPA government's hold over power, the Soviet Union intervened militarily in 1979 but failed to prevent the conflict from escalating as resistance grew in the countryside, spearheaded by Islamist parties.

## **B. THE MILITARY'S DISINTEGRATION: 1979-2001**

Persecuted by Daoud, major Sunni Islamist factions such as the Jamiat-e Islami party led by Burhanuddin Rabbani, and the Hizb-e Islami party led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar had conducted a war of attrition against the regime from Pakistani soil and with Pakistani support since the 1970s. After the Soviet intervention, they and other Sunni Islamist parties became the main opposition to the Soviet-supported PDPA, backed in their anti-Soviet "jihad" by countries as diverse as the United States, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and China.<sup>27</sup>

The mujahidin's rise was paralleled by the abrupt implosion of the Afghan military. In January 1980, a revolt of the 15th Division in Kandahar sparked a succession of military mutinies across the country. The Soviets relied heavily on the remainder of the Afghan infantry to counter the mujahidin but poorly trained and ill-equipped conscripts were ineffective and prone to desertion.<sup>28</sup>

The Soviet withdrawal in 1989 brought about a brief overlap of interests between some Afghan army officers and the mujahidin. The failed coup of March 1990, for instance, was planned by Defence Minister Shahnawaz Tanai in concert with Hekmatyar, with the Pakistan's

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<sup>19</sup> Tanner, op. cit., p. 226.

<sup>20</sup> Musa Khan Jalalzai, *Afghan National Army: State Security, Nuclear Neighbors and Internal Security Threats* (Lahore, 2004/2005), pp. 30-31.

<sup>21</sup> Henry S. Bradsher, *Afghan Communism and Soviet Intervention* (Oxford, 1999), pp. 2-3.

<sup>22</sup> Jalali, op. cit., pp. 76-77.

<sup>23</sup> Founded in 1965, the PDPA split into two factions, Parcham and Khalq.

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<sup>24</sup> Soviet-trained officers such as Watanjar, then deputy commander of the 4th Armoured Brigade, and Qadir, then commander of the Afghan air corps and one-time leader of the Afghan Armies Revolutionary Organisation, led the April 1978 coup that toppled Daoud and resulted in his assassination.

<sup>25</sup> Crisis Group interview, Shahnawaz Tanai, former minister of defence, 25 November 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Ali Ahmad Jalali and Lester W. Grau, *The Other Side of the Mountain: Mujahideen Tactics in the Soviet-Afghan War* (Fort Leavenworth, 1998), p. xviii.

<sup>27</sup> See Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°39, *Political Parties in Afghanistan*, 2 June 2005.

<sup>28</sup> Jalali and Grau, op. cit., p. 315.

military intelligence agency, the Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate's (ISI) backing.<sup>29</sup> Deprived of Soviet support, Dr. Najibullah's government collapsed in 1992, ushering a new phase of the civil war. As thousands of Afghan soldiers joined armed groups led by mujahidin commanders who fought for control of Kabul, the country disintegrated politically as did the Afghan military. While an estimated 262,000 had served in pro-government militias or the official army by 1988, mujahidin forces reached nearly 340,000 personnel by 1991.<sup>30</sup>

The chaos that ensued after Najibullah's ouster spurred the birth of the Taliban movement in 1994, which rose to power under its Kandahari leader Mullah Mohammad Omar, a one time commander allied with the Hizb-e Islami-Khalis faction.<sup>31</sup> Within two years of their emergence in the south, the Taliban seized the cities of Herat, Kandahar and Kabul, with Pakistan and Saudi Arabia's covert support. Drawing on an obscurantist brand of Deobandi Islam, superimposed on the traditionalist tribal mores of *Pashtunwali*, the Taliban enforced harsh rule across large swathes of the country, eventually routing resistance from the Northern Alliance and other non-Pashtun groups by 1998.<sup>32</sup>

The Pashtun-dominated Taliban emerged as the proxy of choice for Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, but failed to gain international support and recognition for their regime. Increasingly isolated and recognised only by Saudi Arabia, Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates, the Taliban government eventually earned the ire of the international community. By 1996, the Taliban's relationship with al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden was well cemented. In 1999, the UN Security Council issued sanctions against the Taliban, calling for it to hand over bin Laden,<sup>33</sup> followed by a second Security Council resolution in December 2000, calling for an arms embargo against the Tali-

ban.<sup>34</sup> As the Pakistanis continued to back the Taliban, their regional rivals—India, Iran and Russia—began to funnel more funding to the Northern Alliance, the Taliban's chief adversary.<sup>35</sup>

Al-Qaeda's attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon on 11 September 2001 led to a new phase of the Afghan conflict. By the start of the U.S.-led intervention in Afghanistan in October 2001, Afghan anti-Taliban forces comprised dozens of disparate armed factions. The Northern Alliance, whose forces then numbered around 50,000, was the largest U.S.-backed militia to enter Kabul after the fall of the Taliban. Composed largely of Tajiks from the Panjshir Valley and the Shamali Plain, it soon became the key player in shaping the Afghan military, with international support and acquiescence, under defence minister and Panjshiri loyalist Mohammed Qasim Fahim.<sup>36</sup>

Northern Alliance predominance in key security organs such as the military set in motion renewed competition for power among Afghan elites who had during the communist, mujahidin and Taliban eras received at one time or another the support from regional and extra-regional actors. Those who remained on the margins of that competition as the coalition forces entered Afghanistan in October 2001 – largely Pashtuns affiliated with the Taliban and allied groups such as the Islamist network of Jalaluddin Haqqani and his son Sirajuddin and Hizb-e Islami-Gulbuddin – form the bulk of today's insurgency. Remnants of mujahidin militias and the military cadres of earlier armies that evolved out of Afghanistan's tumultuous civil war (1973-2001) therefore permeate both the insurgency and the ANA today.

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<sup>29</sup> Ironically Tanai, a Khalqi, only ten years earlier had fought alongside the Soviets against the mujahidin in his home province of Khost. Ibid, p. 319.

<sup>30</sup> Michael Bhatia and Mark Sedra, *Afghanistan, Arms and Conflict: Armed Groups, Disarmament and Security in a Post-war Society* (New York, 2008), p. 72.

<sup>31</sup> Steve Coll, *Ghost Wars: The Secret History of the CIA, Afghanistan, and Bin Laden, From the Soviet Invasion to September 11, 2001* (New York, 2004), pp. 291-293.

<sup>32</sup> See Crisis Group Asia Report N°158, *Taliban Propaganda: Winning the War of Words?*, 24 July 2008.

<sup>33</sup> On 15 October 1999, the UN Security Council issued Resolution 1267, which condemned "the continuing use of Afghan territory, especially areas controlled by the Taliban, for the sheltering and training of terrorists and planning of terrorist acts" and "deploring the fact that the Taliban continues to provide safe haven to Usama bin Laden and to allow him and others associated with him to operate a network of terrorist training camps from Taliban-controlled territory and to use Afghanistan as a base from which to sponsor international terrorist operations".

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<sup>34</sup> On 13 December 2000, the UN Security Council issued Resolution 1333, which reiterated and reaffirmed Resolution 1267 and called on member states to "prevent the direct or indirect supply, sale and transfer to the territory in Afghanistan under Taliban control, as designated by the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1267 1999, by their nationals or from their territories, or using their flag vessels or aircraft, of arms and related material of all types including weapons and ammunition, military vehicles and equipment, paramilitary equipment, and spare parts for the aforementioned".

<sup>35</sup> Ahmed Rashid, *Descent Into Chaos: How the war against Islamic extremism is being lost in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia* (New York, 2008), p. 20.

<sup>36</sup> Currently vice president under Karzai, Fahim, who headed the Shuray-e Nazar after Ahmad Shah Massoud's assassination, was accused of directing forces under his control to commit war crimes during the civil war of the 1990s. For details on the allegations against Fahim, see "Bloodstained hands: Past atrocities in Kabul and Afghanistan's legacy of impunity", Human Rights Watch, 6 July 2005.

Fahim's efforts to consolidate Shuray-e Nazar's<sup>37</sup> hold on the military also manifested itself in resistance to the UN-backed Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (DDR) program.<sup>38</sup> The program to disarm, demobilise and reintegrate ex-combatants, outlined at the Petersburg conference in 2002 and mandated by presidential decree, stalled for months. Formally launched in April 2003, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)-managed Afghanistan New Beginnings Program (ANBP) aimed at disarming an estimated 100,000 officers and soldiers.<sup>39</sup> The MOD was tasked with identifying Afghan Military Force (AMF) units targeted for disarmament while the establishment of ANA forces was to take place on a parallel track. The AMF units were responsible in turn for providing lists of personnel to be vetted by the government-run Regional Verification Committee (RVC). A soldier or officer verified by the RVC was required to surrender his weapons to a Mobile Disarmament Unit (MDU), which was responsible for collecting, storing and transporting the weapons to Kabul. Demobilised soldiers received a voucher for career counselling, an interim job and in some cases monetary assistance.

But with few effective verification mechanisms in place, the DDR process was far from a guaranteed success. Moreover, the monetary incentives encouraged commanders to submit inflated personnel lists to acquire salaries for non-existent or "ghost" fighters. This practice continues in the ANA today, with regional commanders frequently posting inflated personnel rolls both to hedge against high AWOL rates and to collect salaries for non-existent soldiers.<sup>40</sup>

The lack of checks and balances in the DDR program also contributed to uneven disarmament. Units affiliated with the Northern Alliance often were the last to be demobilised. Much of the downsizing that took place from 2003 to 2005 targeted non-Panjshiri units that were not allied with the Northern Alliance. While MOD leaders resisted DDR efforts for several months, the U.S.-led coalition forces and the Afghan government encouraged the subversion of the process by absorbing some militia members into prominent positions within national and local security structures.

The rapid disintegration of the military under Najibullah in the 1980s and the rise of independent militias during the mujahidin had dampened the prospects of quickly reconstructing a united but ethnically diverse national army. At the time, estimates of the strength of militias ranged from tens of thousands to as high as a million.<sup>41</sup> Arguing that these militias should be included in a standing army of 200,000, Fahim stressed that this would be the fastest route to expand the army and to bring the militias under centralised state control.

Sceptical of integrating the militias into the Afghan army, the U.S. initially supported the establishment of a force of 60,000.<sup>42</sup> U.S. opposition to Fahim's approach grew as the challenges of training or, in many cases, retraining militia personnel and overcoming regional, ethnic and tribal factionalism became evident.<sup>43</sup> These conflicting outlooks were partially – albeit temporarily – resolved at the December 2002 Petersburg conference, which outlined the creation of a multi-ethnic, volunteer army with a force of 70,000 under the command of "legitimate civilian authorities".<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Originally a military coordination council established by Ahmed Shah Massoud during the civil war, Shuray-e Nazar now refers to a loose network of mainly Tajik military and political figures.

<sup>38</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *Empires of Mud* (London, 2009), p. 293.

<sup>39</sup> See Crisis Group Asia Briefing, *Afghanistan: Getting Disarmament Back on Track*, op. cit.

<sup>40</sup> Crisis Group interview, Washington DC, July 2010.

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<sup>41</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, "Military Reform in Afghanistan", in Mark Sedra (ed.), *Confronting Afghanistan's Security Dilemma*, Brief 28, Bonn International Centre for Conversion, September 2003, p. 24.

<sup>42</sup> Anja Manuel and P.W. Singer, "A New Model Afghan Army", *Foreign Affairs*, July/August 2002.

<sup>43</sup> Crisis Group interview, retired senior UK military official, Washington DC, 3 August 2009.

<sup>44</sup> "Rebuilding Afghanistan: Peace and Security", The Petersburg Afghan National Army Decree, 2 December 2002. Projected troop levels have increased progressively since the Petersburg conference. In February 2008, the Joint Coordination Monitoring Board (JCMB) raised the ceiling to 86,000. JCMB, subsequently, increased the goal to 134,000. That number was raised again in January 2010 to 171,600.

### III. INTERNATIONAL FRAMEWORK

After the Taliban's ouster, the need for a cohesive Afghan army was first articulated in the Bonn Agreement of December 2001.<sup>45</sup> In April 2002, a meeting of international donor nations in Geneva established a security reform plan, assigning the U.S. as the lead nation for the development of the Afghan military. The Northern Alliance was dissolved and reformed, under the aegis of the Afghan Interim Administration, into an eight corps structure, comprising about 60,000 troops, which formed the backbone of the fledgling Afghan Military Forces (AMF).

Several months later, during the December 2002 Petersburg conference, security sector reform strategy was further refined and was divided into five "pillars", each with a lead nation in charge: the U.S., the ANA; Germany, the ANP; the UK, counter-narcotics; Italy, the justice sector and Japan, disarmament. The U.S. initially committed \$130 million to ANA development while other nations pledged to donate millions in equipment.<sup>46</sup> Further pledges of \$235 million were made in Geneva in April 2002.<sup>47</sup> However, few of these resources were immediately allocated, and efforts to train Afghan forces faltered.

The U.S.-led coalition's "light footprint" approach had resulted in an under-resourced effort to build the ANA and the ANP.<sup>48</sup> Rather, the focus was on "Operation Enduring Freedom", the U.S.-led military campaign on counterterrorism in the Pashtun belt, in which the U.S. picked and chose allies with checkered and violent histories.<sup>49</sup>

When NATO eventually took command of ISAF in August 2003, the number of troops based outside of Kabul gradually increased but still remained relatively low. This left many Afghans in the southern and eastern Pashtun belt beyond the reach of the international troops' stabilising efforts. Meanwhile, the Bush administration's aversion to nation building and the international community's half-hearted attempts at reconstruction, combined with safe havens and support in neighbouring Pakistan, left

large pockets of the country ungoverned, allowing Taliban insurgents time and space to regroup.<sup>50</sup>

#### A. EARLY DEVELOPMENT

From 2002 to late 2003, Afghan military development followed a three-track course: AMF units deployed under the defence ministry; Afghan troops deployed with U.S. forces; and ANA units under the U.S.-led training mission. Because of its role in helping the U.S.-led forces oust the Taliban, the military's command and control initially fell, as earlier mentioned, under the Northern Alliance's political-military cell, the Shuray-e Nazar. While U.S. and ISAF officials recognised the dangers of ethnic factionalism, rapid rotations of coalition advisory staff and bureaucratic restructuring hampered efforts to address it. Absent a clear commitment by the U.S. and its international partners to building a truly national army, Afghan leaders once again exploited ethnic rivalries to control the armed forces while paying lip service to the goal of creating a multi-ethnic military.

The AMF, which represented the bulk of Afghan security forces, consisted largely of militias that had filled the security vacuum in 2001. Although the number of active militia personnel shrunk from 75,000 in 2002 to 45,000 by the end of 2003, the number of AMF divisions expanded to 40 during roughly the same period.<sup>51</sup> Ostensibly under the defence ministry's control, these militias were structured into regional corps, with one division per province. In practice, the chain of command followed patterns that pre-dated the U.S.-led intervention. Troops were often more loyal to a group or *tanzim* led by a local commander than to national priorities. Under Fahim, AMF units became organs of patronage, rewarding allies and supporters with officer commissions. The result was a weak chain of command over a mix of militias plagued by high desertion rates and low operational capacity.

Initially, the U.S.-led Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan (OMC-A), later reorganised into the Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan (OSC-A), oversaw army development. In early 2002, OMC-A launched a program to train a 1,800-strong brigade of Afghan soldiers selected by the defence ministry, while ISAF agreed to train a 600-man presidential guard.<sup>52</sup> Often illiterate and with minimal skills and combat experience, ANA recruits were trained by French, British and U.S. officers. A U.S. officer who worked alongside Afghan troops during this period described them as "armed, uninformed and

<sup>45</sup> In Annex 1, Section 2 of the Bonn Agreement, the participants requested "the assistance of the international community in helping the new Afghan authorities in the establishment and training of new Afghan security and armed forces".

<sup>46</sup> Obaid Younossi, Peter Dahl Thruelsen, Jonathan Vaccaro, Jerry M. Sollinger and Brian Grady, "The Long March: Building an Afghan National Army", Rand Corporation, 2009, p. 12.

<sup>47</sup> Manuel and Singer, op. cit.

<sup>48</sup> Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°85, *Policing in Afghanistan: Still Searching for a Strategy*, 18 December 2008.

<sup>49</sup> Crisis Group Asia Report N°123, *Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency: No Quick Fixes*, 2 November 2006.

<sup>50</sup> Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°89, *Afghanistan: New Administration, New Directions*, 13 March 2009.

<sup>51</sup> Antonio Giustozzi, *Koran, Kalashnikov and Laptop* (London, 2007), pp. 167-168.

<sup>52</sup> Rashid, op. cit., p. 201.

unprepared".<sup>53</sup> The urgency of building up units, however, trumped concerns about the need for quality, discipline and comprehensive literacy training. Desertion rates were high and prolonged absences from the field common. These circumstances ultimately led the U.S. to decide in September 2003 to rebuild the Afghan army from the grassroots.

The U.S. began inserting teams of American soldiers known as Embedded Training Teams (ETTs) into ANA units in 2003. The pace and size of this accelerated program of recruitment, training, deployment and financial investment has since increased every year. As the insurgency expanded and security deteriorated, the U.S. spent \$797 million on army development in 2004, \$788 million in 2005 and \$830 million for fiscal year 2005-2006.<sup>54</sup>

The ANA, however, subsequently faced a shortage of much-needed resources, particularly trainers, as the need to enhance the ANP became apparent. With additional U.S. ETTs deployed for police training, Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLT) were introduced in 2005, under ISAF command, to fill the gaps. While a welcome addition, they also made the multi-track command structures of U.S. forces, ISAF and the defence ministry even more complex.

Like ETTs, OMLTs consisted of officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) drawn from contributing nations and tasked with training ANA units in the field and providing support services.<sup>55</sup> Restrictive rules of engagement, however, significantly limited their impact and presence. For instance, less than half of the 71 teams could be deployed anywhere in country.<sup>56</sup> U.S. and Afghan military officials have complained that OMLT leaders are often far less proactive than their American counterparts, with reports that some OMLT leaders in the north have proved particularly reluctant to fully engage their Afghan partners.<sup>57</sup> Mismatched deployment cycles between ANA units and OMLTs also created challenges. While most OMLTs were deployed for six months, ANA units were typically on a nine-month cycle, leaving some Afghan units waiting for as long as three months before another mentoring team was assigned.<sup>58</sup>

ANA soldiers in insecure regions such as Helmand and Kandahar province described the problems of working simultaneously with British, American and other international troops. A number of experienced Afghan soldiers cited several instances in which disagreements between their European and American counterparts during battles resulted in dozens of ANA casualties.<sup>59</sup> A senior U.S. military official with experience in Afghanistan concurred with this view, saying that Afghan army operations suffered for years from a lack of cohesive command and control between the ministry of defence, ISAF and U.S. forces.<sup>60</sup>

Recent changes to the disjointed command structures undoubtedly will improve operations on the ground, and there are encouraging signs of improvement in the overall strategic oversight of security sector development. In April 2009, NATO established the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) at its 60th Anniversary summit at Strausbourg-Kehl, in part to resolve administrative and logistical barriers between coalition partners supporting security force development. NTM-A places army and police training under dual-hatted control of the NTM-A commander who also has mission oversight over CSTC-A. In parallel, NATO established the ISAF Joint Command (IJC) to control the operational areas, including U.S. and NATO training teams in the field. This has improved overall strategic oversight of security sector development. With an estimated shortfall of about 1,600 to 1,800 personnel for current staffing requirements, however, it may well be difficult for NTM-A to keep pace with army and police development.<sup>61</sup> Time remains the ultimate test of the effectiveness of these changes and challenges.

## **B. FORCE GENERATION**

With greater U.S. funding and an expansion of development programs for Afghan security forces, OSC-A was reorganised in 2005 into the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A). NATO nations for the most part remained on the sidelines of this process. Since 2005, CSTC-A has been the main provider of resources and manpower for training and equipping all branches of the Afghan security forces.

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<sup>53</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior U.S. military official, Washington DC, 23 June 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Rashid, *op. cit.*, p. 203.

<sup>55</sup> Tier I OMLTs are partnered with ANA infantry and combat support units, while Tier II OMLTs are generally partnered with ANA staff in unit headquarters.

<sup>56</sup> Younossi, Thruelsen, et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>57</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior U.S. military officer, Mazar-e Sharif, 21 January 2010.

<sup>58</sup> Younossi, Thruelsen, et. al., *op. cit.*, p. 39.

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<sup>59</sup> Crisis Group interviews, mid-level Afghan officers, September-October 2009.

<sup>60</sup> Crisis Group interview, Washington DC, 30 July 2009.

<sup>61</sup> Two separate briefing memos on NTM-A/CSTC-A prepared in January 2010 give different figures for the required number of trainers. The 1,600 or 1,800 cited in each of the memos represent the shortfall in number of personnel needed to fulfil current needs. But NTM-A/CSTC-A also estimates that it will need to fill a shortfall of 2,504 to meet the current goal of expanding the ANA to 134,000 by fall 2010.

Task Force Phoenix, which is run under the aegis of the ISAF Joint Command, oversees training at the Kabul Military Training Centre, including providing logistical and tactical support. This has helped expand mentoring programs both for the ANA and ANP but personnel shortages remain a problem. Out of 5,688 ETTs and Police Mentor Teams (PMTs), only 2,097 had been assigned as of May 2009, while about 54 out of 65 OMLTs were fully staffed.<sup>62</sup> According to January 2010 NTM-A estimates, only 1,731 trainers had been assigned out of the 4,235 trainers required to meet the goal of 134,000 troops by autumn 2010, leaving a shortfall of about 2,504.<sup>63</sup>

The U.S. has deployed a brigade of active duty soldiers to supplement the shortfall but security requirements have been too restrictive for the additional staff to be effective. For instance, in Regional Command-South (RC-South), international forces are required in some cases to move in groups of no less than nine when they travel outside the perimeters of forward operating bases in Kandahar and Helmand.<sup>64</sup> In many cases, OMLTs and ETTs may only consist of four or five internationals, which means that some ANA units in remote and particularly insecure areas are not receiving the necessary in-field training.<sup>65</sup>

Furthermore, the majority of U.S. and ISAF advisers have focused primarily on infantry training and partnering on combat operations to enhance operational readiness. But the army's logistics capabilities have been neglected, thus increasing dependence on U.S. and ISAF forces for tactical elements such as supplies and transport. It was not until 2007 that CSTC-A recognised the problem and assigned several advisers to the MOD's logistics sections. Even then, many advisers have partnered mainly with senior Afghan staff, significantly circumscribing any benefits at the field level.<sup>66</sup> While 23,172 soldiers graduated from various ANA training institutions in the first quarter of 2010, the vast majority were streamed into infantry slots.<sup>67</sup> Despite clear recognition from a number of senior NTM-A and Afghan officers of the need for more balance between combat and specialised support training, these concerns appear to be falling on deaf ears both in ISAF HQ and in international capitals.

With the priority given to rapid ANA expansion, the current infantry-centric approach to training will likely persist, resulting in fundamental weaknesses in the ANA's logistics and support, including accounting systems. A January 2009 analysis by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) revealed that Afghan security forces were unable to account for thousands of weapons donated to the army and police over the last eight years. The report cited inadequate numbers of U.S. and Afghan staff, poor management and limited data about weapons stored at the ANA central depot as the main reasons for "significant lapses in accountability", resulting in widespread theft and abuse.<sup>68</sup> A CSTC-A logistics training contractor, cited in the GAO report, noted that only one in four ANA personnel had enough basic education to operate manual or automated accounting systems. The same conclusion was reached in two recent audits of the construction of ANA garrisons in Laghman and Kunduz provinces, which noted "the lack of an ANA master plan for facilities development", "inadequate program management" and "insufficient quality control".<sup>69</sup>

CSTC-A's lax oversight of weapons is symptomatic of larger problems. Contractors have come to dominate every facet of the mission in Afghanistan, erasing what little institutional memory remains amid rapid rotations of CSTC-A staff, and undermining accountability. According to General McChrystal, the lack of continuity and insufficient project oversight has reinforced "the perception of corruption within ISAF and the international community".<sup>70</sup> He also noted how these problems had also led to: "poor contract performance, reduced readiness in the use of NATO weapons already provided to ANSF, an inefficient use of Afghan National Security Force Funds, and a potential delay in the efficient expansion and sustainment of properly equipped" troops.<sup>71</sup> As the ANA expands, NTM-A/CSTC-A must institute greater scrutiny of contracts and general oversight.

There are, however, few guarantees that improvements within CSTC-A will produce more cohesion in building the ANA. Although NTM-A/CSTC-A has pushed for administrative reform within the defence ministry and has been a vocal advocate for legislation that would devolve power from Kabul to the field, resistance from high-ranking MOD and ANA officials has slowed progress on

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<sup>62</sup> "Report on the Assessment of U.S. and Coalition Plans to Train, Equip, and Field the Afghan National Security Forces", Inspector General of the United States Department of Defense, Report No. SPO-2009-007, 30 September 2009, p. 38.

<sup>63</sup> NTM/CSTC-A Command Briefing, Kabul, 14 January 2010.

<sup>64</sup> Inspector General's Office, U.S. Department of Defense, Report No. SPO-2009-007, 30 September 2009, p. 39.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>66</sup> Inspector General's Office, U.S. Department of Defense, Report No. SPO-2009-007, 30 September 2009.

<sup>67</sup> SIGAR, 30 April 2010, op. cit., figure 3.19, p. 55.

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<sup>68</sup> "Lack of systematic tracking raises significant accountability concerns about weapons provided to Afghan National Security Forces", Government Accountability Office, GAO 09-267, Washington DC, January 2009, p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> SIGAR, 30 April 2010, op. cit.

<sup>70</sup> Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, "Commander's Initial Assessment", 30 August 2009, op. cit.

<sup>71</sup> Inspector General's Office, U.S. Department of Defense, Report No. SPO-2009-007, 30 September 2009, p. 17.

both fronts. Many NTM-A/CSTC-A officials complain that their Afghan counterparts cling to a more familiar Soviet-style, top-heavy command structure. In one recent example, a top Afghan army commander noted that it had taken nearly three months and ten separate signatures from MOD officials to gain approval for a simple operation.<sup>72</sup> The MOD bureaucracy is also frequently cited as one of the chief obstacles to army development. A U.S. trainer based at the Kabul Military Training Centre said:

MOD has created a micromanagement situation in the army such that brigade and *kandak* commanders can't take the initiative. They cannot effect changes that are needed to make improvements. They can't get the equipment they need. They can't get promotions approved without the signature of [Defence] Minister [Abdul Rahim] Wardak. That micromanagement trickles down to the corps command. It slows everything down to a glacier pace. In the coalition, we're trying to build an army quickly that can be responsive. But MOD doesn't seem interested in that. We need that micromanagement to end.<sup>73</sup>

As the ANA expands, the international community will be increasingly confronted by the dilemma of relinquishing control of army development to a rigid, overly centralised Afghan military bureaucracy. Before that transition, NTM-A/CSTC-A must work with Afghan counterparts to strengthen and streamline administrative structures within the defence ministry and the general staff.

## IV. POLITICAL AND LEGAL IMPERATIVES

Absent a substantial legal framework, few effective enforcement mechanisms and virtually no public accountability, powerbrokers in the defence ministry and the army had, as earlier mentioned, resurrected patronage networks soon after the Taliban's ouster. This has undermined command and control – the linchpin of any effective modern army, reversing many of the gains made under the well-intentioned but often short-sighted support of CSTC-A.

While training and equipping the Afghan army is crucial to the overall counterinsurgency effort, the international community and the Afghan government should invest more in establishing greater accountability. More efforts should be made to recruit and retain experienced Afghan civilian administrators in the MOD. Kabul should also reform legal and administrative structures to counter virulent internal factionalism. Similarly, NTM-A/CSTC-A should play a more proactive role in advising the Office of the National Security Council (ONSC) and MOD on policy decisions. It should also track defence-related legislation, and liaise regularly with parliamentary defence commissions.

In particular, more must be done to enhance the ONSC's role in devising military policy and to deepen links between parliamentary bodies that have oversight over defence-related legislation. There is also an urgent need for civilian advisers to assist in building the capacity of the ONSC and parliament to review defence policy and security sector reform, as well as assessing the defence ministry's manpower and resource demands.

### A. POLITICAL MILIEU

#### 1. Factions and fiefdoms

Factionalism has undermined army development since Fahim's appointment as defence minister, who along with his associates resurrected old patronage networks, distributing key positions in the AMF to loyal members and allies of the Shuray-e Nazar. Ninety of the first 100 generals appointed to the new army were from the Tajik-dominated Panjshir Valley, reigniting ethnic, regional and political factionalism within the armed forces.<sup>74</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Crisis Group interview, January 2010.

<sup>73</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior U.S. military adviser, Kabul, 10 January 2010.

<sup>74</sup> Paul O'Brien and Paul Barker, "Old Questions Needing New Answers: A Fresh Look at Security Needs in Afghanistan" in Mark Sedra (ed.), *Confronting Afghanistan's Security Dilemma*, Brief 28, Bonn International Centre for Conversion, September 2003, p. 18.

Drawing on the Shuray-e Nazar's supervisory council, Fahim appointed General Bismillah Khan Mohammadi, a Tajik from Panjshir province, as chief of the army staff in November 2002. A well-regarded officer who rose quickly through the mujahidin ranks during the civil war, Khan was a one-time confidante of Ahmad Shah Massoud. He joined the Shuray-e Nazar supervisory council during the civil war and was tasked with liaising with Northern Alliance mujahidin in Kabul, Parwan and Kapisa. Inheriting many of Fahim's loyalists within the military, Khan also had the support of influential Northern Alliance leaders, including parliamentarian and Speaker of the Wolesi Jirga, Younous Qanooni.

These alliances helped Khan resist international attempts to balance the ANA's ethnic makeup, but also fuelled tensions between Khan and Fahim's successor, Abdul Rahim Wardak, an ethnic Pashtun who became defence minister in December 2004. Although ideologically both Khan and Wardak are known to favour officers who fought with the mujahidin over officers who fought on the side of Najibullah's government, they are divided on many other issues. The conflict between Wardak and Khan, which dates back to the mujahidin era, has caused deadlocks over control of staff, resources and operations, severely impeding the army's development.<sup>75</sup> It has also fuelled corruption within the MOD and ANA and bred subversion within the military. An Afghan army officer observed that tensions between Wardak and Khan have repeatedly forced senior officers to choose sides, the Pashtuns behind Wardak and the Tajiks behind Khan, often to the detriment of the cohesiveness of their units.<sup>76</sup>

Several senior Afghan officers described the army as divided into four main factions: Pashtuns allied with Wardak or affiliated with the Mahaz-e Milliy-e Islami Afghanistan party;<sup>77</sup> Tajiks allied with Bismillah Khan and Shuray-e Nazar; Uzbeks allied with Lieutenant General Hamayoun Fauzi, MOD's deputy director of personnel and education; and Hazaras allied with Lieutenant General Baz Mohammad Jawhari, deputy director of MOD's materiel and technology department.<sup>78</sup> Comparing the current divisions to those

of the 1970s and 1980s, one Afghan officer said: "The factionalism in the army today is much more serious than the previous period in which Khalqis were pitted against Parchamis because at least in their case both factions had an ideology and government goals that they rallied around". He added: "In the case of these two men, Bismillah Khan and Wardak, they are pursuing their own personal interests and agendas, which means this army is divided between these two men. It is more destructive than it was in the 1980s under the communists".<sup>79</sup>

Acknowledging his rift with Wardak, Khan insists that his disagreements with the defence minister are "not personal" and that tensions stem from "a philosophical difference" over authority.<sup>80</sup> However, friction between the two has weakened the chain of command, adversely affecting overall army development and undermining unit discipline and morale.<sup>81</sup> Several observers cited the case of a high-ranking MOD official arrested in April 2008 for alleged involvement in an assassination attempt against Karzai as an example of the danger associated with growing military factionalism and divided loyalties.<sup>82</sup>

NTM-A staff are equally concerned about the impact of the rivalry on military cohesion and stability.<sup>83</sup> Several international trainers and mentors believe that Khan's removal is necessary, expressing concern that the factionalism that has grown under his command is imperilling

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<sup>79</sup> Crisis Group interview, western Afghanistan, January 2010.

<sup>80</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 17 February 2010.

<sup>81</sup> Giustozzi, "The Afghan National Army: Unwarranted Hope?", op. cit., p. 39.

<sup>82</sup> The attack occurred at a victory day celebration attended by Karzai, Wardak and a number of other Afghan officials and foreign diplomats in Kabul. Although the Taliban and members of Hizb-e Islami both claimed responsibility, an initial investigation into the assault, which killed three and wounded at least ten, revealed that several members of the Ministry of Interior (MOI) and a high-ranking MOD official were detained after being implicated in the plot. The outcome of this investigation has never been publicly revealed. But several people familiar with the case indicated in Crisis Group interviews in January and February 2010 that Brig. Gen. Taleb Shah was arrested along with several MOI officials. Taleb, a Panjshiri who was appointed commander of the MOD Central (Materiels) Workshop in 2003, is believed to be the source of several illicit weapons transfers from the army to insurgent and criminal groups. Several of the assault rifles found in connection with the April 2008 attack were linked to Taleb's weapons repair unit and other materials used in the attack were reportedly traced back to the army. Taleb was subsequently convicted in connection with these charges and sentenced to several years in prison. See also Carlotta Gall and Abdul Waheed Wafa, "Afghans see link to Qaeda in plot to shoot Karzai", *The New York Times*, 1 May 2008.

<sup>83</sup> Crisis Group interviews, senior U.S. military officials, Washington DC, July 2009 and senior NTM-A official, Kabul, December 2009.

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<sup>75</sup> Crisis Group interview, former Afghan army officer, January 2010.

<sup>76</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior Afghan army officer, Kabul, January 2010.

<sup>77</sup> Headed by Pir Ahmad Syed Gilani, the Mahaz-e Milliy-e Islami Afghanistan party or National Islamic Front of Afghanistan was one of the seven main mujahidin groups in the anti-Soviet jihad of the 1980s. Pashtun-dominated and conservative, Mahaz was associated with royalists who advocated the return of the late King Zahir Shah.

<sup>78</sup> Bismillah Khan's network, however, is by far the largest and his supporters reportedly include at least six out of eleven brigade commanders and twelve out of 46 battalion commanders. Antonio Giustozzi, "The Afghan National Army: Unwarranted Hope?", *The RUSI Journal* 154, no. 6 (December 2009), p. 39.



the unity of the armed forces.<sup>84</sup> Yet other officials worry that removing him would fuel even more divisive turf battles within the ANA.<sup>85</sup> This dynamic has made the management and distribution of their scarce resources all the more complex and burdensome, with reform attempts held hostage to rivalries. The sudden large-scale injection of financial resources into building the army is also contributing to internal battles for control of materiel and manpower. The ONSC, NTM-A and NATO/ISAF should initiate a broad review of the current military leadership and work with President Karzai to develop a well-defined succession plan in the ANA general staff and upper levels of the defence ministry.

## 2. The politics of corruption

As in the past, competition over access to international military aid is fuelling corruption, undermining the limited progress made thus far to develop a cohesive national army. While Afghan leaders had exploited early disagreements among NATO partners over the scope and shape of the Afghan military to acquire resources for individual patronage networks, U.S. contracting practices have also swelled the war chests of a number of elite networks with links to the military establishment. For instance, insider deals on no-bid contracts for the provision of logistical and material support to the Afghan and U.S. military have fuelled a shadow economy dominated by government officials as well as insurgents.<sup>86</sup>

High-ranking ANA officers and other Afghan officials have been involved in unfair contracting practices. In August 2009, for example, two Afghans with dual U.S. citizenship pleaded guilty to offering a \$1 million bribe to a U.S. Army Corps of Engineers contracting official in Afghanistan.<sup>87</sup> Another case under investigation by the Afghan government involves three ANA generals accused of using Afghan National Army Air Corps (ANAAC) helicopters for commercial purposes.<sup>88</sup> Contracting corruption at the highest levels of Afghan government has, in fact, become so concerning that the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Government Oversight and Government Reform launched an investigation in December 2009 into allegations that Afghan contractors linked to several prominent Afghan government officials,

including Minister Wardak's son, have paid millions in bribes to Taliban commanders and warlords.<sup>89</sup> Officials in the MOD's legal department and U.S. advisers to the ministry reported that numerous allegations of corruption have been substantiated but few have resulted in any disciplinary action,<sup>90</sup> stressing that this is less a problem of inadequate rules and regulations than of political will.<sup>91</sup>

Rampant corruption in the army has complicated the task of ISAF and MOD advisers. For example, ISAF struggled for months in 2009 to remove an ANAAC commander from his post after he was linked to several instances of corruption and dereliction of duty, including charging private passengers \$100 on military aircraft under his control.<sup>92</sup> President Karzai removed him under intense pressure, but the commander apparently returned to his post just weeks after his dismissal.<sup>93</sup> Such cases deepen the mistrust between Afghan military leaders and ISAF and NTM-A officers. The latter have described repeatedly encountering resistance to any attempts to remove or discipline Afghan military officers suspected of misconduct.

Poor discipline, factionalism and lax vetting practices also contribute to corruption. As a result, predatory relationships between unit commanders and soldiers are the common coin of military life. Officers commonly steal pay from those under their command and in some cases have been caught stealing unit supplies. "As a commander I might demand that you give me part of your salary. I might demand that you give me your uniform and cap. I might ask you to take petrol from a vehicle and sell it on the open market. And if you refuse to do it, I might sell the petrol myself on the black market for my own profit. The soldier, today, is squeezed on both sides. He's squeezed on the one hand by threats from his superiors and he's squeezed on the other by the Taliban", an Afghan officer said.<sup>94</sup>

The MOD inspector general should play an important role in ending corruption and imposing greater oversight over contracts and procurement. In practice, however, this important office has been given little leeway to execute its mission. U.S. advisers complain that when instances of corruption and embezzlement have been flagged the in-

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<sup>84</sup> Crisis Group interviews, U.S., UK and Canadian senior officers, January-February 2010.

<sup>85</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior U.S. officer, Kandahar, February 2010.

<sup>86</sup> See Aram Roston, "How the U.S. funds the Taliban", *The Nation*, 12 November 2009 and Matthieu Akins, "The Master of Spin Boldak", *Harper's Magazine*, December 2009.

<sup>87</sup> SIGAR, Quarterly Report, 30 October 2009, p. 31.

<sup>88</sup> There is no indication yet that those implicated have been or will be charged. Crisis Group interviews, Kabul, February 2010.

<sup>89</sup> See Roston, op. cit. and Karen de Young, "Afghan corruption: How to follow the money", *The Washington Post*, 29 March 2010.

<sup>90</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Kabul, January and March 2010.

<sup>91</sup> MOD Decree 4.2 states that: "The Afghan National Army (both military and civilians) has the responsibility to utilise resources for the intended purpose, not for personal gain, nor in ways that would harm MOD interests. This is especially true of materiel resources to include food, ammunition, trucks, and fuel, which must be accounted for".

<sup>92</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kabul, January 2010.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid.

<sup>94</sup> Crisis Group interview, western Afghanistan, January 2010.

spector general has been powerless to address them in a meaningful way.<sup>95</sup>

More must be done to empower the inspector general to address procurement problems, to pursue enquiries into misuse and pilfering of materials and to enhance oversight of contracts. The president should consider authorising the inspector general's office to issue orders to produce material, information or evidence deemed relevant to a particular audit, while imposing stiff penalties for failure to comply with such requests. The government must also enhance and enforce penalties for embezzlement, dereliction of duty and misuse of equipment. The inspector general's office must be depoliticised by making appointments of this post and that of the deputy inspector general subject to parliamentary approval and with set terms.

## **B. LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

The legal framework for the ANA's establishment and administration consists of various laws, compacts and policy guidelines. The 2004 constitution makes only passing reference to the status of the Afghan military, leaving its role in supporting the state open to interpretation.<sup>96</sup> The non-binding Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) tasks the army with defence against internal and external national security threats, supporting the Afghan constitution, aiding in defeating the insurgency and establishing security for the public.<sup>97</sup> Under the 2006 Afghanistan Compact, the Afghan government committed to establishing a "nationally respected, ethnically balanced Afghan National Army" that is "democratically accountable, organised, trained and equipped to meet the security needs of the country... funded from government revenue, commensurate with the nation's economic capacity".<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Crisis Group interviews, Kabul, 14 March 2010.

<sup>96</sup> Article 55, Chapter 2, Section 34 states: "The defence of the country is responsibility of all citizens of Afghanistan. The conditions for military services are regulated by law". Article 64, Chapter 3, Section 5 names the president as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

<sup>97</sup> Published in 2008, the ANDS lays out a five-year plan which includes a series of benchmarks, timelines and routes for implementing the pledges contained in the 2006 Afghanistan Compact and meeting Millennium Development Goals. Terms of reference and development goals for security sector institutions are laid out in detail in pages 54-60.

<sup>98</sup> Adopted during a conference in London (31 January-1 February 2006), the non-binding Afghanistan Compact outlines a series of goals, timelines and benchmarks agreed to by the Afghan state and the international community for Afghanistan's stability and development. Annex I, p. 6 includes a brief description of the parameters for international support for the development of an army of 70,000, with provisions for periodic joint quality assessments of the state of the military.

Army operations are organised and administered by the defence ministry with forces divided among the ministry, command staff, combat forces and the ANAAC. Ministerial and general staff appointments within the six regional commands are subject to approval of the defence minister and/or the president. But, as explained below, overlapping and sometimes contradictory legal and administrative structures have eroded the military's organisational structure.

The Office of the National Security Council (ONSC) has official responsibility for shaping security policy and defining national security objectives. Its members include officials from the Office of the President, the Office of Administrative Affairs, the Department of Services and the Office of the National Security Adviser.<sup>99</sup> In practice, however, the ONSC wields little influence, with the MOD and the general staff turning the business of national security policymaking into an ad hoc enterprise.

Theoretically, the defence commissions in the upper and lower houses of parliament are responsible for shaping and codifying legislation regarding the armed forces and defence infrastructure. Weak institutional links between parliament and the executive have, however, hindered the potentially positive impact of the commissions in developing a military that is responsive to state and public needs.

Parliament has adopted three bodies of law, which nominally guide the military's organisational structures, rules and regulations and criminal procedures: the Uniform Code of Military Justice; the Criminal Procedure Code for Military Courts; and the Afghanistan Military Court Law.<sup>100</sup> These laws (discussed in detail below) focus primarily on military justice, outlining the role and structure of military courts, and articulating penalties and punishments for dereliction of duty. Ideological conflicts arising from 30 years of civil war have, however, left their mark on even these limited laws, resulting in numerous gaps and contradictions.

The Afghan government has made little progress in codifying the military's administrative structure. As a result, army appointments remain politicised and demarcations of authority unclear. Although parliament tried in 2009-

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<sup>99</sup> According to the interior ministry's September 2006 National Internal Security Strategy, the ONSC is "the highest forum for determination of national security priorities, provides guidance for integration and coordination of national security matters by the ministries, departments and agencies...[t]he ONSC provides the primary focus of the interagency process for implementing national security policy and procedures".

<sup>100</sup> The Afghanistan Military Court Law was officially enacted and promulgated in Gazette No 866 on 21 November 2005; the Uniform Code of Military Justice in Gazette No 944 on 29 April 2008; and the Criminal Procedure Code for Military Courts in Gazette No 876 on 9 February 2008.

2010 to address systemic inequities in the administration of the armed forces, rank reform and personnel issues have so far been guided by a single presidential decree adopted in September 2003.<sup>101</sup> The decree pertains primarily to the restoration of rank and absorption of anti-Taliban militias and pre-civil war government forces into the national army; there are no other specific references to soldiers' rights and responsibilities. Parliament should pass legislation and the president should sign it without delay to establish a clear delineation of roles between executive policymaking and army operations.

## 1. Military justice

Military discipline has generally involved more stick than carrot. Corporal punishment was commonly used against the rank and file during the pre-Taliban era; it was also occasionally practised in the early years of the ANA's formation.<sup>102</sup> To some extent, this history of harsh discipline is reflected in the Uniform Code of Military Justice, adopted in 2008, which includes a series of prohibitions and punishments for everything from desertion to treason. In all, the code covers 34 different violations, all but a handful of which incur a minimum punishment of at least one-year imprisonment. The codes are enforced and cases reviewed by primary military courts in each of the regional commands. Appeals are handled by a secondary military court of appeals consisting of five judges, located in Kabul. There is, however, little evidence that military codes are regularly or fairly enforced.

Military courts reviewed 1,779 cases from 2006 to 2009.<sup>103</sup> While the cases ranged from murder to embezzlement, absenteeism and serious traffic accidents represented the bulk of the caseload. In Herat, for example, where the 207th corps command is headquartered, 90 of 100 cases pending in January 2010 involved absenteeism.<sup>104</sup> Yet Afghan officials admit that the desire to reduce attrition rates by any means, as well as interference from high-

ranking officials, have thwarted efforts to maintain discipline and pursue cases against military deserters.

According to one MOD legal adviser, lack of political will and mixed signals from factional leaders within the ministry have resulted in the haphazard application of justice. "We've made every effort to enforce justice in the military, but of course we occasionally receive calls from this guy or that guy to influence a case", he said. "If the leaders of the ministry and their deputies were more professional and abstained from affiliating themselves to particular groups, then it would be a lot easier for us to enforce the laws and military codes we're tasked with enforcing".<sup>105</sup>

Lack of capacity within the ministry's legal department also contributes to the inability and more often unwillingness of staff to resist interference in such cases. Plans to increase troop numbers are likely to place an additional burden on the MOD's understaffed legal department. Ongoing efforts to revise military justice procedures and to enhance the numbers and knowledge of defence attorneys, prosecutors and interrogators are therefore vital to maintaining discipline within the army. More resources should also be directed toward improving collection of and access to evidence. This will, however, address only part of the problem. New regulations must also elaborate the rights and responsibilities of soldiers, officers and MOD staff, and these should be effectively communicated to them.

## 2. Military administration

Neither the legislature nor the executive has adopted a comprehensive body of law or decrees defining the army's role or its administrative structures. Personnel issues have generally been managed through a cumbersome, over-centralised and rigid bureaucratic system, whereby Kabul-based officials must approve all personnel decisions. Parliament has attempted to address glaring inequities within the command structure and to adopt legislation to normalise military administration. In November 2008, the lower house of parliament, the Wolesi Jirga, introduced draft legislation on reform and regulations for military personnel, including recruitment and hiring criteria and procedures, discipline and reward mechanisms and death and injury compensation packages. The assignment of rank, transfers, benefits, leave, resignation, retirement and reserve status for NCOs and officers were also addressed.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>101</sup> Presidential Decree No 58 states: "the ranking system and other affairs of the civilian and military personnel of the state shall be properly organised and reformed". Article 1 of the decree further states that those civil and military personnel of the state who were dismissed or abandoned their jobs starting from 27 April 1978 to 22 December 2001 "shall not be subject to the conditions of resignation articulated in Article 56, Clause 4 of the law on government employees when they are reappointed, which requires demotion of up to one year of service upon re-entry into government service. Instead their ranks shall be ascertained upon reappointment".

<sup>102</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior U.S. military official, Washington DC, 14 July 2009.

<sup>103</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior MOD official, Kabul, 6 January 2010.

<sup>104</sup> Crisis Group interview, Herat, 19 January 2010.

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<sup>105</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior MOD official, Kabul, 6 January 2010.

<sup>106</sup> Introduced in parliament in November 2008 as the Inherent Law of Officers and NCOs, the Law on ANA Personnel, Sergeants and Officers was first proposed and sent to the justice ministry for consideration by a working group of ANA/MOD

The draft law additionally envisions standardising service and educational requirements for promotion and rank. Graduates of military academies who obtained a four-year bachelor's degree would attain the rank of second lieutenant. Those completing twelfth grade and NCO or officer training courses would also be eligible for this rank. Recruits completing coursework at a local or international military institute would attain the rank of sergeant. Although the current number of recruits with higher education remains relatively small, the enforcement of this provision would help create strong leadership as the military's numbers expand.<sup>107</sup>

The law's provisions for promotion are even more crucial. Currently, most promotions require final approval of either the defence minister or the president or both. This has constrained corps commanders in rewarding soldiers and NCOs in a timely manner, undercut the authority of regional and battalion commanders, and undermined morale. The law seeks to remedy this by giving the chief of army staff and corps commanders' greater authority to promote mid-to-high ranking officers while the version of the law promulgated by the Meshrano Jirga, the upper house of parliament, reserves promotional powers for the president and defence minister.

The law languished in committee for more than a year with several members of the Wolesi Jirga Defence Affairs Commission supporting greater authority for the chief of army staff, while several members of the Meshrano Jirga's Internal Security, Defence Affairs and Local Organs Commission backed more power for the executive. This tug of war between the ministry and the army general staff reflects the schism between Minister Wardak and army chief Khan. It also parallels regional and ethnic frictions between Pashtun and non-Pashtun factions in parliament. During debates in the Meshrano Jirga, Pashtun members were reportedly encouraged to support the version of the law that gave greater power to Wardak in exchange for political favours.<sup>108</sup> A member of parliament summed up the legislative tussle:

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advisers before being sent to parliament. It has undergone several revisions in committee since then.

<sup>107</sup> Chapter 4 of the Wolesi Jirga version of the draft law additionally requires the express approval of the defence minister and president for the appointment of officers to the rank of general. Under this version, battalion commanders would be allowed to appoint sergeants with the approval of their brigade commander; promotions to second and first lieutenant would require approval of both the brigade commander and corps commander while captain-through-colonel appointments would require the approval of the corps commander and chief of army staff.

<sup>108</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 3 January 2010.

MOD officials thought this law would be passed for them. They believe that they will remain in their positions forever. All they were concerned about were their privileges and powers....[But], the law has to be neutral with regard to the privileges of specific individuals. This law is meant to reward those who are carrying the burden of war on their shoulders, not the ministry officials. We were trying to make sure privileges were not only fairly distributed but also to devolve power to the operational units on the ground.<sup>109</sup>

Subsequent discussions among members of a dual-chamber commission led to the reinstatement of provisions for the devolution of promotional authority to the chief of army staff and corps commanders for NCOs and mid-ranking officers. A combined committee of the Wolesi and Meshrano Jirgas passed this version of the law on 14 November 2009. President Karzai refused to approve it on the grounds that it would create confusion about rank and promotion, arguing that the defence minister should retain central control of promotional authority. Concerns were also raised about pension provisions in the bill and the government's ability to fund the new administrative scheme.<sup>110</sup> The law was sent back to parliament for further revision on 18 January 2010. It is still pending in the legislature.

If the Afghan government is committed to expanding the army and shaping it into an independent, self-sustaining force over the next five years as Karzai indicated in his inaugural speech of 21 January 2010, then more must be done to hasten the passage of this legislation. Enhancing the quality of military leadership depends greatly on well-defined lines of authority, a clear delineation of soldiers' and officers' rights and responsibilities and a standardised scheme of promotions and benefits. Failure to adopt this and similar laws on reforming military administration will weaken resolve among the officer corps and lower morale among the rank and file. The continued absence of administrative guidelines is also likely to exacerbate tensions between the defence minister and army chief.

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<sup>109</sup> Crisis Group interview, MP Nurul Haq Oloomi, member, Wolesi Jirga Defence Commission, 4 February 2010.

<sup>110</sup> Karzai cited numerous reasons for rejecting the law, most of them technical. However, he additionally raised specific objections to the terms of the law that detailed a retirement scheme for army and MOD officials, and ordered all references to retirement to be struck from the law.

NTM-A/CSTC-A command has rightly expressed concern that failure to pass legislation on personnel management could result in a backlog of unfilled assignments and delayed promotions.<sup>111</sup> Large numbers of MOD staff are eligible for retirement yet many refuse to retire without a reasonable pension scheme. The resulting bureaucratic stagnation is undermining NTM-A's efforts to promote better leadership within the ministry and the army. The Afghan government and NTM-A should devise funding mechanisms for a comprehensive pension program. Consideration meanwhile should be given to expanding the NATO Trust Fund to include financing for a substantial portion of the military's pension requirements. Parliament, the defence ministry and the finance ministry should cooperate on formulating a framework for benefit schemes that makes the military a desirable career while ensuring that the army's expansion is financially sustainable.

The international community cannot afford to keep paying for failure. If no progress is made on these key reforms in the near term, donors must increase pressure on the government in Kabul to resolve the legislative logjam. Since this will certainly not be the only time that efforts to reform the ANA are bogged down in lengthy legislative debates, the withholding of funds could be used as a lever to spur change. But a careful balance must be maintained in leveraging donor funding. The U.S. and NATO need to recognise that their demands for reforms within MOD and the general staff must be matched by broad, sustained investment in the military's administrative and logistical structures.

## V. MANNING AND FIELDING THE ANA

### A. GROWING PAINS

By March 2010, ANA troop levels had reached about 112,000, with plans to expand to 134,000 training by October 2010.<sup>112</sup> In January 2010, the Joint Coordination Monitoring Board agreed to a defence ministry request to raise troop levels to 171,600 by 2011. At the London Conference on 28 January 2010, NATO countries and the Afghan government agreed in principle that troop levels would be raised to 240,000 by 2014.<sup>113</sup> In the past, however, such targets have often been revised as security deteriorated.

There are also disagreements about the actual number of ANA combat soldiers on duty. Some analysts have suggested that U.S. and CSTC-A figures represent the total number of Afghan troops trained and equipped, following graduation from the Kabul Military Training Centre (KMTC) over the last eight years rather than active duty soldiers.<sup>114</sup> A 2008 U.S. government report confirmed this view, estimating that only 37,866 combat troops had been deployed in the field out of 56,127 billeted. The remaining were posted at the MOD, military intelligence regional offices, communications support, acquisitions, installation management department and intermediate command headquarters.<sup>115</sup> It is also questionable whether battalions or *kandaks*, a key military unit, are able to maintain their full strength of about 620 to 790 soldiers, particularly in areas where the insurgency is most entrenched.<sup>116</sup>

The gap between reported and active duty troop numbers underscores the dilemma NATO partners face, especially as the army's expansion appears to have become one of the primary metrics of success in the Obama administration's counterinsurgency strategy. Moreover, the quality of deployed troops is increasingly a secondary concern. Benchmarks frequently cited by U.S. officials more often than not fail to reflect actual operational capacity, or indeed sustainability. Timetables have been compressed to meet Washington's goals, leaving larger questions of strategic orientation to be resolved at a later date, if at all.

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<sup>111</sup> An undated, unclassified CSTC-A memo in early 2009 summarises the basic outlines of an army personnel management law entitled the "Inherent Law of Officers and NCOs". The summary references several additional benefits that do not appear to be included in the pending parliamentary legislation and specifically alludes to the potential for an "inflammation of the power struggle between the Minister of Defence and the Chief of General Staff" if differences over lines of authority are not resolved.

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<sup>112</sup> Published estimates of actual troop numbers vary considerably. A briefing memo prepared by NTM-A/CSTC-A in January 2010 stated that the reported number of troops as of 26 January 2010 had reached 104,296 and set an objective goal of reaching 159,000 by July 2011. According to the SIGAR report, ANA troop strength reached 112,779 by 20 March 2010, SIGAR, 30 April 2010, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>113</sup> Mark Sedra, Security Sector Reform Monitor: Afghanistan, No. 2, November 2009, p. 4.

<sup>114</sup> Johnson and Mason, op. cit., p. 14.

<sup>115</sup> GAO report, June 2008, op. cit., p. 19.

<sup>116</sup> Giustozzi, "The Afghan National Army: Unwarranted Hope?", op. cit., p. 40.

Since September 2008, the target date for 134,000 trained troops has been brought forward at least twice, first from 2013 to 2011, and finally to October 2010. While stepping up the pace of expansion is an understandable response to deteriorating security, the international community must realise that doubling troop numbers does not in itself guarantee success. Generally, recruitment has managed to keep pace with and in many cases even exceeded demand, but difficulties in attracting and identifying qualified non-commissioned and commissioned officer candidates have stymied efforts to enhance the ANA's operational capability. Reported shortfalls in NCOs and senior officers and troops with specialised skills such as medicine, transportation and logistics are hindering growth.<sup>117</sup>

The construction of infrastructure also lags far behind recruitment, with only about 40 per cent of required military bases constructed or underway.<sup>118</sup> The expansion of regional army training centres in Herat, Mazar-e Sharif, and Gardez, Kandahar and Darulaman is a welcome sign. The massive overcrowding at KMTC serves as a warning about the perils of under-resourcing such institutions. Instructors reported that the campus's capacity is 8,000 recruits, but as of mid-January 2010 it had more than 14,000.<sup>119</sup> Similarly, given the deteriorated state of many forward operating bases, NATO partners must focus on developing maintenance capacity and standards, allocating adequate resources and planning ahead for long-term infrastructural and logistical needs. More boots on the ground may help fight the insurgency but will also require more shelter and other basic provisions for soldiers.

The army's logistical and infrastructural challenges reflect a larger existential problem facing the Afghan government and the international community. The push to expand the military under the aegis of a U.S./NATO framework has led to an influx of NATO military equipment, weaponry and other technology. The stated goal is to give Afghan soldiers a tactical advantage over the insurgency. Introducing proprietary systems also carries advantages for NATO trainers who have repeatedly complained of the challenges involved in working with Warsaw Pact equipment. While much of the Warsaw Pact weaponry and ammunition donated by various nations following the Taliban's ouster is still in use, the gradual transition to NATO grade weapons such as the M-16 assault rifle and the use of armoured Humvees represents a substantial shift in the Afghan military's orientation.

Concerns persist that the ANA is a long way from acquiring the capacity to maintain NATO equipment. Poor contractor oversight of maintenance and repairs has already proven highly problematic.<sup>120</sup> The reconfiguration of a military steeped in Soviet traditions along more Western lines will require a sustained commitment not only in terms of equipment, but also in maintenance, education and strategic support. The risks and benefits of such a long-term investment should be carefully weighed beyond the context of the current conflict with the insurgency. A mixed system that draws on Warsaw Pact weaponry and ammunition and NATO tactics will only be sustainable for so long. The effectiveness of such an army against the modern militaries of many of Afghanistan's neighbours must be given due consideration.

## 1. Training

The first stop for most soldiers en route to the field is generally the KMTC or one of the other four regional training centres. After completing a basic screening process that includes the submission of two written references, a medical exam that includes testing for opium use,<sup>121</sup> physical testing, and biometric scanning, recruits are streamed into Basic Warrior Training. Under the new timeline for the army's expansion, this basic course in infantry techniques has been reduced from ten to eight weeks. The dropout rate is about 16 per cent.<sup>122</sup> The physical training regime meets the standard of most modern armies. Skills taught include marksmanship, hand-to-hand combat and combat manoeuvre techniques. There is, however, little, if any, collective heavy weapons training.<sup>123</sup>

At the start of basic training, each soldier is outfitted with a uniform, gear and a weapon. In 2007, CSTC-A began distributing M-16 assault rifles with about 55,000 shipped to Afghanistan in 2008; a little more than 32,000 were fielded by June 2009.<sup>124</sup> Trainers and advisers at KMTC reported that new recruits and mujahidin recruits have easily adapted to the M-16 and appear comfortable with the maintenance required to keep the weapon clean and fully operational. However, several trainers in the field,

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<sup>120</sup> Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Dept. of Defense, 30 October 2009, p. 19.

<sup>121</sup> Drug testing for opium use is required but it is unclear what the threshold is for passing tests for chemicals found in hashish and other cannabis-based drugs.

<sup>122</sup> Crisis Group interview, Brig. General Simon Levey, director, ANA training, CSTC-A, Kabul, 18 December 2009.

<sup>123</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lt. Colonel Jean-Claude Deletraz, senior mentor, officer training, KMTC, Kabul, 10 January 2009.

<sup>124</sup> See Younossi, Thruelsen, et. al, op. cit., p. 25. See also Anthony Cordesman, "Afghanistan National Security Forces: Shaping Host Country Forces as Part of Armed Nation Building", Center for Strategic and International Security, November 2009, p. 25.

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<sup>117</sup> GAO report, June 2008, op. cit.

<sup>118</sup> Younossi, Thruelsen, et. al, op. cit., p. xii.

<sup>119</sup> Crisis Group interview, U.S. army trainer, Kabul, 10 January 2010.

particularly in Kandahar, where the fighting is most intense, complained that logistical logjams within CSTC-A and a shortage of replacement parts makes it difficult to repair weapons.<sup>125</sup>

Upon completion of basic training, about 30 per cent of recruits enter five-week Advance Combat Training programs where they are trained in special skills such as artillery, engineering, signals, transportation and logistics.<sup>126</sup> Soldiers and officers are then matched with their units and ETTs at the Consolidated Fielding Centre (CFC), where they spend five weeks drilling on unit operations and developing unit cohesion before being tested and then deployed to the field. It is often during this interim period that NCOs are identified and placed within units. Until recently, scant attention had been given to training NCOs who are crucial to maintaining unit cohesion, with candidates selected during basic training or follow-up training. In a welcome shift, NTM-A has started devoting more resources to the growing NCO corps. On average, KMTC now receives about 3,000 applications a year for 400 NCO positions.<sup>127</sup> In 2010, a specialised three-month course will be established at a new NCO training school that will target recruits who are high school graduates.

There are three routes to becoming an officer. The majority of candidates go through a similar screening process to soldiers before attending a twenty-week training course at KMTC. Unlike soldiers, officer candidates must be high school graduates and demonstrate greater physical endurance. On average, KMTC receives about 500 officer applications for an incoming class of 140. About 2,000 officers graduate each year to the rank of lieutenant, but the pace of graduation is expected to increase to 2,600 to meet expansion goals.<sup>128</sup> A small number of candidates recruited from high schools are routed through the four-year course at the National Military Academy of Afghanistan, which is modelled on the U.S. West Point Military Academy. A select group of former mujahidin fighters, vetted by MOD, is streamed through the Mujahidin Integration Course at KMTC four times a year. On average

about 520 ex-mujahidin join the officer corps through this course each year.<sup>129</sup>

## 2. Recruitment and retention

Although the ANA is meeting and sometimes exceeding recruitment targets, challenges in recruiting quality soldiers remain.<sup>130</sup> Leadership development has been particularly difficult, largely because limited educational levels restrict the pool of eligible officer and NCO candidates. Estimates of literacy rates vary considerably, but some analysts suggest as much as 90 per cent of the force is illiterate. U.S. government sources have estimated that 70 per cent of overall Afghan security forces are functionally illiterate.<sup>131</sup> These figures correspond to those of an NTM-A official involved in training, who assessed the average literacy rate for soldiers at 11 per cent, 30 per cent for NCOs, and nearly 90 per cent for officers.<sup>132</sup> Senior Afghan officers understandably complain that such limitations hinder their ability to improve operational capability.

Drug addiction and poverty are also major impediments to unit capacity and cohesion. Estimates of drug use vary widely.<sup>133</sup> Some believe that the drug addiction rate among soldiers could be as low as 20 to 25 per cent in the south, but as high as 80 to 85 per cent overall.<sup>134</sup> Describing the impact of the shortage of good recruits, one senior ANA officer said: “We are recruiting people who are barely literate and people who are addicted to become sergeants and officers. We have people who are lacking in basic education joining the army. So we have to cope with this in part by lowering our expectations. We’re in a society that has experienced 30 years of conflict and the institutions and culture of this country were destroyed. So we can’t expect much from the people who were raised in this society and have to cope with what we’re given”.<sup>135</sup> Several remedies to the challenges of recruitment have recently been proposed, including a return to army conscription, but given

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<sup>125</sup> The switch from the AK-47 assault rifle to the M-16 had long been debated before this new equipment was introduced. While many Afghan officers seem pleased with the switch from the AK-47 to the M-16, CSTC-A trainers have mixed views about the change. Many argue that although the AK-47 is considerably less accurate than the M-16, the assault rifle commonly used in the U.S. military, it is more appropriate for Afghanistan’s hard, dusty conditions, and requires less maintenance. Crisis Group interview, retired senior U.S. military official, Washington DC, 30 July 2009.

<sup>126</sup> Younossi, Thruelsen, et. al, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lt. Colonel Jean-Claude Deletraz, chief CSTC-A adviser, officer training, KMTC, Kabul, 10 January 2010.

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<sup>129</sup> Crisis Group interview, Brigadier General Simon Levey, Kabul, 18 December 2009.

<sup>130</sup> Sedra, Security Sector Reform Monitor: Afghanistan, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>131</sup> An analyst assesses that all but 10 per cent of ANA troops are functionally illiterate. Giustozzi “The Afghan National Army: Unwarranted Hope?”, op. cit. The Inspector General’s Office of the U.S. Department of Defense, however, gives a better functional literacy rate of 30 per cent. Inspector General’s Office, U.S. Department of Defense, Report No. SPO-2009-007, 30 September 2009.

<sup>132</sup> Crisis Group interview, Brigadier-General Simon Levey, Kabul, 18 December 2009.

<sup>133</sup> Crisis Group interview, U.S. army officer, Kabul, 10 January 2010.

<sup>134</sup> Giustozzi, “The Afghan National Army: Unwarranted Hope?”, op. cit., p. 37.

<sup>135</sup> Crisis Group interview, Major General Jalandar Shah, 207th Corps Commander, Herat, 18 January 2010.

the failure of past experiments with conscription, particularly in the 1980s during the Soviet incursion, the military should be wary of returning to a policy that has often acted as a catalyst for insurrection.<sup>136</sup>

Although the ANA is meeting and sometimes exceeding recruitment targets, challenges in recruitment and retaining quality soldiers remain.<sup>137</sup> Formal desertion rates have decreased from a high of nearly 50 per cent in 2003 to a reported 9 or 10 per cent in early 2010.<sup>138</sup> Actual desertion could, however, be higher since lengthy absences of more than six months are notoriously under-reported. MOD and ANA officials place the desertion rate at somewhere between 5 and 10 per cent, but at least one U.S. official suggests the figure might be as high as 12 to 19 per cent.<sup>139</sup> Unsurprisingly, ANA units in more volatile areas have much higher desertion rates. There has nevertheless been some improvement in retention rates overall. The reenlistment rate for NCOs, for instance, was reportedly 56 per cent in 2008, and 67 per cent in 2009; for soldiers, it was 50 per cent and 49 per cent, respectively.<sup>140</sup>

The overall improvement in retention rates is partly due to salary increases and improvements in pay delivery systems that allow soldiers to receive their pay electronically. While AMF soldiers received on average about \$17 a month plus food rations in 2003, pay for ANA soldiers reached an average of about \$100 to \$110 by 2004.<sup>141</sup> Additional pay scale increases have more recently raised a soldier's average base salary on a three-year contract to \$165 a month, with an additional bonus of \$2.50 per day for soldiers located in the fourteen provinces designated high threat areas.<sup>142</sup> These increases are laudable but still insufficient to cope with steep inflation and to compete with salaries offered to security personnel by private contractors and international NGOs.

Non-competitive wages, irregular pay and distribution of benefits are frequently cited as some of the key factors behind desertions and absenteeism. ANA officers, soldiers and international advisers also cite insufficient and uneven distribution of leave as a major source of dissatisfaction. Many soldiers are the sole wage earners in their families, and hence often go AWOL when faced with problems at home that require more time off than what is allotted. On average, soldiers receive about two weeks of leave a year, subject to their commanders' whims. Ethnic affiliation to commanders often results in disparities in soldiers' leave.

### 3. Ethnicity and leadership

International stakeholders have pushed for an ethnically diverse army since the ANA's inception. Nevertheless, the uneven representation of ethnic groups in key positions in both the ANA and MOD has been a recurring problem. Tajiks and Pashtuns dominate the officer corps and NCO class. In November 2009, a senior army officer estimated the ANA's ethnic breakdown as follows: 44 per cent Pashtun; 25 per cent Tajik; 10 per cent Hazara; 8 per cent Uzbek and 13 per cent other.<sup>143</sup> Defence ministry officials provided similar estimates.<sup>144</sup> This breakdown, however, appears misleading upon closer scrutiny. A Crisis Group analysis of figures provided by an Afghan official in January 2010 found that Pashtuns represented 42.6 per cent of the army overall while Tajiks represented 40.98 per cent, Hazaras 7.68 per cent and Uzbeks 4.05 per cent and other minorities 4.68 per cent. While the presence of Pashtuns at all levels corresponds to their proportion to the general population, Tajiks continue to dominate the officer and NCO ranks. In contrast, Hazaras, Uzbeks and other minorities are significantly underrepresented.<sup>145</sup> These discrepancies fuel factionalism and deepen patronage networks.

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<sup>136</sup> David Rising, "Karzai: Afghanistan may institute conscription", Associated Press, 7 February 2010.

<sup>137</sup> SIGAR, 30 April 2010, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>138</sup> Crisis Group interview, Major General Zahir Azimi, Kabul, 6 January 2010.

<sup>139</sup> Crisis Group interview, U.S. diplomat, Kabul, 25 November 2009.

<sup>140</sup> "Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan", U.S. Department of Defense, June 2008, p. 18. See also Younossi, Thruelsen et. al, op. cit., p. xii.

<sup>141</sup> See Crisis Group Report, *Disarmament and Reintegration in Afghanistan* and Crisis Group Briefing, *Afghanistan: Getting Disarmament Back on Track*, both op. cit.

<sup>142</sup> MOD instituted a \$45 a month salary increase across the board in November 2009. Undated CSCT-A briefing memos distributed in January 2010 detail pay rates for both the ANP and ANA from patrolman/soldier level to the rank of general. Staff sergeants earn \$210 a month in the first three years of service; generals with up to six years' experience earn as much as \$1,005 monthly.

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<sup>143</sup> Crisis Group interview, Brig. General Mohammad Karimi, Chief of Army Operations, Kabul, 24 November 2009. While several attempts have been made to determine the ANA's ethnic breakdown, there has been little in the way of verification. Rand Corporation conducted a comparative analysis in 2009 of five separate estimates conducted from 1980 to 2007, which found that Tajiks represented a little more than 40 per cent of the officer corps. Pashtuns also represented a little more than 40 per cent of the officer corps.

<sup>144</sup> Crisis Group interview, Maj. General Zahir Azimi, 6 January 2010.

<sup>145</sup> Afghanistan's ethnic breakdown is difficult to determine, with the last census conducted by the Afghan government in 1979, the year of the Soviet intervention. Although Karzai's government agreed in principle to conduct a new census it has been delayed time and again on the grounds of insecurity. The U.S. Central Intelligence Agency recently revised population estimates in its World Factbook, reducing the overall estimated population from 33.6 million to 28 million. The CIA gives the following ethnic breakdown: 42 per cent Pashtun, 27 per cent Tajik, 9



Some veteran ANA soldiers claim that ethnicity can be a factor in whether a soldier will re-enlist. “Our *kandak* was ethnically mixed, about 50 per cent Pashtun and 40 per cent Tajik”, said a major. “The rest were a mix. The commander was Tajik and so were the officers at the senior level. The relationship was good, but ethnicity did play a role. For instance, when a soldier’s contract was ending, re-enlisting was easy if the commander was of the same ethnicity. If not, you had to travel to another province to renew your contract and get an assignment with a new battalion”.<sup>146</sup> According to NTM-A officials, there are far more Tajiks as opposed to Pashtun officers in Pashtun-majority southern provinces such as Kandahar, Helmand and Zabul, all frontline states in the fight against insurgents. Recruitment among Pashtuns in the south has been low, in general, making the task of building a diverse national army all the more challenging.<sup>147</sup> In Zabul, for instance, where an estimated 70 per cent of officers are Tajik, the population is roughly 95 per cent Pashtun.<sup>148</sup> The ethnic breakdown has significant ramifications for winning hearts and minds.

The largest Tajik and Pashtun blocks within the military are linked to the army chief and the defence minister, respectively, as discussed above. Of the 118 top tier MOD officials and general staff, about 50 per cent are apparently allied with Bismillah Khan’s predominantly Tajik Shuray-e Nazar network.<sup>149</sup> Several ANA and international officers complain that the imbalance has seeped into the selection of young officers for training programs abroad, with many of the coveted places in U.S. and European programs reserved for Shuray-e Nazar-affiliated Tajiks.<sup>150</sup> NTM-A officials, however, maintain that they have been closely monitoring the distribution of fellowships for such programs.<sup>151</sup>

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per cent Hazara, 9 per cent Uzbek, 4 per cent Aimak, 3 per cent Turkmen, 2 per cent Baloch and 4 per cent other.

<sup>146</sup> Crisis Group interview, Daral Uloom, 30 September 2009.

<sup>147</sup> David Brunnstrom, “Reluctant Pashtuns hamper Afghan recruitment drive”, Reuters, 3 March 2010.

<sup>148</sup> Crisis Group interview, NTM-A official, Kandahar, 21 February 2010.

<sup>149</sup> MOD does not officially track the affiliations of its leaders and few details on the backgrounds of ANA and MOD officials are publicly available. However, Crisis Group conducted several interviews with MOD and ANA officials and an informal survey of top ANA and MOD officials revealed that a large number of officers maintain close ties with the Shuray-e Nazar network. Several other smaller cadres were also detailed in the survey, but the majority of officers named appeared to ally themselves with more significant powerbrokers such as Bismillah Khan and Minister Wardak.

<sup>150</sup> Crisis Group interview, German military official, Berlin, 2 March 2010.

<sup>151</sup> NTM-A stated in fiscal year 2010 to date, of 79 Afghan officers and NCOs and government civilians sent to the U.S. for

#### 4. Logistics and infrastructure

The international community’s infantry-centric approach to building the ANA and neglect of non-combat training in the early years after the Taliban’s fall have triggered perennial shortages in personnel specialising in logistics and supply. It was not until 2008 that mentoring programs began to focus on developing the army’s logistical capacity. There is now widespread recognition that existing systems are “institutionally immature and insufficiently effective”, with NTM-A/CSTC-A publicly acknowledging that insufficient logistics and supply chains have caused operational paralysis.<sup>152</sup> If not urgently addressed, the ANA will be unable to support its growing size, prolonging its dependence on the U.S. and NATO.

The shortage of logistics personnel does not only stem from under investment by external actors and the Afghan government but also reflects high illiteracy rates and insufficient mathematical proficiency. MOD’s overcentralised bureaucracy and capricious administrative practices also contribute to logistical logjams. Supplies are often blocked due to lack of transparency in requisitions and inadequate accounting methods, which in turn result in pilferage.

According to a senior Afghan officer:

The framework of our logistics system is modelled on NATO standards but the content is still Warsaw Pact. Food provisions and dining halls are based on a very old and obsolete system, created by backward bureaucrats in the procurement department of the ministry of defence. Without [international] support ... this logistics system wouldn’t last a week... Five hundred of my soldiers are tasked with kitchen work and cleaning dining halls. These five hundred could be used instead as a manoeuvre battalion. Instead of hauling sacks of rice, these soldiers could be relaxing, getting quality training, eating well and then going back to the battlefield.<sup>153</sup>

Afghan military leaders seem unwilling to support the growth of specialised non-combat services. Several NTM-A/CSTC-A officers said that it was not uncommon for specially trained soldiers and NCOs to become the personal assistants of Afghan officers, instead of being sent where skilled soldiers are in short supply.

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training, 57 per cent have been Pashtun, 28 per cent Tajik, 14 per cent Hazara, 1 per cent Uzbek. Crisis Group email correspondence, 8 May 2010.

<sup>152</sup> Inspector General’s Office, U.S. Department of Defense, SPO-2009-007, 20 September 2009, pp. 14, 25.

<sup>153</sup> Crisis Group interview, Herat, 18 January 2010.

Housing shortages and weak infrastructure further compound the army's logistical problems. Poor contract and project oversight and personnel shortages have persistently bedevilled the construction of ANA facilities. For instance, a U.S. Department of Defense audit of some fifteen U.S. Army Corps of Engineer contracts valued at \$743.8 million, including contracts for construction on ANA housing facilities, found that most had been inadequately executed and overseen.<sup>154</sup> A more recent review of U.S. Army Corps of Engineer projects found that a shortage of Army Corps staff has caused more than half of ANA facility construction projects to lag by 10 per cent.<sup>155</sup>

Although the U.S. is the lead nation on army to constructing facilities. The creation of the NATO ANA Trust Fund in February 2007 signals greater support for long-term army development. Contributions, however, have fallen short of donor rhetoric. As some NATO nations begin to draw down combat forces, the coalition should consider a major funding drive to increase contributions to the trust and perhaps even replace outgoing combat units with teams of engineers.

## **B. IN THE FIELD**

Criteria for assessing the ANA's field capabilities have been controversial from the start. In the beginning, fundamental disagreements within the U.S. defence community over these criteria led to a failure to identify early signs of the challenges that lay ahead. In 2005, CSTC-A established the use of "capability milestones" to assess the readiness of an army unit, ministerial agency or functional department. The different levels of operational capacity range from Capability Milestone 1 (CM1), considered fully capable of conducting its primary mission but may require some outside assistance, to CM4 for units incapable of conducting their primary operational missions and thus only able to conduct parts of their mission with assistance from international forces.

During its first six years, the ANA's international backers encountered significant obstacles in creating mission ready units. By 2008, only two out of 105 ANA units were rated CM1, while 38 required regular international assistance, and 65 had yet to be fully formed or needed full international assistance to operate.<sup>156</sup> Rapid expansion of the army has resulted in a visible decline in the operational readiness of fielded units. In May 2009, 47 units were assessed as capable of operating independently, but that

number dropped to 44 in September 2009, a 6 per cent decrease in one quarter, and hit an all new low of only 34 units as of December 2009, representing a 23 per cent drop in that quarter.<sup>157</sup>

Although ANA forces are now reported to be "in the lead" on more than 50 per cent of operations, many of these operations are simple tasks such as patrols or maintenance of security checkpoints.<sup>158</sup> Battalion and brigade operations are rarely conducted without considerable assistance, if not under outright international direction and control. Accordingly, several CSTC-A trainers have raised doubts about the actual readiness of the ANA, suggesting that statistical measures such as capability milestones often hide a unit's deficiencies. Concerns about the utility and accuracy of capability metrics has resulted in a U.S. government review of the capability milestone system, raising the further possibility that such measures do not reflect the quality of troops in the field.<sup>159</sup>

The ANA might, for instance, have played a significant role in some major operations such as the February 2010 "Operation Moshtarak" in the volatile southern town of Marjah in Helmand province, where some 2,000 ANA troops were deployed but the lead was still taken by roughly 10,000 coalition counterparts. In fact, most ANA units remain only partially operational and generally junior participants in counterinsurgency operations. For instance, 600 to 650 ANA troops were deployed during "Operation Khanjar" in July 2009, only after U.S. officials publicly complained about the paucity of Afghan security forces in the region.<sup>160</sup>

The absence of sufficient numbers of ANA troops, particularly in insecure areas, stems less from manpower shortages than management failures. Until very recently, the defence ministry and the general staff made little effort to rationalise procedures for the deployment and rotation of Afghan troops. Many Afghan soldiers assigned to units in the south spend the majority of their three-year tours on the frontlines with little or no relief. MOD officials say they have tried to institute more stringent rotational schedules to give frontline soldiers time to recover and to introduce new units to battlefield conditions.

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<sup>154</sup> "Contracts Awarded to Assist the Global War on Terrorism by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers", Office of the Inspector General, U.S. Department of Defense, Report No. D-2006-007, 14 October 2005.

<sup>155</sup> Inspector General's Office, U.S. Department of Defense, Report No. SPO-2009-007, 30 September 2009, p. 14.

<sup>156</sup> U.S. GAO, June 2008, op. cit., p. 3.

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<sup>157</sup> SIGAR, 30 October 2009, op. cit., p. 61 and SIGAR, 30 January 2010, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>158</sup> NATO tracks many of these operations in numerous press releases to highlight the ANA's readiness. See for instance, "Successful Operation in Southern Afghanistan", NATO press release, 22 January 2010 or "Afghan National Army Takes Lead in District Sweep", NATO press release, 22 December 2009.

<sup>159</sup> SIGAR, 30 April 2010, op. cit., p. 54.

<sup>160</sup> See Bob Woodward "Key in Afghanistan: economy, not military", *The Washington Post*, 1 July 2009; and Rajiv Chandrasekaran, "Marines Deploy on Major Mission", *The Washington Post*, 1 July 2009.

The chief of army operations, however, argues that ANA commanders in less volatile areas are reluctant to part with their best assets, and soldiers are also reluctant to leave those regions. “If I’m a corps commander, I’d rather have battle-tested soldiers than a bunch of green soldiers”, said an senior Afghan officer, while admitting that it was “necessary to rotate the battalions not just because they are needed for combat, but because they need the experience....But when I travel to different places to see soldiers they tell me, ‘Sir, I’m familiar with this place. I don’t want to leave this place’. Field commanders say: ‘Yes, that’s fine if you want me to rotate my men, but only if you give me a battalion that has the equivalent level of training and experience’”.<sup>161</sup>

Prolonged deployment on the frontlines lowers morale. The defence ministry can no longer afford to keep neglecting deficiencies in the ANA’s rotational program, and it must resolve differences with the general staff over deployments. Failure to do so will blunt the effectiveness of the army against the insurgency. Rotation challenges are again symptomatic of wider problems that must be addressed before the army achieves the projected personnel goal of 240,000.

The ANA’s dependence on international forces for air power also hinders its development, and will likely compel Kabul to extend Karzai’s 2015 deadline for assuming full responsibility for security. It is questionable, for instance, whether NTM-A and Afghan officials will achieve the goal of 8,000 men and 84 fixed wing and 62 rotary wing aircraft by 2016.<sup>162</sup> By January 2010, air corps strength was around 2,800 men and 46 aircraft, most of which are Russian-made.<sup>163</sup> Only one Afghan pilot had been fully trained and graduated from the NTM-A-led training program.<sup>164</sup>

With the introduction, in November 2009, of the U.S.-made C-27 cargo plane have come renewed expectations that more sophisticated aircraft will be added to the fleet in the coming years. Yet there are enormous challenges to the ANAAC’s growth, including financial sustainability. For example, according to the calculations of a senior NTM-A official, the planned introduction of up to eighteen C-27 aircraft by 2016 would bring the cost of operating only a small portion of the ANAAC fleet to at least

\$21.6 million a year, not including additional costs for large-scale repairs, inflation and more personnel.<sup>165</sup>

The bulk of the air corps consists of middle-aged Afghans trained in the Soviet Union during the 1970s and 1980s. Since the switch to NATO flight training standards requires ANAAC personnel to have a strong command of English, retraining these individuals is all the more challenging. CSTC-A has begun intensive English language training both in-country and for select ANAAC personnel in the United States, often extending for up to a year. Afghan and U.S. military officials acknowledged that several sent for training to the U.S. overstayed their visas after completing the course.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Crisis Group interview, Lt. Gen. Shir Mohammad Karimi, chief of army operations, Kabul, 24 November 2009.

<sup>162</sup> Cordesman, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>163</sup> The Afghan military once operated fifteen divisions, with 120 jet aircraft plus armed helicopters. *Ibid.*, p. 29.

<sup>164</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior NTM-A official, Kabul, 12 January 2010.

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<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>166</sup> Crisis Group interview, Major General Mohammad Dawran, ANAAC Commander, Kabul, 16 January 2010.

## VI. A STRATEGIC WAY FORWARD

Although there are encouraging signs of improvement in the ANA, there are five critical threats to the strategic way forward in pursuing full Afghan control of the army, as agreed at the January 2010 London Conference, including: relations between the military and international forces, regional dynamics, fiscal sustainability, the challenges of defining Afghanistan's National Security Policy and incoherent, premature engagement with insurgent forces. Currently, the role, rights and responsibilities of international forces in Afghanistan are only outlined in an exchange of notes in 2002 and 2003.<sup>167</sup> Although the Afghan government has on several occasions indicated its desire to stipulate the authorities under which NATO/ISAF and U.S. forces operate, no formal status of forces of agreement has been signed to date.<sup>168</sup> With the July 2011 deadline outlined by U.S. President Barack Obama at West Point for a partial draw down of combat forces looming, the U.S. and its partners can no longer put off discussions with the Afghan government about establishing a status of forces agreement for NATO and U.S. troops.<sup>169</sup> The roles and goals of all military actors must be clearly defined if mutual trust is to be established.

Any serious assessment of the ANA's future role must also factor in regional relationships, which many Afghan politicians argue that the Karzai government, the U.S. and NATO have ignored in shaping the army. According to Nurul Haq Oloomi, a member of the Wolesi Jirga Defence Commission:

Given the geopolitical position of Afghanistan and its neighbouring countries, it is important to look at what kind of army Afghanistan needs. Right now, there is no long-term guarantee for Afghanistan's defence. There is a need for a medium-sized ANA that serves as a deterrent and at the very least these forces need to be self-sufficient... Quality over quantity is the most important thing. Material, money, equipment, vehicles – we might be able to supply these ourselves sooner

<sup>167</sup> The diplomatic notes exchanged between the U.S. Embassy in Kabul and the Afghan Ministry of Foreign Affairs provided U.S. military and civilian personnel diplomatic status under the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. Steve Bowman, Catherine Dale, "War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations, and Issues for Congress", Congressional Research Service, 3 December, 2009, p. 21.

<sup>168</sup> See Carlotta Gall, "Afghans want a deal on foreign troops", *The New York Times*, 25 August 2008; and Laura Rozen, "Afghanistan seeking SOFA terms", *Foreign Policy*, [http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/02/24/afghanistan\\_seeking\\_sofa\\_lite](http://thecable.foreignpolicy.com/posts/2009/02/24/afghanistan_seeking_sofa_lite).

<sup>169</sup> Sheryl Gay Stolberg and Helene Cooper, "Obama adds troops, but maps exit plan", *The New York Times*, 1 December 2009.

than expected, but what is most needed is a comprehensive strategy. The Afghan state and the international community must agree on this strategy and within this strategic framework, the emphasis must be on a solid ANA.<sup>170</sup>

Many of Afghanistan's troubles stem from its uneasy relations with its neighbours, particularly Pakistan. Islamabad has consistently used Islamist Pashtun jihadi proxies to promote its perceived interests in part because of Kabul's irredentist claims over Pakistan's Pashtun-majority border areas. Because the Pakistani military sees itself as the inheritor of British India's colonial role, interventionist policies towards Afghanistan are also aimed at promoting Pakistan's dominance over a country that it believes falls under its sphere of influence. It is in this context that the Pakistani military negatively perceives India's close and longstanding relationship with elements of the current Afghan political and military elite.<sup>171</sup>

To the north, Russia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and other former Soviet republics have taken on renewed importance with the launch of the Northern Distribution Network (NDN).<sup>172</sup> To the west, Iran continues to play a significant role as both investor and spoiler in Afghanistan. Iran's investment of millions of dollars in reconstruction in western Afghanistan in particular has reinforced perceptions of Tehran's desire to maintain its regional influence.<sup>173</sup> At the same time, Iran's traditional hostility toward the Sunni extremist Taliban appears to have softened recently as its longstanding rivalry with the U.S. has hardened, as is evident in recent reports that the Iranians are training the Taliban.<sup>174</sup>

The U.S. and NATO presence has had a paradoxical effect on the region, simultaneously increasing tensions between actors such as Iran, Pakistan and India while realigning the interests of others such as Russia, China and

<sup>170</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 21 December 2009.

<sup>171</sup> See Crisis Group Report, *Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency: No Quick Fixes*, op. cit.

<sup>172</sup> The NDN was launched in 2009 in response to repeated attacks on supply lines in Pakistan that threatened to cripple U.S. troop surge plans. Negotiations to open the new route began in 2008. For detailed analysis of the potential geopolitical ramifications of the NDN, see Andrew C. Kuchins and Thomas M. Sanderson, "The Northern Distribution Network and Afghanistan: Geopolitical Challenges and Opportunities", Centre for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, January 2010. See also Candace Rondeaux and Walter Pincus, "NATO materiel threatened in Pakistan", *The Washington Post*, 18 December 2008.

<sup>173</sup> Jason Motlagh, "Iran's spending spree in Afghanistan", *TIME Magazine*, 17 May 2009.

<sup>174</sup> "Iranians train Taliban to use roadside bombs", *Sunday Times of London*, 21 March 2010.

Central Asian states who have a vested interest in a stable Afghanistan. The regional dimensions of the conflict impose serious limitations on the ANA's ability to respond to threats on its own. It is unlikely, for instance, that the Afghan army will be able in the near future to confront the threat from terrorist safe havens in Pakistan's border areas without significant assistance from U.S. intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets in the region. U.S. forces, in turn, are likely to become increasingly dependent on Afghan security forces to hold the line on the southern and eastern borders, as U.S. combat forces draw down over time. This mutual dependence raises important questions about the sustainability of the Afghan army in the long term.

Expanding the military to a force size of 171,600 in the near term and 240,000 in the long term will undoubtedly strain the country's limited fiscal resources. Efforts to expand the scale and size of the army and police will cost a considerable sum with some estimates projecting \$3.5 billion a year to grow the size of the force and an additional \$2.2 billion a year to maintain it.<sup>175</sup> In 2008, the Afghan government was only able to contribute \$320 million to cover those costs.<sup>176</sup> Given the prolonged economic stagnation in the country more careful analysis needs to be done of the long-term impact of the security sector on overall stability. Sustainability is strategy in this case, and a thorough strategic assessment of Afghan army costs will take into account the political constraints donor nations like the U.S. will inevitably face as public support for American intervention dwindles.

The size of the Afghan national security forces depends very much on the threats the country faces. Threat reduction, therefore, must be prioritised as a means to achieving economies of scale for the security forces. But the absence of a consensus within the Afghan government on a national security strategy has left open a policy vacuum. Important questions such as force size, equipment and infrastructure expenditures are decided by donor countries with little coherent input from Kabul. Meanwhile, Afghan institutions such as the ONSC, which should play a lead role in forecasting the fiscal and strategic implications of security sector reform, have been marginalised by a lack of international investment.<sup>177</sup> Since the army's expansion will undoubtedly require a great deal more funding, there should be a parallel emphasis on enhancing the

ONSC's capabilities as the lead coordinating body in charge of prioritising security sector policies and expenditures.<sup>178</sup>

Established in 2002 under the direction of then National Security Adviser Zalmay Rasoul, the ONSC advises the president on security matters as well as shapes national security policy. Under Rasoul, a French-trained medical doctor with close ties to the late King Zahir Shah, the institution was slow to evolve. Inexperienced in military and security matters, Rasoul, who became foreign minister in January 2010, was unable to rally the council to its chief task. Karzai, too, has proved reluctant to fulfil his role as commander-in-chief and to develop the needed interagency coordination.

Plans are currently underway to build an \$11.5 million facility in Kabul for the council that would serve as a nerve centre for national security planning.<sup>179</sup> Modelled, in part, on the "Situation Room" in the White House, the facility would enable the Afghan government to make real-time assessments of ongoing security developments. This and other incremental efforts have been shepherded by a handful of U.S. and UK officials. For the bulk of the international community, however, the ONSC is little more than an afterthought, allowing the Karzai administration to employ some of the most ineffective members of its patronage network in one of the country's most vital security organs.

As of March 2010, there were only two international advisers assigned to ONSC development, both contractors with MPRI, a U.S. contractor.<sup>180</sup> The ONSC has 147 authorised positions, a third of which remained unfilled as of late March 2010.<sup>181</sup> Although there are many highly educated and experienced technocrats in senior positions, the bulk of ONSC staff are poorly educated. Only an estimated 76 per cent of the total staff has a high school education.<sup>182</sup> A vast majority are young and lack the career experience to tackle many of the complex tasks facing the council, and many have been given jobs through patronage networks. Efforts are underway to recruit can-

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<sup>175</sup> "War in Afghanistan: Strategy, Military Operations, and Issues for Congress", Congressional Research Service, op. cit., p. 62.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>177</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior U.S. military official, Kabul, 2 February 2010.

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<sup>178</sup> For an analysis of security sector spending in Afghanistan see "Afghanistan Managing Public Finances for Development, Main Report" Vol. 1, Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Sector Unit, South Asia Region, World Bank, Report No. 34582-AF, 22 December 2005.

<sup>179</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior U.S. military official, Kabul, 2 February 2010.

<sup>180</sup> The current ONSC advisers are contractors with MPRI, a major U.S. military contractor based in Alexandria, Virginia. NTM-A and Afghan officials plan to double the number of ONSC advisers to four within the next year.

<sup>181</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior Afghan government official, 14 March 2010.

<sup>182</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior Afghan government official, 14 March 2010.

didates for the ONSC staff with better language skills and greater analytical capabilities. Funding limitations could make it difficult for the Afghan government to offer attractive salaries to candidates in a competitive labour market.<sup>183</sup>

Afghan officials cite the lack of trained staff and bureaucratic resistance to change as major reasons behind the council's slow development. Ensuring the professionalism of ONSC leaders and staff is essential to developing its full potential. University or military academy degrees should be the minimum requirement for ONSC staff. Parliamentary approval of appointments of both the National Security Adviser and the Deputy National Security Adviser should be required and bars against nepotism adhered to strictly. The council also still lacks the requisite tools and mechanisms to evaluate potential legislation aimed at reducing security threats. It has been unable to reduce corruption and waste in defence contracting and procurement processes because of an apparent lack of understanding of anti-corruption laws.

There are some signs that the Afghan government and the international community have begun to recognise the vital role the council could play in shaping security sector reform and development. After years of inactivity, the ONSC has begun drafting a National Security Policy and it is scheduled to publish a National Threat Assessment, detailing a broad range of current and future challenges to Afghanistan's security. Yet Afghan and U.S. officials have noted difficulties in gathering information for even this most fundamental of national security documents. To remove bureaucratic barriers to information collection, the president and parliament should consider authorising the ONSC to issue orders requiring government agencies and officials to produce materials or information deemed relevant to its work. Failure to respond to such requests in a timely manner should result in legal penalties. ONSC, in turn, should be required to produce regular reports on national security, in consultation with the appropriate defence commissions in parliament.

In order to enhance its understanding of the numerous policy challenges facing the security sector, the ONSC should consult more regularly with parliament. The parliament in turn should consider creating special term-limited liaisons for the upper and lower house, tasked with transmitting legislative positions on defence policy to the ONSC and regularly reporting back to the parliament's defence, internal affairs and justice commissions. NTM-A/CSTC-A too should work in concert with key international actors in Kabul to track legislation pertaining to the national

security sector and to advise the ONSC on potential political and fiscal implications of proposed legislation.

The ONSC has the potential to bring together the disparate interests of key ministries, especially the defence ministry, interior ministry and the National Directorate of Security. For example, the council was instrumental in the promulgation of the presidential decree of 22 January 2010 that banned the use, production, storage and sale of ammonium nitrate fertiliser, often a primary element in improvised explosive devices.<sup>184</sup> The decision followed sizable seizures of ammonium nitrate by NATO/ISAF forces in 2009.<sup>185</sup> Since most ammonium nitrate is imported from Central Asia and Pakistan, customs control will be vital to enforcing the ban. A properly constituted ONSC could play a lead role in persuading Pakistan and other neighbours to help implement the ban. Unfortunately, the ONSC has only been a minor player on more pivotal issues, including Karzai's decision to initiate reconciliation talks with the Taliban, even if it occasionally has been responsible for bringing senior Taliban figures to the negotiating table.

A plan for reintegration and reconciliation of insurgents was announced at the January 2010 London Conference, and a trust fund created for the purpose, with pledges of \$500 million by the international community.<sup>186</sup> The Karzai government and the U.S.-led coalition plan to distribute funds and provide benefits to those insurgents, and the communities that have sheltered them, who are willing to give up the gun. But as one senior Afghan government adviser warned, "the devil will be in the details".<sup>187</sup>

The current proposals circulating Kabul's corridors of power appear rushed and undeveloped. There is little clarity on the criteria for reintegration and no visible consensus on how to identify insurgent leaders who are reconcilable. While some influential actors, including the U.S., advocate reintegrating foot soldiers and low- and mid-level commanders into the mainstream, others, particularly the UK and the UN, favour negotiations with the

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<sup>184</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior U.S. military official, Kabul, 2 February 2010.

<sup>185</sup> Dexter Filkins, "Bomb material cache uncovered in Afghanistan", *The New York Times*, 10 November 2009; Allan Cullison and Yaroslav Trofimov, "Karzai Bans Ingredient of Taliban's Roadside Bombs", *The Wall Street Journal*, 22 January 2010.

<sup>186</sup> Mark Landler and Alissa J. Rubin, "War plan for Karzai: reach out to Taliban", *The New York Times* 28 January 2010; Robert Marquand, "At London Afghanistan conference, a developing script of withdrawal", *The Christian Science Monitor*, 28 January 2010.

<sup>187</sup> Crisis Group interview, Massoum Stanekzai, special adviser to the president on reconciliation and reintegration, Kabul, 11 February 2010.

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<sup>183</sup> Crisis Group interview, senior ONSC official, Kabul, 16 March 2010.

Taliban shura, headed by Mullah Omar, a policy also supported by the Karzai government. There has been inadequate consideration of the destabilising consequences particularly on the ANA, with military leaders strongly opposing premature reintegration and reconciliation efforts. The degree of resistance to reintegration and reconciliation varies from corps commanders to rank-and-file soldiers but the views of a core section of the military leadership are reflected in army chief Bismillah Khan's position, who argued:

I think negotiations with the Taliban should be conducted when they are under serious political and military pressure, when we feel our hands are up and their hands are down. Only at that time will our conditions be fully accepted. This noise about reconciliation from this government has been detrimental. It has boosted the Taliban's morale and demoralised us and it will not have any practical results because the Taliban will feel that they are the victors, and that they have the upper hand.<sup>188</sup>

With Karzai's personal standing is at an all-time low after the fraudulent presidential election, many suspect that his reconciliation policy is aimed far more at regaining lost ground with his Pashtun base, than at a genuine effort to seek a durable peace.<sup>189</sup> Swift moves to cut deals with the predominantly Pashtun insurgents are likely to increase ethnic frictions and exacerbate factional tensions countrywide, as well as within the army and defence ministry. Under these conditions, reintegration and reconciliation, as currently conceived by Kabul and the U.S.-led coalition, would not result in a peaceful settlement of the conflict. Instead, if the ANA and international forces were given the time to first neutralise the threat from the insurgency, reintegration and reconciliation efforts could help stabilise the state and its institutions, instead of plunging the country into chaos, providing violent extremists an opportunity to once again exploit internal tensions.

## VII. CONCLUSION

The ANA could indeed help stabilise Afghanistan. The army enjoys more popular support than many other state institutions, and its development is much further along than the ANP's.<sup>190</sup> There is, however, no guarantee that the army can sustain its current rate of growth and many challenges remain including lack of leadership, low literacy, and poor logistics capabilities. While factionalism and corruption within the defence ministry pose as serious a threat to the army as the insurgency, development at the scale and rate proposed by the Afghan government and NTM-A will eventually overextend domestic and international resources. Further expanding the army without addressing these underlying problems could worsen rather than improve security.

Creating an army capable of both serving a civilian government and partnering with coalition forces to rout the insurgency is admittedly a complex task, and one that requires more nuanced thinking about the overall defence posture of Afghanistan now and in the future. The proliferation of armed groups, including those based in Pakistan's tribal areas, will likely remain a key component of Afghanistan's defence posture. Developing the Afghan military's capacity to engage tactical elements such as air power, intelligence and commando units in service of a strategy to reduce internal and external threats will therefore be crucial.

Although the U.S. and NATO have repeatedly stated that quality matters as much quantity, this has yet to be reflected in their efforts to develop the army. As a retired U.S. lieutenant general argues, the simple view of ANA development is "akin to a fisherman's catch and release policy ... provide some training, distribute uniforms and equipment, and release them into the battle zone. When the numbers caught and released reach the predetermined goal, the train-and-equip mission is complete and the intervening forces can go home".<sup>191</sup> The current infantry-centric approach to developing the Afghan military could also undermine Kabul's ability to deliver security on its own, once international forces withdraw. NTM-A must renew its emphasis and investment in the development of supply, logistics and intelligence capabilities in the Afghan army and NATO must do what it can to finance such efforts.

<sup>188</sup> Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 17 February 2010.

<sup>189</sup> See Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°96, *Afghanistan: Elections and the Crisis of Governance*, 25 November 2009.

<sup>190</sup> See Crisis Group Asia Report N°138, *Reforming Afghanistan's Police*, 30 August 2007 and Crisis Group Asia Briefing N°85, *Policing in Afghanistan: Still Searching for a Strategy*, 18 December 2008.

<sup>191</sup> Lt. Gen. (retired) James M. Dubik, "The Simple vs. The Complete", Institute for the Study of War, 12 March 2009.

If the ANA is to be a key pillar of security, the president, the ONSC, parliament and NTM-A will have to do much more to institute policies that minimise internal factionalism, including defusing current tensions between the defence minister and the army chief. As a necessary first step, parliament should pass, and President Karzai should sign, the proposed law on ANA personnel, clarifying demarcation of authority between the two offices and rationalising rank and promotions. Enhancing the quality of military leadership depends greatly on well-defined lines of authority and a clear delineation of soldiers' and officers' rights and responsibilities. More tanks, guns, and boots on the ground are not the only ingredients of a working army. Pensions, salaries, promotions and other benefits must be managed effectively.

The U.S., NATO and the Afghan government will also have to rein in an MOD bureaucracy that has paralysed institutional development by broadening civilian input into the ministry and professionalising its personnel. The government should also build the ONSC's capacity to address and define critical policy issues, and thus move toward a more coherent national security approach. Indeed, the defence ministry's role should be to implement strategic policies developed by the ONSC. Parliament can play a role in improving both institutions, by regularly reviewing the defence ministry's performance and playing a more proactive role in assisting the ONSC with the crucial task of developing a dynamic national security strategy. Developing the ANA cannot be done on the cheap, but the price tag will be considerably higher without a broad national review of military policy. The Afghan government as a whole must assume a more prominent role in shaping its defence doctrine and assessing the strengths and weaknesses of its armed forces, so that they are no longer perceived as serving NATO first and Afghanistan second.

**Kabul/Brussels, 12 May 2010**



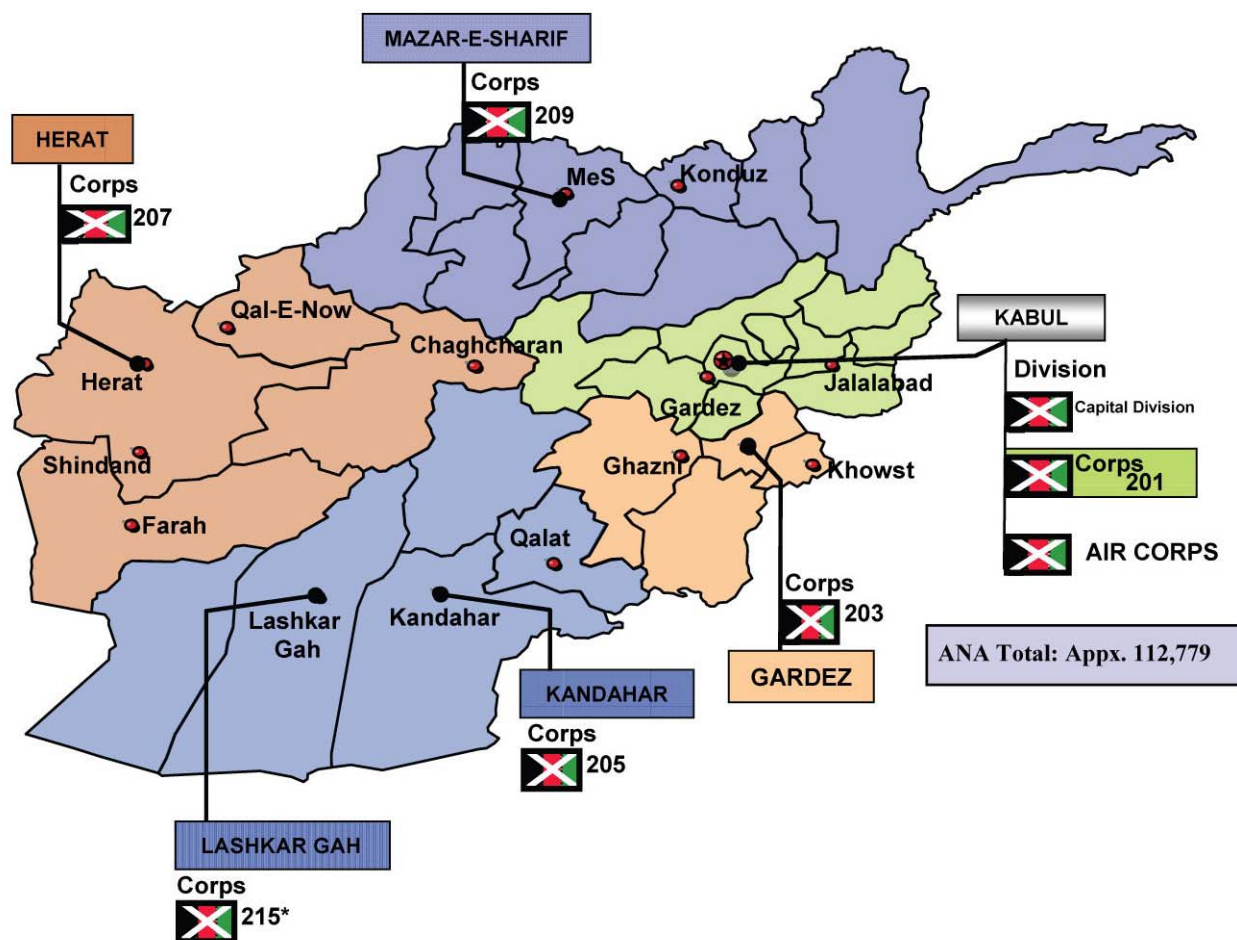
## APPENDIX A

### MAP OF AFGHANISTAN



## APPENDIX B

### MAP OF ANA REGIONAL COMMAND AREAS



\* Maiwand Corps activated 1 April 2010.

Map amended from <http://aco.nato.int/page265721841.aspx>, accessed 12 May 2010.

## APPENDIX C

### GLOSSARY OF TERMS

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AMF	Afghan Military Force
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANAAC	Afghan National Army Air Corps
ANBP	Afghanistan's New Beginnings Program
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghan National Security Forces
AWOL	Absent Without Leave
CFC	Consolidated Fielding Centre
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan
DDR	Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration
ETT	Embedded Training Team
GAO	Government Accountability Office (U.S.)
IJC	ISAF Joint Command
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JCMB	Joint Coordination Monitoring Board
KMTC	Kabul Military Training Center
MDU	Mobile Disarmament Unit
NCO	Non-Commissioned Officer
NTM-A	NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan
OMLT	Operational Mentor and Liaison Team
ONSC	Office of National Security Council
OSC-A	Office of Security Cooperation-Afghanistan, formerly OMC-A (Office of Military Cooperation-Afghanistan)
PMT	Police Mentor Team
RVC	Regional Verification Committee
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

## APPENDIX D

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