

Mission Experience, the Practical Aspects of Peace Soldiering: United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

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Afghanistan is a land, hardly matched with any country of the world because of its peculiar and unique characteristics. From socio-economical to geo-political or any other causes make this land very much different from all its neighbors. A lot of experts on Afghan issues believe that the phenomena in Afghanistan shouldn't be evaluated just on the basis of ordinary logic and approaches. To know Afghanistan one has to do a deep study of all its features. Unless you live among the specific regions and communities, it is not possible to gain any correct information about them.

Average life expectancy for Afghanistan's 28.5 million people is 44.5 years, at least 20 years lower than that of neighboring countries. One of two Afghans can be classified as poor, and 20.4 percent of the rural population does not have enough to eat, getting less than the benchmark of 2,070 calories a day. More than half of the population has suffered from the effects of a prolonged drought. One-quarter of the population has at some time sought refuge outside the country, and 3.6 million remain refugees or displaced people. Most

glaring are the inequalities that affect women and children. One woman dies from pregnancy-related causes about every 30 minutes, and maternal mortality rates are 60 times higher than in industrialized countries. One-fifth of the children die before the age of five; 80 percent of them from preventable diseases, one of the worst rates in the world. Only 25 percent of the population has access to clean drinking water, and one in eight children die from lack of clean water. Afghanistan now has the worst education system in the world and one of the lowest adult literacy rates, only 28.7 percent. Annual per capita income was \$190 and the unemployment rate 25 percent.

The modern history of Afghanistan, and especially the experience of Britain and Russia, shows that foreign efforts to create governments in that country can be doomed to failure. Foreign countries and international groups should only define political criteria that would lead to international acceptance and a major redevelopment effort and allow the Afghans themselves to work out political solutions that meet them. Nevertheless assistance, advice and money are needed.

International environment

Several distinct overt policy interventions have taken place in Afghanistan. Each has different though related goals and leadership.

- Operation Enduring Freedom, the first front in the “global war on terrorism”.

- The implementation of the Bonn Agreement led by UNAMA
- The International Security Assistance Force ISAF
- The recovery, reconstruction and development effort, initially led by UN, international financial institutions and donor agencies, now by the Afghanistan Development Forum and Consultative Groups, chaired by the Afghan government.

The US is in a unique position to provide leadership in any international effort directed towards Afghanistan.

CENTCOM currently has about 19,000 Coalition Forces in Afghanistan as part of Operation Enduring Freedom. This total includes some 17,300 U.S. and about 1,700 Coalition personnel from seventeen nations. All are commanded by Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan (CFC-A) which assures unity of effort with the U.S. Ambassador in Kabul and manages the military-to-military relationship with the Governments of Afghanistan, Pakistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and the NATO-ISAF. Combined Joint Task Force – 76 (CJTF-76) is a division-level subordinate command with 14 separate task forces; including combat, support, medical, engineering and training units. Linked into CJTF-76 is a robust special operations capability.

In 2005 the Coalition will focus on six imperatives:

1. continued direct pressure against enemy sanctuary through offensive operations
2. building competent, capable Afghan security forces
3. completing the DDR program

4. anchoring Afghan control of the countryside, instilling confidence in the Afghan Government and enabling reconstruction and good governance through PRTs
5. facilitating cooperation with neighboring friendly states
6. increase Coalition coordination with the expanding NATO presence

In 2005 the UK leads an accelerating international assistance effort for Afghanistan's counter-narcotics program. The Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL) leads U.S. national efforts that partner with the UK-led program, and U.S. forces in Afghanistan are in strong support. To support INL's assistance of Afghanistan's counter narcotics fight U.S. established a Counter Narcotics Branch in their Tampa Joint Interagency Coordination Group (JIACG) to better coordinate Department of Defense's support for U.S. national efforts.

Training, equipping and mentoring the Afghan National Army (ANA) remains the key component for military activities to stabilize Afghanistan. American field commanders report that ANA companies perform extremely well in combat against insurgents along the Afghanistan's southern borders.

Reconstruction remains an important part of isolating the enemies and depriving them of their support base. PRTs number nineteen today, with fourteen directed by CFC-A and five under the authority of ISAF. CFC-A and ISAF

plans to expand to another seven sites, producing a total of 26 PRTs by the end of 2007. ISAF will take over three Coalition PRTs in the west during 2005 and up to four more in the south by 2006.

Thanks to the US-led military intervention, a UN-mediated political process and a moderate level of international assistance an international respected and domestically legitimate government increasingly governs a conflict-prone, insecure, slightly less destitute country, still suffering from drought or floods and setting new records in drug trafficking and which is threatened by further conflict due to both domestic issues and regional tensions linked to the US's Global War on Terror.

Security

Most Afghans say that the security has improved but they also cite it as their principal problem. They cite the general state of impunity exploited by commanders (warlords), not the Taliban or Al-Qaida, as the main source of insecurity and they see establishment of the rule of law and disarmament as the solution. Many militias have been disbanded but some claim that this has actually increased insecurity, especially in northern Afghanistan, as the former fighters still have their personal weapons and are not integrated and the new institutions are not yet effective.

The term "Security - threats" needs to be defined. For the state of Afghanistan it means foreign influence which enables the government to make its own decisions, the

lack of ability to get grip over the country outside Kabul, the possibility that public opinion might change against the government if the promises are not fulfilled and the danger that Afghanistan turns into a Narcotic-state.

For the deployed forces, UNAMA and the international community it is the threat from hostile acts carried out by Hezb-e-Islami Gulbuddin, Al-Qaida and remnants of the Taliban. For the people of Afghanistan it's the rape of woman and children, kidnapping, murder, illegal detention by corrupt police force, forced displacement and human trafficking.

Most Afghans as well as human rights organizations, define security as the security of ordinary Afghan civilians from attacks from any quarter. Afghans consistently identify commanders/warlords rather than Taliban or Al-Qaida as the main threat to their security. No international organization has a mandate to protect Afghans from such insecurity. The partial exception is UNAMA, whose mandate is restricted to monitoring investigating human rights violations. Some Afghans in the main areas of CFC-A's operation identify the Coalition as a security threat, which has led thousands of people to demonstrate against CFC-A and others to join the Anti- Government-Elements.

Government

The cabinet signals the predominance in the elite of English-speaking Pashtuns with strong ties to Washington and some have argued that it is a sign of the

reassertion of Pashtun domination under the sponsorship of the US with the support of Pakistan. The security apparatus has made the first steps away from factional control and towards professionalism based on legal authority, but the newly trained portions of the security forces are still pilot programs confronted with the power of militia groups or drug traffickers.

The trend of demobilization of militias and establishment of new security forces is positive though it is still too early to tell if these will be uniformly accepted across the country. A contrary trend is the formation of unofficial armed groups by drug traffickers and others.

President Karzai's Transitional Authority of Afghanistan is unstable and weak, in spite of October 2004's largely successful presidential elections. A lack of military power means the government lacks any authority beyond Kabul, while under funding and inability to enforce taxation collection further reduce the ability of the government to function. The re-emergence of warlords, some of whom were for varying periods supported by bribes and other inducements by US agencies following the invasion of the country in October 2001, has become a major factor in weakening the government. Local chieftains are independent rulers with almost complete loyalty from their tribes and/or clans. They accept the authority of central government only when accompanied by guarantees of non-interference in their regional affairs, including blatant illegality and by grants of money.

The fact that warlord militias are generally far superior in number, training and motivation to government forces means such violence often goes unchecked.

Security development

Addressing the continuing security shortfalls through:

- Configuring PRTs into a more integrated nationwide stabilization force including both local units and regional mobile units with a more robust mandate
- The expansion of ISAF and the transition of CFC-A to a stabilization rather than war-fighting mission
- A potential unification of command should also be considered.
- Disarmament of Illegal Armed Groups

A new type of peace-keeper

During the last three years Afghanistan became one test-case for a number of internationally developed concepts in the field of Peace-Keeping, State- or Nation-Building and Democratization. In fact in the field of Peace-Keeping, Afghanistan's experience might be able to teach a valuable lesson to other missions. With the United Nations having only a "light footprint", Peace-Keeping relies less on military than on political maneuvers.

In Afghanistan you find 19.000 troops of the Coalition Force without UN-mandate, 8.000 NATO troops and UNAMA with an unprecedented military component.

What you will not find is any kind of unity of command.

United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is the first Political Mission with a small military component. The Military Advisory Unit (MAU) of UNAMA consists of one General and 12 Lieutenant-Colonels at the level of Battalion Commanders of 12 different nations. In any of the present UN-Observer Missions this officers would be at least Chief Operational Officers.

As the “War on Terrorism” fought by US-led coalitions is most likely to continue UN will have to find a new role to fit in. UNAMA is often mentioned as a possible future role-model within the new environment of future Peace-Keeping.

Selection and training criteria for the new style of military assistance to missions long the line of UNAMA

The employment for officers on peacekeeping missions has changed significantly over the last few years which mean that a new style of officer is required. The current missions are departing from the traditional Peacekeeping Missions. UNAMA is the first Political Mission with a small military component

The new style of officer must have the full range of officer qualities and skills because they are employed independently and an officer with significant weaknesses in any area cannot be employed in most of the positions. In missions with more officers, one can “hide” the weaker ones but in this mission it is better to have no officer than one who does not fully meet the requirement. The normal selection for Military Liaison Officers (MLO) and Military Advisers (MA) is based on officers with a sound general military background. This is still required but it is no longer sufficient because the officers are now working under very different conditions under the command of civilians, who in many cases, have not previous experience with the military and where they are required to operate independently and deal with a wide variety of situations and people. In addition to the traditional military skills, the new style of officer must be highly skilled in each of the following areas:

- a) **Initiative:** The most important requirement for MLOs/MAs is initiative because they will normally be employed individually under circumstances that are both unique and rapidly changing. The MLOs/MAs will have to be able to function effectively on their own with only basic strategic guidance;
- b) **Interpersonal Skills:** The officers are required to deal with a wide range of civilian and military personnel. This requires an understanding of the cultures, the ability to tolerate different opinions, the sensitivity to make accommodations and the ability to maintain the focus on the mission and build a network of contacts;

- c) **English:** The working language for international missions is English and all MLOs/MAs must be fluent at both spoken and written English. All reports are required in English and even technically competent officers who are not fluent spend a disproportionate amount of time dealing with their reports and they still have problems with providing their higher headquarters with a clear picture of the situation. Therefore it is essential that all MLOs/MAs read, write and speak English fluently;
- d) **Analytical Ability:** The MLOs/MAs will be required to review situations and provide a comprehensive analysis of complex situations. This is required for their personal survival, their assessment of the local situation, their prediction of the future and their recommendations on the best course of action;
- e) **Staff Work:** The MLOs/MAs are required to report almost all of their information in writing and the reports/analysis are often distributed widely. Therefore, it is essential that the officers are able to prepare coherent logical staff work to support their investigations and analysis; and
- f) **Character:** All officers must have strong character because they are deployed independently under trying physical conditions, real danger and quite often in situations where they are subject to significant financial temptation from bribes or illegal opportunities.

As many of these characteristics cannot be developed during a short course the most effective way of staffing these positions is through a rigorous selection process by

officers who have been on deployments and are familiar with the requirements. The selection process must include interviews to assess the officers' ability in English, their management styles, their cultural tolerance and their ability to deal with stress. Once selected the officers should go through a period of training focusing on the requirements for their specific mission:

- Pre-deployment Training. Normal Pre-deployment Training for their Military;
- Mission Specific Training. Mission Specific Military Training aimed at preparing them for this specific mission to include: historical development of the conflict, the major political and military groups, the specific threats to MLOs/MAs, climate, mine awareness and any additional issues required for the specific mission;
- Cultural Training. Specific Cultural Training on the culture and history of the country. The training should focus on the information required to interact appropriately both professionally and socially with the local population of all ages and classes;
- Language Training. Officers deployed independently should go through Language Familiarization Training to allow them to conduct the minimal social amenities in the local language to open doors. There is no requirement for them to be fluent in the local language although this would be a benefit;
- Medical Training. Because they are employed independently, often in areas of significant risk, something along the lines of Combat First Aid/Combat Life Savers Course would be extremely

beneficial (some nations already provide this but it should be a pre-requisite); and

- Mission Indoctrination. In spite of all of the national pre-deployment training there must be a general Mission Briefing for all personnel arriving on the mission. The briefing for UNMOs should come from someone with military background and extensive experience in the theatre.

Based on my experience on this mission, I am firmly convinced that we need to adjust our selection criteria for MLOs/MAs and that quality is more important than quantity. One officer who does not meet the standard will not be productive and can create both administrative and operational problems that will take a great deal of effort to resolve.