

10,000 TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN IS NOT ENOUGH: RIGHTSIZING NATO'S DEVELOPMENTAL SUPPORT FORCE BEYOND 2014

This is the second paper in a series on Afghan National Army development and transition.

The Afghan National Army (ANA) is arguably the most respected institution in Afghanistan. Keeping it that way as it becomes more self-sufficient will contribute to all of NATO'S post-2014 strategic aims: improving governmental legitimacy and creating an environment for economic progress and reconciliation, as well as continuing counter-terrorist operations within Afghanistan and the region. NATO political and military leaders should be brutally honest with themselves as to the actual requirement associated with ANA development beyond 2014, and they must avoid a dangerous pitfall endemic in this kind of decision. Maintaining the ANA's positive developmental trajectory is a necessary component to both NATO's and America's post 2014 strategy.

The size of the force NATO tasks with the responsibility to continue the ANA's positive trajectory should be the conclusion of two extensive dialogues. The first determines the "objective" requirement. This discussion is not unconstrained; rather, it is limited by the overall strategic aims and the specific tasks associated with ANA developmental. The second dialogue is a discussion of the risks leaders are willing to take if a less than the "objective" requirement is fielded. These are related, but distinct, discussions. Without the outcome of the first dialogue, the second will not be grounded upon battlefield realities, so adequate risk assessments become near impossible. The combined purpose of the two dialogues is to avoid the extremes of too much and too little.

But there is danger associated with the dialogue process itself. Assumptions about what is "politically feasible," how much risk can be taken, and what force is required may shape the objective discussion of force requirements. We can appear to have a dialogue without actually doing so. This kind of skewed approach is dangerous, for it wastes lives and money by fielding a force that cannot accomplish its assigned task.

The objective requirements for the ANA's post 2014 development should derived from the answers to four

basic questions. First, will any of the ANA units have partner NATO units or will the developmental effort be executed solely through a set of embedded developers? Second, if NATO uses only embedded teams, at what levels and in which units will these teams be employed? Third, what kind of headquarters will be necessary to coordinate these efforts? Finally, what direct support—combat support (intelligence, lift and medical evacuation aviation, medical, and air and ground fires) and combat service support (supply, maintenance, ground transport, and logistics)—must be available to the ANA as well as to NATO's embedded development teams?

First, will the ANA have partner NATO units or will the developmental effort be through a set of embedded developers alone? Since at least 2009, ISAF units have been training and developing their ANA partners on the job, so-to-speak. This program recognizes that training does not stop upon graduation from an Afghan school or training program. Proficiency accelerates in ANA units who plan, prepare, execute, recover, and assess operations with NATO partners. At a very minimum, one U.S. Combat Brigade should be retained beyond 2014 in RC East to operate in partnership with its ANA counterparts to assist with especially difficult fighting. RC East present a unique fighting requirement

given the extreme geography, the presence of the brutal Haqqani Network, and the complexity of historical infiltration routes insurgents use to transit from Pakistan into Afghanistan. Currently, no such partner program is envisioned beyond 2014; it may have been dismissed because “political considerations” were brought in too early in the dialogue. We believe that this decision should be reconsidered.

In other parts of the country, the NATO/ANA operational developmental effort can be accomplished via embedded teams of trainers/developers. These teams would have three purposes: first, continue developing ANA individual, unit, and leader capacity—in fighting skill and use of their own supporting systems, thus continually increasing ANA self sufficiency; second, provide a conduit to selected NATO combat support and combat service support until Afghan systems reach sufficient reliability; third, provide for the embedded teams’ own internal force protection and sustainment.

Assuming a partner unit for the ANA’s operational units in Regional Command (RC), East—one NATO Brigade Combat Team an estimated 5000 personnel would be allocated to RC-East; 25 member teams embedded at and above ANA battalion size units in RCs South and Southwest as well as within the ANA’s Special Operations Forces—about 2225; and similar teams embedded at the brigade and above levels in RCs West and North as well as the Kabul Division, Mobile Strike Force, and Air Corps—about 425; the “objective” operational development effort would come to about 7650 partnered or embedded personnel.

Second, if no NATO partner unit is required for the ANA in RC East and the requirements for the other ANA units remains as stated above, then the operational development effort would be reduced to about 4475 personnel.

The development effort, however, is not defined solely as what is necessary within the ANA’s operational units. NATO must also embed teams of developers within selected ANA’s training and education organizations as well as within the ANA’s Major Commands. Teams will

also be needed in the ANA’s General Headquarters and Afghanistan’s Ministry of Defense.

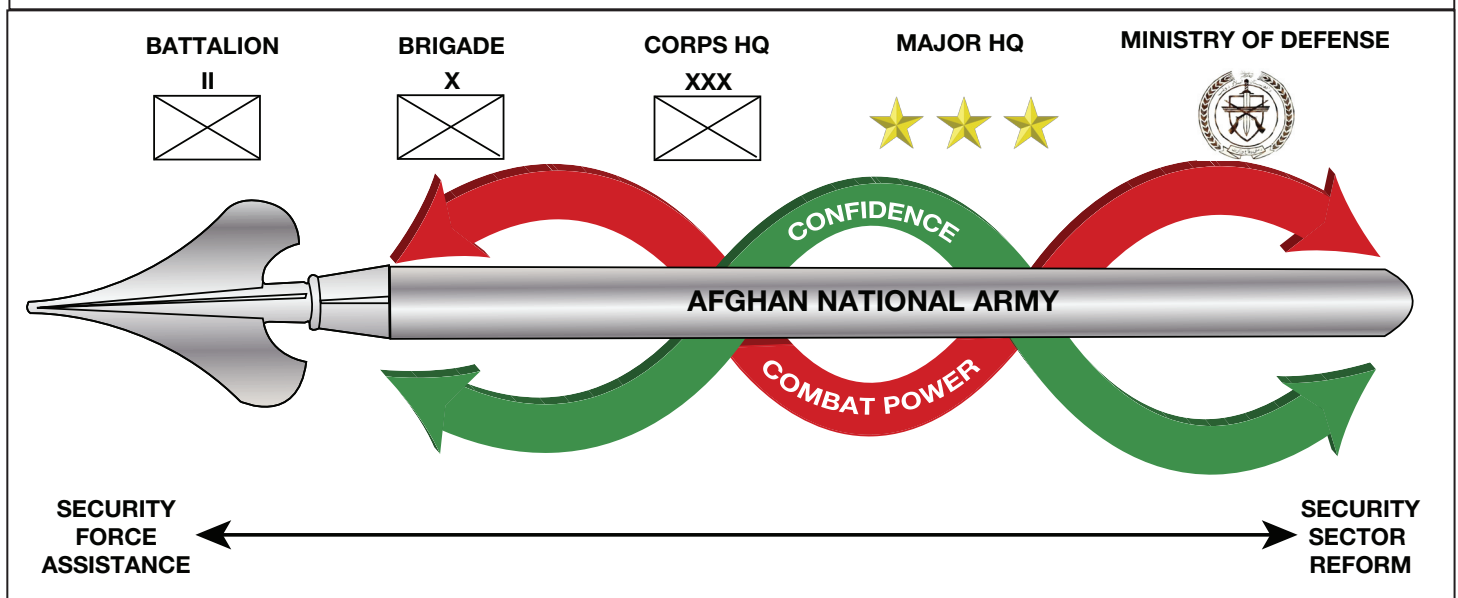
Over the years, the ANA has assumed more and more responsibility for its own training and education. The Afghan military would be the first to say, however, that a requirement for continued assistance in the ANA’s Training Command remains. Similarly, some form of embedded teams will be needed in the ANA’s Ground Force Headquarters, as well as its Recruiting, Logistics, Medical, Area Support, and Detention Commands. Assuming an embedded team of about 25 members in each of these senior commands and about the same in each of the 25 training centers, academies, and schools the ANA major command development effort comes to about 800 personnel.

The ANA’s General Headquarters and Ministry of Defense will also need continued development assistance in at least the following six major functional areas: force management, training, acquisition, development, sustainment, and resource management (programming and budget). The ANA General Headquarters is responsible for planning and executing the military aspects of these functions, while the Ministry of Defense is responsible for the political aspects. Assuming these are the six functions that require continued development, and a team of about 10 is required in each, then this aspect of the development effort comes to about 120 officers and civilians.

Of course, one might wonder why NATO should embed in any of the ANA’s non-operational organizations. This is a legitimate question, but one easily answered. The operational forces of any nation’s army form the tip of that army’s spear. A spear’s tip, regardless of how sharp, is worthless without an adequate shaft.

The shaft of an army’s spear is formed by the echelons of organizations that link operational units to the combat support and combat service support systems that emanate from the Ministry of Defense; an army’s combat power and confidence is a function of these systems.¹ Simply put: weak shaft, worthless spear; weak systems, reduced combat power, confidence, and self-sufficiency. Security Force

FIGURE ONE: VISUALIZING THE COMPLETE DEVELOPMENT EFFORT



Assistance (SFA) is the U.S. military’s doctrinal term for sharpening the tip of an indigenous army’s spear; Security Sector Reform (SSR) is the term for developmental assistance at the Ministry of Defense and senior military headquarters levels, (shaft of the spear). Both are required in Afghanistan beyond 2014.

Third, what kind of headquarters will be necessary to coordinate these efforts? Whether a NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan remains as a separate, stand alone headquarters subordinate to a senior NATO command or it becomes part of one large headquarters, one fact remains: some overhead will be required to produce the unity of effort and coherency of action needed of the post-2014 ANA developmental effort.

This overhead responsibility will, in all probability, be divided. On one hand, the NATO operational commander will likely assume responsibility for NATO partners units, embedded units, the ANA’s Ground Force Headquarters, and direct support organizations—the SFA mission. The SFA mission will likely be a NATO three-star organization because it must establish a relationship with ANA commanders of that rank. The NATO Training Mission, on the other hand, will likely change organizational constructs as it assumes responsibility for continuing the development of the ANA’s Training, Recruiting, Logistics,

Medical, Area Support, and Detention Commands as well as the General Staff and the Ministry of Defense—the SSR mission. The SSR mission will be a mixed, civil-military organization reflecting the composition of the organizations it will help develop. Because this organization will interact with senior Afghan military officers as well as the Minister of Defense, it may also be a NATO three-star position with a senior civil servant as a deputy.

As Multi-National Force-Iraq made a similar change in organizational arrangements in December 2009, it also merged what had been its operational command (Multi-National Corps-Iraq, MNC-I) and development command (Multi-National Security and Transition command-Iraq, MNSTCI-I) into one headquarters. At the time this transition occurred, the MNSTC-I headquarters was reduced from about 1800 to about 600; this headquarters retained responsibility for Iraqi institutional training and education as well as advising the Iraqi Joint Force Headquarters and its major commands. It also retained responsibility for continuing the functional development of the Iraqi Ministry of Defense. The merge left brigade-sized headquarters, under the command of what had been MNC-I, throughout the country. These brigade-sized units, called Advise and Assist Brigades, were responsible for coordinating the improving and developing of the Iraqi Army’s combat, combat support, and combat service

support capacity as well as the security and support for the embedded teams. In Afghanistan, these brigade-sized headquarters, called Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFAB), must accomplish the same tasks their predecessors did in Iraq as well as provide oversight for the direct support organizations within the RC area. SFABs should report to whatever follow- command replaces NATO's current operational command.

For the ANA units in RCs East, South, and Southwest, each SFAB headquarters will likely require about 350 and in RCs North and West, about 250 for a total of about 1550 personnel. For NATO's organization responsible for continuing the developing the ANA's major commands, general headquarters, and Ministry of Defense, at total of 350-600 personnel will be required. The overall command and control requirement, therefore, is an estimated 1900-2150 personnel. How NATO will organize to execute both the operational and institutional development of the ANA is a detail to be determined later. The total command and control requirement is important, however, for it helps identify the full "objective" requirement for continued ANA development.

Finally, what direct support—combat support (intelligence, lift and medical evacuation aviation, medical treatment, and air and ground fires) and combat service support (supply, maintenance, ground transportation, and logistics)—must be available to the ANA and to NATO's embedded development teams? Neither the U.S. nor any other NATO country will deploy members of its armed forces without adequate support. Further, to leave the ANA without such support as they develop their own would be to produce a spear of little sustaining value—sharp tip, no shaft. Thus, the combat support and combat service support necessary for ANA development beyond 2014 will have a dual responsibility.

Estimating the size of the direct support forces is difficult. Given the climate and geography of Afghanistan as well as the country's immature infrastructure, the ANA developmentaleffortwillbedispersed; time/distance factors and maintenance requirements will, therefore, dictate the actual size of the direct support force. Assuming that figure 3 below contains a satisfactory, notional "objective" developmental force, the support force will necessarily contain at least four reinforced, brigade-size elements: an aviation brigade consisting of squadrons of scout and attack

FIGURE TWO: DUAL RESPONSIBILITY- SHARED CS AND CSS SYSTEM SUPPORT

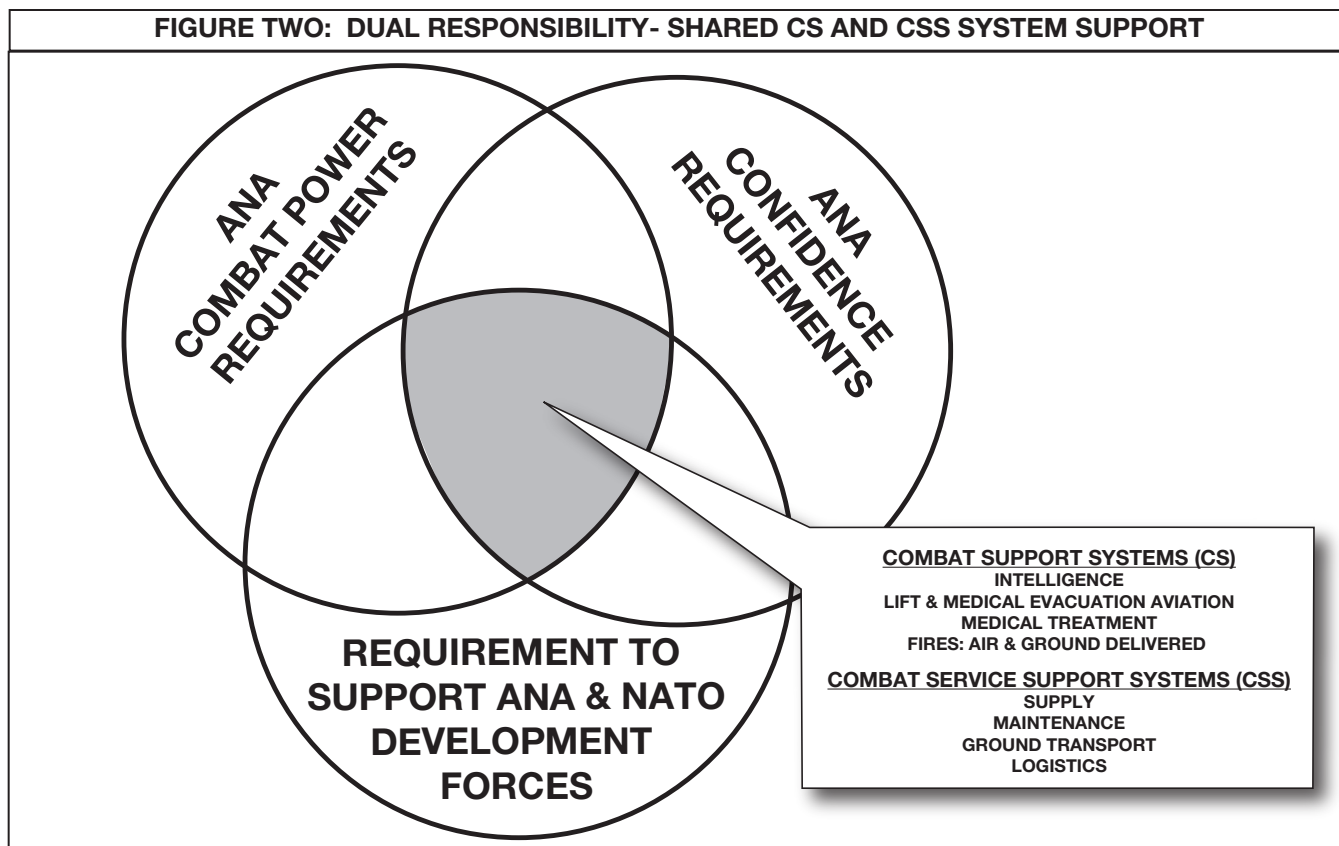


FIGURE THREE: SUMMARY, NOTIONAL OBJECTIVE REQUIREMENT

	IF PARTNER BCT IN RC- E	IF NO PARTNER UNITS
Operational Requirement	7,650	4,475
Major Headquarters Requirement	800	800
General Staff and MoD Requirement	120	120
Direct Support Requirement	16,000-20,000	16,000-20,000
Command and Control	1,900-2,150	1,900-2,150
TOTAL PERSONNEL	26,470-30,720	23,295-27,545

aviation, lift aviation, and medical evacuation aviation; a fires brigade with up to five field artillery battalions, one per regional command; an intelligence brigade with downlinks in the senior NATO developmental headquarters in each of the regional command; and a combat service support brigade consisting of one task organized battalion—supply, maintenance, ground transportation, and security assets—per regional command. *In toto*, these four brigades, each of about 4-5000, aggregate to at least 16-20,000 support troops.

The grand total of this notional first dialogue comes to somewhere in the 24-31,000 range. This number is an estimate based upon open source information concerning the composition of the ANA and the assumptions mentioned above. The resultant ranges neither takes into account the size of the overall NATO command, nor the NATO counter-terrorist organizations executing and supporting reconnaissance, surveillance, and direct-action operations.

The result of the first dialogue aims to describe NATO's "objective" requirement and set the stage for the second dialogue, the discussion of risk. If the initial dialogue is skewed by inserting "political considerations" in too early, the probability of fielding a development force that can actually accomplish its task and achieve NATO's strategic

objective decreases while the probability of wasting lives and money increases.

Lieutenant General James M. Dubik, (U.S. Army, Ret.) is a Senior Fellow at the Institute for the Study of War. Jeffrey Dressler is Senior Afghanistan Analyst and Team Lead at Institute for the Study of War.

NOTES

¹LTG James M. Dubik and Jeffrey Dressler, "Combat Power & Confidence Within the Afghan National Army," published by the Institute for the Study of War, December 7, 2012 and available at www.understandingwar.org.