



# Newsletter



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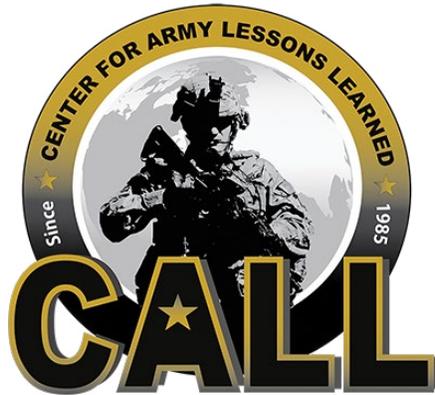
## DEFENSE INSTITUTION BUILDING

*Perspectives on Ministerial Advising*

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# Defense Institution Building Perspectives on Ministerial Advising

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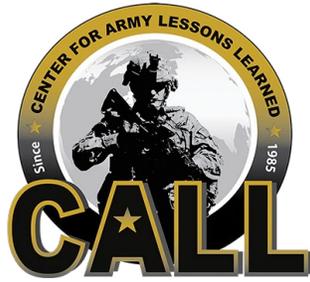
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## Foreword

Defense Institution Building (DIB) is a relatively new, important, ongoing part of the U.S. Army mission and the informed thoughts, lessons, and best practices of academics, senior leaders, and practitioners should be carefully considered. The purpose of this newsletter is to introduce the reader to DIB experiences, challenges, and concepts for the practice of ministerial advising. It is important to note that DIB is not yet an Army doctrinal term, yet many of the lessons learned from security cooperation activities, security force assistance operations, and security sector reform (SSR) apply to DIB. One of the first lessons for SSR and DIB is that a common definition and understanding of the mission is imperative.

The term “defense institution building” denotes different ideas to the many organizations involved with writing policy, creating doctrine, planning, resourcing, and conducting DIB. The dissimilar understanding of DIB contributes to disparate expectations, dispersed efforts, and in some circumstances, diluted efficiencies. In an effort to establish a common understanding of DIB, the Under Secretary for Defense (Policy) released Department of Defense Directive 5205.82, *Defense Institution Building (DIB)*, 27 JAN 2016. This directive states that the Department of Defense (DOD), “in coordination with other appropriate U.S. departments and agencies and when authorized by law, will develop the capabilities and capacity of allied and partner nation defense institutions in support of defense strategy.”

In that light, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency defines DIB as efforts aimed “to establish responsible defense governance in order to help partner nations build effective, transparent, and accountable defense institutions. DIB efforts advance the American ideals of democracy and the rule of law, and strategic interests, in addition to securing security cooperation investments.” It is through this guidance and definition that DOD and the U.S. Army should analyze, advance, and apply the concepts and components of DIB.

The topics examined in this newsletter include the following:

- How illicit actors function as primary roadblocks in the path to peace.
- How the DIB program at the U.S. European Command works with partner nations to help these nations move toward intellectual interoperability with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).
- How NATO is building the Afghan government's capacity to sustain itself into the future.
- How to—
  - Interact with senior foreign officials in the Islamic world.
  - Apply lessons learned when advising the Afghan Army Chief of the General Staff.
  - Address coalition lessons and responsibilities in Afghan corruption reform.
  - Advise the Afghan Minister of Defense.
  - Approach the concept of professionalizing ministerial advising.

It is through vigilant study, consideration, and experience that these lessons and best practices of DIB and the SSR mission should be employed.



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## Introduction

This newsletter consolidates thoughts and experiences on security force assistance at the ministerial and institutional levels. The intent is to provide a snapshot of current lessons, practices, and concepts associated with defense institution building (DIB) that should inform and assist future DIB practitioners. The following articles were selected based on a relationship to DIB and Army Warfighting Challenge (AWfC) problem statements:

- Chapter 1, *Strategic Planning Partnerships: Program Builds Intellectual Interoperability in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, looks at improving interoperability at the strategic level to create intellectual interoperability.
- Chapter 2, *Make It Matter: Ten Rules for Institutional Development*, speaks to rules for institutional development.
- Chapter 3, *The American Military Advisor: Dealing with Senior Foreign Officials in the Islamic World*, offers guidance based on experience in the Islamic world in areas that are generally Muslim, conservative, and traditional.
- Chapter 4, *Insights into Ministerial Advising, the Afghan Government, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization*, the first of three similar articles related to advising at the ministerial level in Afghanistan within the Ministry of Defense, the Afghan Minister of Defense, and the Afghan Army Chief of Staff.
- Chapter 5, *Advising the Afghan Minister of Defense: Mid-Tour Assessment*, summarizes efforts to learn a new set of advising skills.
- Chapter 6, *Report: Lessons Learned in the First 11 Months of Advising the Afghan Army Chief of the General Staff*, summarizes experiences and lessons of advising the senior officer in the Afghan National Army.
- Chapter 7, *Coalition Lessons/Responsibilities: Afghan Corruption Reform*, examines corruption in Afghanistan and promoting reform in the future.
- Chapter 8, *Developing Capacity for an Enduring Security Force*, proposes what it takes to build an enduring security force.
- Chapter 9, *Professionalizing Ministerial Advising*, makes the case for an association of professional ministerial advisors and advisory best practices.

The AWfC problem statements and learning demands (LDs) also addressed in this newsletter include the following:

- AWfC 1, *Develop Situational Understanding*.
  - **Problem Statement:** How to develop and sustain a high degree of situational understanding (SU) while operating in complex environments against determined, adaptive enemy organizations.

- LD 1.4. How do Army units accelerate the experiential learning process to imbue Soldiers and leaders with the experience, judgment, and maturity necessary to develop and sustain SU in a complex environment?
- LD 1.6. How do Army units develop understanding of the political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time factors that affect the mission?
- AWfC 2/3, *Shape the Security Environment*.
  - **Problem Statement:** How the Army influences the security environments and engages key actors and local/regional forces to consolidate gains and achieve sustainable security outcomes in support of geographic combatant commands (GCC) and joint requirements.
  - LD 2.1. How can the Army develop a common operating picture of security cooperation activities among the components, including special operations forces and unified action partners, to ensure unity of effort for activities that mutually support the Integrated Country Strategy and GCC goals?
  - LD 2.2. What host nation information is necessary to accurately identify security cooperation opportunities and assess the outcomes of engagements across all domains (to include the presence or anticipated occurrence of megacities)?
  - LD 2.5. How can the Army better enable Army service component commands (ASCCs) to identify supporting objectives, identify requirements, set priorities for countries and resources, assess the activity, and its impact on the theater security objective?
  - LD 2.7. How can U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command ensure Army personnel understand the nuances of planning, executing, and assessing Army security cooperation activities prior to assignment at ASCCs?
  - LD 2.8. How can the Army train, sustain, and incorporate the skills of cultural awareness and language training throughout Soldier careers?
- AWfC 10, *Develop Agile and Adaptive Leaders*.
  - **Problem Statement:** How to develop agile, adaptive and innovative leaders, who thrive in conditions of uncertainty and chaos and are capable of visualizing, describing, directing, and leading/assessing operations in complex environments and against adaptive enemies.
  - LD 10.5. How should the Army prepare adaptive and creative leaders capable of operating within the complexity of the operational environment and the entire range of military operations?

## Chapter 1

### **Strategic Planning Partnerships: A New Program Builds Intellectual Interoperability in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization**

**by Dr. Judith Reid, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers**

(This is a reprint from the *per Concordiam* magazine, 14 DEC 2015, George C. Marshall European Center for Security Studies.)

The defense institution building program at U.S. European Command works with partner nations to help them move toward intellectual interoperability with members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). As the international security assistance force mission in Afghanistan wanes and most armed forces are shrinking toward peacetime forces and budgets, NATO and partner nations need to maintain meaningful peacetime connections and continue training and exercising with each other to prepare for the next conflict.

Part of that preparation is to improve interoperability at the strategic level to create intellectual interoperability. Many U.S. partners regularly undertake defense reviews. As their defense leaders work through political direction and mandates, operational realities, and funding cuts, it often seems that little can be achieved. It is as if every streamlining initiative is connected to another in a cascading matrix toward the same bottom line: no money and smaller, less capable forces. Allow me to offer another perspective on improving the current state of strategic planning. Instead of seeing nonstop cutbacks and “salami-sliced” operating budgets, take a wider viewpoint to gain a positive outlook on the strategic planning process.

### **Strategic Planning Process**

Ends, ways, and means — in business, these terms mean what the organization wants to bring to market, the manufacturing and operational processes that create the product, and the resources needed to succeed. In the military, we refer to these as mission, operations, and resources. Both set priorities and mitigate risk to meet the desired end state. Mission is first. In business, the key to success is understanding where a product or service falls in the supply and demand cycle. Market analysis discerns customer needs and desires and generates an evaluation of the product or service and the source of its demand in the marketplace. The military equivalent could be a threat assessment or defining a desired capability to achieve a specific end state. In both cases, an external analysis is performed to better understand the political, economic, social, technical, and environmental macro trends in effect at that time and expected over the ensuing two to five years. Military planners identify potential threats and align or create the capabilities needed to counter them based on similar external trend analyses.

Next, we make it happen. Once a product or service is conceptualized, how does it materialize? What does it do? How does it work? What is the process? If it is a product, then what raw materials get cast, smashed, drilled, and pounded into place to create the finished product? How many are produced in an hour, a day, or a year? If it is a service, what raw materials of time, human capacity, physical space, and intellectual property come together to create a deliverable expertise? In the military, which weapon platforms combine with software and human skill to produce a capability desired to help ensure national security?

Finally, we pay for it. Resources — a reliable funding stream — are required to bring the product, service, or military capability into existence. Employees must be recruited, trained, retained, retired, and removed as needed based on the needs of the operation. Soldiers also must be trained with the knowledge, skills, and abilities needed to operate the platforms. Logistical pipelines for fuel, replacement parts, lubricants, and raw materials must hum in a chorus of productivity.

These three key elements of business or military activity compete against each other for time, attention, money, and space. This is a constant problem. If the market demands gold-plated cars, it is not just a question of paying for the gold with the resources available, but also of whether gold is a viable metal for manufacturing cars. If an entity develops software to run that car, are there enough qualified software designers available who understand not just the code that needs to be written, but how to design software that fulfills market demand? If the military requirement is to fly refueling missions within a 500-mile radius, the challenge is more than whether there is enough fuel for the plane. It is also whether a suitable plane exists — in good condition, with the required up-to-date technology — and if a runway that can accommodate its weight is available, plus a host of other operational issues that determine whether the mission can be accomplished.

### **Finding the Resources**

Resource issues might include a runway in need of repair or the availability of operationally-ready refueling planes to support additional flight training time. Where does the money come from? If there is no more money, how can more be generated? Will the public accept a tax increase? Can unused military assets be sold on the open market? Can expenses be minimized to free up cash? In short, there is no such thing as a 99-percent capability. These questions lead to more questions: Can the operation be adjusted to be more cost-efficient? Does that car have to be gold plated? Do we need software designers for every bit of code writing, or can we use lesser-paid code writers to handle the boilerplate sections? Does our refueling plane need its own airport, or can we use a civilian airport?

There are constant re-evaluations and tradeoffs to be made in determining the desired results, the operational procedures to achieve those results, and the ability to acquire the necessary resources. This requires compromise and consensus building.

Give a little here and take a little there until the capability is acceptable, the operations are workable, and the resources are manageable. These are hard, but necessary, choices. How does a country restructure its budget to reduce the personnel costs of too many older officers? How can the maintenance costs of advanced new platforms be included in a wish list to hardware providers? How does one stop perpetuating support for corrupt leadership and move toward merit-based, fiscally sustainable prudence?

### **Efficiency in Cooperation**

For each country struggling to balance its budget, there are different answers. The solution begins with turning away from old, outdated attitudes and methodologies and moving toward an affordable future within the NATO community. Rather than a country seeing itself as dependent on a greater whole, each country should see itself as a responsible, contributing member of an alliance. That requires an in-depth analysis to balance ends, ways, and means. As such, when a country commits a capability to NATO, that commitment is undergirded by an affordable,

operational plan. The process is not linear, but can start anywhere, particularly where quick successes can be achieved to jump-start the process of change. For example, perhaps a country wants to improve its medical trauma care. In many countries, civilian hospitals treat injuries like mild traumatic brain injuries or provide long-term amputee care. While this specialized medical knowledge is core to military medical care, it can also benefit the local population in emergency trauma care.

The solution begins with turning away from old, outdated attitudes and methodologies and moving toward an affordable future within the NATO community.

For a small investment in the armed forces, the country could buy this specialized capability for the general population. Or perhaps a country wants to become NATO interoperable. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, NATO created and maintained accession processes to guide aspiring countries to membership. There are membership action plans, individual partnership action plans, annual national programs, and Partnership for Peace planning and review processes. NATO standardization agreements detail the operational capabilities necessary to join or operate effectively with alliance forces — for example, English language capability or the ability of troops to understand and utilize a particular piece of hardware. This operational objective focuses efforts to meet the goal of NATO interoperability, but could cost more than some aspirants' coffers allow. Another country may want to pay for new programs. If generating more revenue is not feasible, what cost-cutting measures can be implemented within the defense department to harness efficiencies? Can excess equipment be repurposed? Can military real-property assets be reallocated to other government agencies or liquidated to private entities? Can retirement benefits be reworked to cost less? Where are the pockets of opaque financial transactions that can be made transparent? More cash means more capacity to recruit new troops or prepare to join NATO. This would lead to a more ready and able military force that supports a country's security needs.

## Conclusion

The ends-ways-means triangle represents a natural tension among desired mission readiness, operational requirements, and resource availability. In this case, tension is good. This tension forces each major decision to be weighed against other possible courses of action. Additionally, planners are compelled to prove an action's value. Military models see the ends as immovable, though business models do not. If operations cannot produce a particular desired effect with the resources available, then the ends must be re-evaluated and potentially adjusted to achieve the goal within the parameters of available operational and resource capabilities. The mission accepts risks if the ends are to reach NATO interoperability, but the ways and means are not yet available to achieve that goal; then what stepping stone toward the NATO interoperability goal could be attained in the near term? The constant adjustment among the three requires a continual rebalancing of each.

In the business community, the outside variable is profit. Will the dance among the three — product, operations, and resources — create something that the market wants and will buy? The outside variable for the military is whether the combined efforts of ends-ways-means can produce security sector services that are of value to the nation and are attainable. The process is not linear, or even hierarchical; it is circular and possibly even three dimensional. It should not be seen as shaving away each of the points on the triangle until parity is reached, but rather as interactively creating a holistic picture that is balanced, realistic, and achievable. The tension

inside the triangle is necessary for checks and balances to the strategic planning process, and can help create elegant solutions to security challenges.

The process of thinking through and making choices is something in which most western ministries of defense routinely engage, which means that this decision process undergirds intellectual interoperability in the alliance. As governments contribute fewer resources to military spending, balancing ends, ways, and means is key to every military's strategic success. It is also at the heart of NATO intellectual interoperability.

## Chapter 2

### Make It Matter: Ten Rules for Institutional Development

by Mark Kroeker

(The following is an excerpt from Impunity Magazine,  
*Countering Illicit Power in War and Transition.*<sup>1</sup>)

Illicit power structures emerge and are energized in the vacuum left by the chaos of war, civil upheaval, sub-regional disorder, and the attendant destabilization. First to go during conflict are the legitimate power bases that arise from the legal framework of the state. Constitutions, laws, and codes of criminal procedure, even vehicular codes, fall by the wayside as the channels of power disbursement are upended and the relevant, legally appointed leaders abandon their posts. Courts are looted, and judicial officers withdraw in fear as tribally and self-appointed power grabbers dictate the law. Police institutions are taken over by militias that impersonate the actual police, usurping the legitimate power of the state to enrich themselves and their criminal organizations. Prisons become the focus for illegal detention at best, and torture and extrajudicial executions at worst.

Interim leaders exploit the chaos and uncertainty of transition to further their own illegitimate financial objectives. These leaders see prisons as a lucrative franchise for holding captives for ransom by family and friends. Few, if any, of these inmates are actually charged with a substantive offense under the law. And meanwhile, the truly culpable enjoy the impunity brought about by power deals amid the chaos. These are the illicit networks that institutional development can best address.

#### Peace Agreements: Where Institutional Reform Begins

The typical post-conflict path to peace often includes agreements sometimes referred to as “comprehensive peace accords.” These are hammered out by high-level negotiators, diplomats, or emissaries whose main focus is to find common ground between warring parties, stop the killing, and establish a “peace to keep.” In some instances, there may be language that refers obliquely to reforming or restructuring the police. But unfortunately, peace accords, treaties, and other agreements rarely contain language specifically addressing institutional development through reconstituted justice systems, including courts, police, and prisons.

The path to peace is often distracted or derailed by the illicit actors that a carefully designed rule-of-law institutional development plan should have addressed.

Regardless of where the efforts begin, ample historical evidence has shown that launching or rebuilding the institutions that make up the justice and rule-of-law sectors are the principal way to invade the vacuum, overtake and overpower the illicit structures, and pave the road to peace. Without this enormous effort, the political landscape is abandoned to a modern tragedy that consigns the lives of ordinary citizens to a sad and sorry state.

The foremost positive examples of this process are seen when the leaders of power networks operating outside the law (and often in concert with the military, malicious leaders, or interim/ad hoc political leaders) give way to a legitimate return to the rule of law. This can enable an

acceleration of the peace process. And it creates a window during which peacekeepers and transitional or nascent governments can address further national enhancements such as education, industry, investment, and most significantly, amelioration of the lives of ordinary citizens. The whole constitutes a sea change in the political ecosystem and brings a reversal to the otherwise downward spiral of lawlessness, conflict, and chaos.

## **When Institutional Reform Works and Why**

### **Bosnia and Herzegovina: Ensuring Equitable Representation and Preventing Illicit Capture of State Institutions**

The Dayton Peace Agreement or Accord is an agreement to bring peace, maintain a cease-fire, cooperate with all humanitarian and other organizations in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and ensure the safety and freedom of movement of the United Nations Protection Force, humanitarian organizations, and agency personnel.

It is always useful to start with a look at what works, before criticizing what does not. One realistic and relatively successful example emerges from postwar Bosnia and Herzegovina. In 1995, the Dayton Peace Accords<sup>2</sup> and other agreements included reforming, restructuring, certifying, and rebuilding police agencies of the two political entities: the Federation of Bosnia-Herzegovina and the Republika Srpska. Developing a federation-based police academy at Suhodol with young recruits including Muslims, Serbs, and Croats was a major struggle and aggressively opposed by powerful leaders who profited from the chaos of Bosnia's civil war. This was a war that had claimed the lives of more than 200,000<sup>3</sup> citizens and laid waste to the functioning societies, along with legal systems and structures. During the reconstruction that followed, factional leaders from the conflict mounted considerable opposition to opening the police academy.

With much fanfare, the academy opened, but when it did, these factional leaders insisted on a segregated approach to housing. In practice, this would have required that the police recruits from each faction be housed on separate floors, thus defeating the purpose behind having a unified national police institution. So factional opposition was rejected, and the academy was launched with three beds to a dormitory room, assigned by alphabetical order of last name. The only segregation was male/female. This provided random integration, often resulting in a dorm room occupied by a Serb, a Croat, and a Muslim recruit. Proving naysayers wrong, the recruits got along peacefully and amiably. Desegregation sent a powerful signal that police agencies were to be formed along professional lines that included ethnic, religious, and geographic diversity.

Desegregation sent a powerful signal that police agencies were to be formed along professional lines that included ethnic, religious, and geographic diversity.

Institutionalizing this element provided momentum for the institution-building process and marginalized the loud-talking political leaders who profited from the postwar chaos. The decision, however, did not come without cost. One sad outcome was that a car bombing subsequently took the life of a Croat minister of interior who supported the police training development program. He also fought local mafias representing the Croat subculture that formed during the war.

Building institutional capacity by establishing a fully diversified national police academy unsettled the power bases at the heart of the roadblocks to the peace process. Although the minister paid with his life, the institution survived.

### **Liberia: Restoring Control and Legitimacy Within the Rule of Law**

Another historical example can be found in Liberia, whose 14-year civil war had claimed some 240,000<sup>4</sup> lives. During that time, in the vacuum of institutional influence, illicit profiteers formed overlapping power zones. Liberia's constitution, penal code, and code of civil procedure were put on the shelf, and lawlessness prevailed. The result was that Liberia became a major trans-shipment hub for weapons, drugs, and people in a market operated by criminal networks that profited from the chaos of war.

The Accra Peace Accords requested that the United Nations (UN) assist with training and restructuring the Liberian National Police force.

In late 2003, immediately after the signing of the Accra Peace Accords,<sup>5</sup> none of Liberia's three principal civil war factions — Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy (LURD), the Movement for Democracy in Liberia, or the Government of Liberia — could claim legal legitimacy, since each operated clearly outside any law other than the orders issued by rapacious military despots. Actual power emanated from fighters who later emerged as self-proclaimed leaders and power brokers. These criminals carved up the spoils of war with unbridled violence.

The violence was exemplified prominently on Bushrod Island, just across from an infamous bridge that provided entry into Monrovia from the country's outer reaches. The bridge had been the scene of intense wartime fighting with enormous loss of life. The Bushrod Island Police Station, at the heart of what had been the area's main commercial zone, had been looted, and in late 2003, both the bridge and the station stood in a state of severe infrastructural disarray. The station also served as a strategic location for LURD's criminal activities. The group saw it as a profit center and occupied it with pseudo "police" — LURD fighters who had no legal authorization to perform police functions. Operating like a street gang, LURD fighters established a zone of fear on the densely populated island, taking into custody anyone they saw as able to fulfill a profit need. The pseudo police would hold the detainees until families or friends arrived and paid ransom money for their release. They performed gangland-style extortion or "protection" for a fee, using power and influence based on the wartime legacy of fear and violence, rather than abiding by Liberia's constitutional law.

At the urging of the UN police commissioner, the UN mission in Liberia designated the Bushrod Island Police Station as a "Model Police Station Quick Impact Project." The UN police force very publicly kicked out the LURD fighters, rebuilt the station with a modest amount of UN Quick Impact Project funds, and equipped it for co-located UN police who were operating alongside carefully selected legitimate Liberian leaders and officers from the Liberian National Police ranks. The illicit power structures that had been engaging in extrajudicial imprisonment, kidnapping for ransom, extortion, and torture were replaced through a focused demonstration of legitimate institution building. This sent a strong signal to the much relieved Bushrod Island communities that the police were going to be functioning once more and that they were there to serve the community, not ravage it.

## Justice Reform

While these two examples illustrate police-related legitimacy, many similar examples pertain to courts and prisons. Postwar or failed-state conditions exacerbate the problem through the state's inability to exercise legitimate government control, and increase the profit potential for criminal organizations that thrive on the resulting chaos.

During the chaos of war and transition, all rule of law institutions tend to fall to illicit power, which disguises itself with institutional titles and trappings.

One of the principal needs of human society is justice, and illicit actors know this and exploit it. Because of this, institutions that provide justice are strategic pivot points toward stabilization and make attractive targets for the illicit actors that dominate during chaos. To illustrate, we can look at the successful transitions that took place in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s. Countries such as Colombia and Panama, for example, succeeded because peace was accompanied by wholesale transformation of the justice and security systems writ large, along with modifications to the legal framework that underpinned the transitions. Such examples show that in undertaking institutional reform, illicit power structures that dominate rule of law systems are high-value targets. The successful dismantling of these structures produce the greatest results in a classic path to peace.

## Three Ingredients for Success

To successfully deploy institutional development as a tool for disrupting illicit power, three principal elements are needed: early architecture, authentic partnerships, and an accurate measurement of results.

**Early Architecture.** First, there must be a governance framework that enables systemic, rule of law-based institutional reform. It should be included in the articles of peace accords, mirrored in and empowered by UN Security Council resolutions, and codified in memorandums of understanding. Language in these documents must include provisions that can authorize and guide necessary legislative reform as well as the reform of courts, prisons, and police institutions.

The governance architecture must be accounted for during the peace negotiations, not after.

Too often, agreements simply refer to reforming and restructuring the police without providing any guidance on the form and structure that should result. The effect is that deliberate shaping of the critical institutions and human capital that operate in the post-war geopolitical environment occurs only much later, and often by default. When these vital aspects are addressed late, rather than in early planning, the golden hour is lost. The low-hanging fruit — reforms that are easier to implement while a strong international advisory and security presence is in place and in charge — becomes progressively harder to reach as a new or restored government consolidates its control. Angels, not devils, are in the details when these are drafted early on with long-range goals in mind.

An excellent example of the degree of detail that can be included in guiding documents and agreements is seen in Plan Colombia.<sup>6</sup> This codification of both national policy and the peace agreement further established a clear framework for reform of the entire Colombian security

system. It also provided the road map for the peace process with the active insurgent groups, for Colombian development, and for the international assistance that supported both peace and development in the years ahead.

The Bonn Agreement is an agreement on provisional arrangements in Afghanistan pending the reestablishment of permanent government institutions.

Similarly, the Bonn Agreement (Afghanistan)<sup>7</sup> with its accompanying compacts, agreements, and declarations established a framework for interim governance and long-term development following the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan in 2002. Although imperfectly executed, the agreement did contain relatively precise guidelines for restoration of the institutions and functions necessary to restore and strengthen the rule of law. And it informed both domestic Afghan and international assistance during the decade that followed.<sup>8</sup>

**Authentic Partnerships.** Second, there must be a clear systemic pathway for forming partnerships between international donors and domestic actors within the host nation. These partnerships must be formed with a common vision, mission, goals, and strategic approach.

Most importantly, the international community must be willing to accept unity of effort, together with a systematic ideology that the host nation itself sees as legitimate and culturally acceptable.

International actors must form authentic partnerships with stakeholders and must be willing to subordinate their narrower preferences in the interest of a larger common objective. Nongovernmental organizations and local players are not exempt from this principle. Even though they may not have been party to the agreements that facilitated more formal, international intervention, they too must accept a common view if their work is to add value. They should work toward common goals based on internationally accepted rule-of-law ideals that include human rights considerations and accepted norms of police; courtroom; and prison doctrine, standards, policies, and procedures. Where gaps exist in domestic systems, international treaties and conventions should be assessed for applicability. Particularly in the field of prison administration, which tends to be fraught with abuse, serious penal reform should be considered wherever the existing standards are unacceptable under international humanitarian and human rights law.

In the absence of a solid domestic legal framework, interveners can use model codes as a starting point for engagement. A good one is the Penal Law and Code of Criminal Procedure, reproduced through an enormous effort as the Model Codes for the Post-Conflict Criminal Justice Project.<sup>9</sup>

Development of the Model Codes was an initiative of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP), the Irish Centre for Human Rights, The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and the UN Office for Drugs and Crime. The goal was not to create a prescriptive framework for all places at all times, but to provide something useful that could fill the gap during the post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction period in those states that did not have a legitimate or acceptable basis of criminal law in place. The Model Codes could be used by interveners as an interim measure and provide the starting point for legislative action by the host nation.

Much also has been said about respect for cultural differences, and the need for “local buy-in” for any institutional development effort. Although it is indeed essential that the international community be sensitive to the fact that culture and local ownership is key to sustainability, not all the criticism is valid. Illicit actors are particularly skilled at arguing why an international standard of accountability or inclusiveness, for example, should not be applied. The fact remains that at least some of the clamor supporting these so-called cultural mores, norms, and values is just a thinly veiled attempt to retain a corrupt status quo or shore up an illicit power base. This is often seen in the so-called cultural reluctance to adapt to international norms for civilian oversight, professional policing, judicial power, anticorruption, and refusal to protect the rights of minority and vulnerable populations.

These are important issues for effective institution building; resistance needs to be carefully examined. History provides ample evidence that illicit actors use every tool, including the guise of national norms and procedures and a need for “buy-in,” to disrupt the building of institutions that ultimately threaten their selfish interests. Introducing internationally respected codes (such as those still available as legacy work of the international law and human rights partners) can go a long way to overcoming pseudo-cultural resistance.

**Accurate Measurement of Results.** Third, results must be rigorously measured. Clearly, certain intangibles will never be measurable.

Significant measurements can be entrusted to established tools available to assess the forward motion, or lack of it, in institutional reform.

The common navigational distress produced by countless news events, superficial accounts, shallow papers, and distorted anecdotes ginned up amid the abundance of hysteria and through social media all work together to form a distorted view of the state of play in the local environment. When reformers get too caught up in the news cycle, they tend to become reactive in their development activities, and any chance for consistency and sustained progress is lost.

One excellent measurement tool that has been widely used in Liberia, Haiti, and South Sudan is the Rule of Law Indicators (ROLIC).<sup>10</sup> A product of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, ROLIC produces navigational coordinates of a national rule of law state of play. Using a template consisting of available administrative data, stakeholder surveys, and expert findings, ROLIC reports on the multiplicity of competences within each of the three principal security-sector institutions that first come to mind when we think of the rule of law: courts, police, and prisons.

While not conclusive, the ROLIC produces indicators of progress, in an easy-to-digest, linear fashion. As multiyear reports become available over time, trends emerge and create opportunities to engage with development partners and identify weaknesses in the system. ROLIC data and the framework itself help illuminate weaknesses in the security system and in accompanying institutional development programs, which are particularly vulnerable to illicit power. ROLIC is not infallible, but it can produce longitudinal measurement for players and facilitate greater transparency for development processes. It also serves the most fragile communities very well. Weak points and corrupt institutions are more clearly visible and salutary efforts are more effectively identified in a way that clarifies rather than obfuscates.

Other measurement tools also can and should be deployed to measure institutional growth; and there is a growing body of learning on metrics and on measures of effectiveness for quality assurance. Unfortunately, often the wrong things are measured (for example, the numbers of police in a police organization, the numbers of prisoners in the prison system, and the numbers of cases being disposed of in the judicial system). While these are fairly easy to measure, the measurements do not take into account the levels of competence, for example, among the police being graduated from accelerated police training programs designed to produce numbers. Similarly, the reason for prison overcrowding is often a direct failure of the country's court system rather than an increase in police effectiveness. Often, a prison system's effectiveness or capacity is paired with indicators intended to measure the court's capacity to dispense justice fairly and equitably. While it is useful and essential to look at how justice functions as a system, the subsystems within it must be carefully examined within its own peculiar set of authorities and functions.

### **Recommendations for Effective Post-conflict Institutional Development**

While it may seem that any effort to build strength into broken systems — especially justice systems in fragile or post-conflict states — would be welcome, the truth is that we in the international community often worsen rather than improve the situation. Funds are wasted, sincere host nation-generated reform initiatives are neutralized, and we contribute to the very dysfunction that is at the heart of corruption. When this occurs, illicit power structures are energized rather than dismantled.

No one would argue against the notion that weak systems constitute a fertile hotbed for the emergence of illicit power. What we rarely admit, however, is that we ourselves can and do make things worse. Figure 2-1 provides a checklist of recommendations that should accelerate institutional development in the justice and rule of law sectors.

### Checklist to Accelerate Institutional Development

- 1. Seize the golden hour.** While delays are inevitable in the absence of agreements and other broad-based resolutions, be aware that the earliest interventions are usually the most effective.
- 2. Build the capacity of institutions by taking on entire justice and rule of law systems.** Transformation of broken systems must be done not in parts, but as a whole.
- 3. Measure the right things.** There is a tendency to measure the most easily identified and visible aspects of institutional reform, such as recruitment numbers and demographics, graduation rates, arrest and conviction rates, and improvements in physical infrastructure, while overlooking the trickier ones and the intangibles that make for solid institutions. Issues such as improvements in institutional culture, the relationship between police and prosecutors, professionalism within the legal and law enforcement sectors, public awareness and understanding of rights and remedies, and judicial willingness to enforce are also indicators. These are difficult to quantify and can be measured accurately only over time, but also represent sustainable progress toward overcoming the biggest hurdles to credible, capable, and enduring institutions and systems.
- 4. Do not let donors contribute to division or discord.** The term “donor interference” has emerged as a stark reminder that when donors are not coordinated in a commonly accepted architecture, the result is delay and dysfunction. Coherence should be considered a metric for programmatic performance.
- 5. Wrest ownership of post-conflict justice institutions away from self-serving politicians.** Bringing justice systems under oversight of legally constituted leaders is essential. In fragile environments there is a tendency toward extra-legal grabbing of institutions. Police need to be focused on serving communities, courts unfettered by political interference, and prisons driven by international standards of human rights and lawful sentences.
- 6. Avoid military oversight of the police, and if necessary in the near term, end as quickly as possible.** During and following internal and sub-regional conflicts, police become nothing more than tools of militias that have entirely different doctrines, procedures, and institutional cultures. After war, there is a tendency to conflate security forces and merge former military combatants with police. This is a mistake. Community policing is typically in direct conflict with military purpose and doctrine.
- 7. Never underestimate the importance of the prison system.** There is probably no clearer indicator of post war chaos than overcrowded prisons in a state of disarray with prisoners incarcerated in inhumane conditions and no (term) end in sight. This dysfunction also contributes to impunity of those few (especially those linked to illicit power) who successfully buy their freedom.

*Results are incremental, generational, and rarely immediate ... it is critical to recognize that often this institutional damage occurred over a generation or more.*

- 8. Remember that results are incremental, generational, and rarely immediate.** Those who look to nominally functioning justice systems or hastily stood-up police forces as an exit strategy need to look long-range toward the strength of the institutions, not to numbers and individual personalities. Where institutions are being restructured from scratch, building an accountable, enduring institutional culture takes time, effort, and adaptation as challenges and opportunities emerge. Where institutions are being reconstituted following failure or co-optation, it is critical to recognize that often the institutional damage occurred over a generation or more. The repair probably will take just as long.
- 9. Demystify the language of our papers and memorandums.** The reluctance toward robust and swift transformational leadership often stems from misinterpretation of vague language in the papers, agreements, or mandates.
- 10. Join hands instead of pointing fingers.** In post-conflict environments, there is a tendency to disparage other players and stakeholders. Governmental and nongovernmental players, as well as contractors and local players, should expend their energy on forming authentic partnerships based on common alignments, rather than partaking in criticism.

**Figure 2-1. Checklist of recommendations to accelerate institutional development.**

## Conclusion

Institutional development is a powerful tool in the fight against illicit power. Done right, it produces indigenous security forces that can protect the population within the framework of the law, protect and ensure the fair and equitable administration of justice, address grievances that were underlying drivers of conflict, and control and isolate those elements of the population who remain committed to conflict and undermining legitimate government.

If institutional development is done hastily or incorrectly, it enables illicit power brokers, political patronage networks, criminal enterprises, and other bad actors to consolidate power in the immediate post-conflict chaos and disorganization. It leads to the capture of state resources and institutions for personal rather than public gain. And finally, it leads to a resurgence of the very grievances that led to instability and conflict in the first place. For these and many other reasons, it is essential that institutional development is done right the first time.

## Endnotes

1. Impunity: *Countering Illicit Power in War and Transition*, edited by Michelle Hughes and Michael Milausic, page 331. Center for Complex Operations and the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute. This publication is subject to Title 17 of the U.S. Code, Sections 101 and 105. It is in the public domain at <http://cco.ndu.edu/Home.aspx>, and may not be copyrighted.
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## Chapter 3

### **The American Military Advisor: Dealing with Senior Foreign Officials in the Islamic World**

**By Michael J. Metrinko**

(The following is an excerpt of the original Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute and Strategic Studies Institute study conducted in August 2008.<sup>1</sup>)

#### **Introduction**

The events of September 11, 2001 (9/11) and subsequent U.S. military and political operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have changed American military-civil relations throughout the region, generating relationships between American military officers and senior foreign officials in ways never envisioned in traditional training manuals.

There is little in military doctrine that addresses such relationships, or in regular training that equips officers to serve as advisors to foreign cabinet ministers, governors and, at times, even heads of state. The problem is compounded by profound differences in background, culture, and mindset between American officers and foreign officials.

In the post-9/11 world, an advisory position at the political and strategic level in the Islamic world can have great and immediate consequence for U.S. interests, and can make the American advisor a prime figure in the decision-making process of foreign leaders.

The guidance herein is based predominantly on experience in the Islamic world of the Middle East and Afghanistan, in areas that are generally (but not completely) Muslim, conservative, and very traditional. While most examples cited in this handbook are based on service in the Islamic world, many of the principles and lessons have universal application.

Although Muslim countries and cultures differ from one another, and methods of approach will change depending on locale, there are certain generalities that define the relationship of an advisor to foreign officials in this world such as the following. The advisor should:

- Assist and consult, but he cannot command.
- Have expertise, but does not have the last word.
- Cooperate with other players, both foreign and American.
- Be a true American, but not an “ugly” American.
- Avoid being a hypocrite.
- Be humble.
- Be helpful, but also credible.

## What is an Advisor?

The advisor's role and responsibilities are ultimately determined on the ground. The American and his (foreign) counterpart bring their own cultural differences and life experiences to bear on their roles.

An "advisor" is a "person who offers advice, especially in an official or professional capacity." And "advice" is an "opinion from one not immediately concerned as to what could, or should be done about a problem."

### Definition

The dictionary definition of "advisor" is succinct: An advisor is a "person who offers advice, especially in an official or professional capacity." And "advice" is an "opinion from one not immediately concerned as to what could or should be done about a problem."

The American advisor serves an essential role. A U.S. military advisor for a senior foreign official is part of an American military structure with a defined chain of command and clearly delineated responsibilities. His assignment will change with circumstance, but is usually to advise the official on military and other matters, to act as liaison between the U.S. military hierarchy and the senior official, and to effect action by the official which will be in the interests of the United States. How he does his task depends on his personality and that of the senior official whom he is advising, on conditions in the country, and on American domestic political considerations.

The advisor interprets the American viewpoint to the official and helps him avoid misunderstandings that can affect both countries. He can reach back to the U.S. government on the official's behalf to harness and help direct resources that may have great impact on the country's stability and prosperity. By being sensitive to the (foreign) official's concerns, and by giving credible and honest advice when both can speak in full confidence, the advisor directly affects the two countries' relations.

As LTC Mark Grdovic notes in his article *The Advisory Challenge*, the amount of influence an advisor attains will be directly proportional to the sum of three factors: the rapport between the advisor and the host-nation commander or counterpart; the credibility of the individual advisor; and the perception by host-nation forces of the continued value of the relationship.<sup>2</sup>

Ultimately, the core skills necessary for a successful advisory role are the same from the tactical to the strategic level, involving the combination of personality, credibility, and perception of value.

The core skills necessary for a successful advisory role are the same from the tactical to the strategic level, involving the combination of personality, credibility, and perception of value.

## Differences in Perception

A senior foreign official may not see any need for an American advisor, no matter what agreements have been made between his president and the American military commander or ambassador.

The advisor must be sensitive to the burden of historic precedence. For this reason, an official who utilizes a foreign advisor may be regarded by some of his countrymen as a collaborator with a foreign occupying force.

Local reaction to the presence and activities of American Soldiers can range from welcoming to the intense and hostile, even from ostensibly “friendly” counterpart officials.

The American advisor must take care not to let himself be regarded as just another person who has come to pass out gifts in order to curry favor. He must not be regarded as simply a source of material assistance, supplies, high-tech presents, and trips abroad under the rubric of training.

The advisor must look at himself through local eyes and the local culture. If the American officer’s “can do” attitude is too highly developed, he may just seem ill-mannered and abrasive to the official and his staff, who often operate at a different tempo than that in U.S. military circles. If he appears to be too young and lacking in authority, the American may be regarded simply as a decorative foreign staff aide who tags along to add luster to the official’s entourage.

Age is important in many parts of the traditional Islamic world. Tribal and village elders are the source of advice and authority, not the younger generation, and young men attending a major meeting or assembly are expected to sit silently and listen to the older generation.

The American advisor and the senior foreign official will come to their own understanding of an appropriate scope of responsibility and access. The initial arrangement will probably change over time. There are no fixed parameters, and personalities and local reality will be the deciding factors in determining what the advisor is supposed to do and how he will do it.

## Differences in Time Frame: When “Tomorrow” Really Means “Never”

The senior foreign official and the American advisor may have very different concepts of the time necessary to complete an action. Some cultures do not place value on undue haste, and the smart advisor soon learns that “bukra” or “fardo” (“tomorrow” in Arabic and Farsi) or “inshallah” (“God willing” in Farsi/Dari/Turkish and Arabic) often mean that action has been relegated to some other time and place, but probably not any time soon or any place near.

Ignoring the local cultural concepts of timeliness will simply lead to frustration and ultimate failure for the advisor, and cause hidden discomfort and annoyance in his local counterpart in response to his frustration. In the Islamic world, religious holidays and daily prayer times will take precedence over scheduled meetings, and decisions may be made in loose gatherings with endless cups of tea rather than at official conference tables.

An American officer assigned as an advisor normally knows how long his tour of duty will be. From the day that he arrives in-country, he hears a clock ticking off the days left in his assignment, and he may feel a subconscious compulsion to complete a check list of “things to do” in order to satisfy performance goals.

The foreign official, on the other hand, has a different view of time and a different perspective. His focus is indefinite, and he will not be rated on one year's performance. By the same token, the foreign official's tenure is ultimately uncertain. Because he owes his position to local politics in what is probably a volatile environment, he can be reassigned, disgraced, promoted on a whim, or assassinated.

In the Islamic world, bowing to fate runs deeply throughout society. Risk aversion may be seen as cowardice and lack of honor by many local leaders.

### **Local Calendar Takes Precedence**

The advisor should know the local calendar and understand the ramifications of holidays, local weekends, etc. These can change from country to country and even from region to region. This can be a several-day period, and the savvy advisor will not try to arrange meetings for American delegations or expect his local colleagues to give up their family time.

In Shi'ite areas, the period commemorating Ashura, the day that the Prophet Muhammad's grandson Husayn was martyred at the Battle of Kerbala, can be especially sensitive. Shi'ite schools and mosques organize religious ceremonies that come out onto public streets, and may involve crowds of many thousands of men who are in a heightened state of religious emotion. If the local Shi'ite and Sunni communities do not have good relations, this can end up in violence and property destruction. It is not a time for foreign advisors to wander the local streets, arrange for visiting American delegations, or assume "business as usual." Even in the most peaceful areas, the focus is on religious martyrdom, with an increase of tension in the streets.

The period of Ramadan is especially difficult in all Muslim countries because many people fast, refraining from all food and drink, even water, during daylight hours. The advisor must take this into account, because during Ramadan (the dates change according to the lunar calendar) it will not be "business as usual." The incessant series of evening social events adds to the general exhaustion. The non-Muslim advisor is not expected to observe the fast personally, but should refrain, out of respect and consideration for his Muslim colleagues, from smoking, eating, or drinking in public or in front of his colleagues during daylight hours.

Just as other countries have their own holidays, do not expect foreign officials to take the American calendar into account. The bottom line is to know the local calendar well in advance, and refuse official American requests for meetings and visits that affect important observances.

### **Selection and Qualifications of the Advisor**

Proper selection of an advisor is complex, because the required skills and knowledge are intangible, and not those of the normal Soldier. Not only is the military situation strange, but the human milieu — the psychological and social context in which he works — is also foreign and makes unexpected demands on the knowledge, patience, and practical wisdom of the advisor.

### **Assigning the Right Person or the Right Team**

Selecting the right individual to become an advisor... involves far more than his having rank and military knowledge. In addition, it may be more appropriate to assign an advisory team rather than a single individual, especially if the foreign official heads an agency or ministry whose work

has a significant impact on the country's security or economy. Additionally, a position which is not advertised or regarded as an advisory slot may turn into just that if the American officer's personality is appropriate, or as work conditions evolve.

At senior levels, position descriptions are never static and a good advisor must be flexible as changes in his assignment occur.

While cultural and political knowledge can be gained through study and observation, the advisor must have the personality, patience, savvy, background, and interests which allow him to be open to such study, and open to the foreign environment in which he will find himself. The advisor should be comfortable with ambiguity, and willing to act based solely on higher intent, purpose, and policy objectives rather than a hard and fast list of instructions. He may be part of an advisory team, or he may be a solitary figure who acts without the immediate support or company of any other U.S. military or interagency colleagues. He must be able to adjust to this environment, absorb a vast amount of new information, and then act confidently, possibly without being able to consult his colleagues in advance.

### **Rank, Gender, and Age**

Many foreigners do not accept contemporary American views about rank, gender, age, or race. Insisting that they do so will hinder or doom the advisory mission. Cabinet level and command positions in the (U.S.) military are routinely filled by women, and both law and custom now enshrine the principle that men and women are equal in every legal respect. This is not the case in many other countries... where gender and age are important considerations in selection for assignments, and where they are essential considerations in assessing someone's professional merit. Ethnic background, skin color, and religious faith also play a role, based on local society and tradition.

In traditional Muslim societies, a senior male foreign government official might find it unacceptable to be advised by a foreign female advisor. No matter how moral, professional, and correct she might be, an American female officer assigned such duties would have to overcome certain negative assumptions in foreign eyes. A lower ranking male or a female officer's expertise can break down these culturally inhibiting barriers over time, but it will also require an open attitude on the part of the foreign official.

### **Rank is Real, Whether Earned or Bestowed as a Gift**

Rows of medals carry weight in foreign eyes, and until proven otherwise, ribbons, medals, and insignia connote gravitas, intelligence, experience, entree, and authority. In traditional societies, they are signs of high rank, and an advisor of high rank is (initially, at least) much more acceptable to a foreign official and much more likely to command the official's attention and esteem.

### **Advisor's Tools for Success**

The advisor must be ready to play the roles of both teacher and student, be open to an unfamiliar cultural environment, have evident interest and respect for unusual people and places, and be willing to subject his own comfort, preferences, and timing to those of a foreigner. A good advisor will adjust to foreign culture and habits in order to enable his message and guidance to

be presented effectively. He must be intellectually curious, and also be able to keep silent and just listen. It is also essential that an advisor have the professional and personal qualifications to perform his duties.

A good advisor will adjust to foreign culture and habits in order to enable his message and guidance to be presented effectively.

### **Professional, Academic, and Life Experience**

The advisor's background and skills will be quickly judged by his foreign counterpart, and a senior foreign official is often highly trained and experienced in his own right. The U.S. military system, on the other hand, does not normally generate national-level expertise in any sector of study. The real expert in a technological or other field is more likely to be a civilian contractor attached to the advisory team rather than the military officer, and collegiality and collaboration will be vital for success. If the advisor does not measure up in one aspect, he must recognize and acknowledge his limitations and give advice in that context. The advisor must play to his strengths when opportunities arise and conditions permit, and look for ways that demonstrate his particular expertise and talents.

At the most basic level, whatever the senior foreign official's exotic clothing or lack of Western polish, he has survived to exercise power... Understanding how this happened and analyzing the official's history can be an invaluable lesson for the American advisor in his efforts to develop a relationship and package his advice for success.

### **Do Not Confuse Paper with Qualifications**

The advisor must show that he has qualifications that complement the official's skill set, and that he can add value to the official's performance and provide useful advice and assistance. How he does this will differ with time and location, but it is a challenge that he must analyze and meet in order to accomplish his mission.

### **Personal Flexibility**

The life styles of top-level officials make it less likely that advisors will have... constant access. However, the advisor must be willing and able to relegate his own schedule and preferences to those of the senior official.

For most senior officials, there is no demarcation line between work and down-time. In many parts of the Muslim world, privacy is not a value or even much of a concept, and the American advisor should be willing to adapt to discussions held in loud social settings, or to talking with the official while 10 or 20 or even 50 others are sitting in the room and listening silently.

### **Knowing the Local Culture**

The American advisor should seek local guidance on cultural and social custom and etiquette, watch others around him, and ask questions about proper norms of behavior from local sources. No "one size fits all" book on etiquette and culture encompasses the wide variety of the Islamic world. Differences between foreign and American etiquette are endless, and ignorance of local

customs will harm the advisor's effectiveness. No one can possibly know everything about a foreign culture — or even his own culture — but some basic humility, an open mind, intellectual curiosity, and the ability to laugh at himself will carry the advisor a very long way. He must be aware of what is merely permissible, what is recommended, and what is prohibited in the local environment, because if local norms are not respected, the advisor's best efforts to present ideas and influence foreign officials will be frustrated or even counterproductive. Some social settings may be difficult for the advisor, but he will adapt quickly if he wants to be successful.

Orders of precedence are essential to understand. The protocol of eating is profoundly important in many places, and ignoring it can sink a mission. Foreigners are watched carefully and judged by their willingness to partake in proffered hospitality, and in some areas they might actually be at risk until they have shown they are friendly by accepting refreshment (e.g., in the Pashtun tribal belt). Sometimes hospitality can be carried to extremes.

Expecting every Muslim to follow every rule expressed in the Quran is like expecting every Christian to obey every stricture laid down in the Bible. Advisors are human, and there will be a line beyond which one cannot go, foods one cannot eat, gifts that one cannot accept, and behavior that one cannot tolerate. A simple explanation of "why" — an explanation that should never become a self-righteous sermon — is perfectly acceptable in most cases.

Personal principles and standards of integrity should not be sacrificed, and it is always acceptable to just say "no," as long as it is done politely, firmly, and with no hint of condemnation.

Remember that a foreign advisor is always under observation, from servants, other guests, and the eyes of scores of nameless security guards, drivers, other staff, and even the beggars sitting outside along the road (who may be reporting his activities to the local security service). He will be tested repeatedly to gauge his reactions and standards, and his character and professionalism judged accordingly.

Social customs and behavior differ from one place to another, and the advisor will have to put this into perspective and practice some degree of flexibility. A successful advisor will study and ask about local social norms, and adjust in an appropriate way to the setting while maintaining his personal principles and standards.

### **Knowing American Culture and History**

Advisors serve as a quick reference for any and all questions that foreign officials have about the United States, ranging from etiquette points to serious discussions about American history, religion, politics, and policy.

### **Knowing the Terrain**

In theory, the advisor must know everything possible about the history, society, culture, economy, and politics of the country to which he is assigned if his advice is to have any connection to the reality of the foreign official's world. He should strive to learn as much as he can, and show interest, enthusiasm, and commitment to the learning process, because knowledge of the local human terrain will determine the nature of his advice, the way it is presented, and the likelihood that it will be received and implemented.

The advisor must understand American policy, and know the limits of what he can and cannot say or do. He cannot exceed the parameters established by his commander or the ambassador. Exceeding his authority may leave the advisor in a position where his credibility disappears, and thus he will no longer be able to perform his duties.

### **Hypocrisy Factor**

The advisor must remember that his foreign audience may see him differently than he views himself, and will react to his advice accordingly. The advisor will be judged by his audience as the representative of a larger power, and seen in the light of that power's own actions.

Despite their good intentions, many foreigners are perceived as hypocrites by Muslim audiences, and their message met with annoyance or even anger because of the manner it is presented.

### **Language Problem**

The ideal advisor should be fluent in the local language, but this ideal is rarely met. Professional relationships, accuracy, and security will all be affected by the advisor's inability to speak the language. Most advisors use interpreters, making it difficult to establish a truly effective relationship with the senior local official they are advising. Even if everyone speaks English, the advisor must be sensitive to differences in understanding which are caused by differences in background and life experience. None of this is impossible, but language is a complicating factor in relationships and requires close attention.

Even if everyone speaks English, the advisor must be sensitive to differences in understanding, which are caused by differences in background and life experience.

### **Use of Interpreters**

The perfect interpreter is impossible to find, but the advisor must cope nonetheless. In the real world, the interpreter is more likely a local citizen who left his country decades in the past and has only returned on a contract, or someone whose parents are from the country in question and who learned the language from his family while growing up in America, or a local citizen who studied English in school. Facts, figures, and details will often be mistranslated, and nuances of meaning may be totally lost.

The only way to avoid these pitfalls is to speak slowly, clearly, and succinctly, to rehearse key points in advance with the interpreter, and to check and recheck the interpreter's accuracy with figures and other data. Even then, however, no translation will be completely correct, and inaccuracies and bias on the interpreter's part may color the advisor's intended statements.

The advisor can improve his message by avoiding military jargon and abbreviations. Metaphors, similes, and humor are difficult to translate well into other cultures. Asking an interpreter to repeat back what you have said or plan to say improves the chances of accuracy.

The advisor should avoid analogies, and recognize that an interpreter may drop a point, or guess at it, if he has not fully understood the concept. Most of all, the advisor should not surprise the interpreter with unusual vocabulary or new subjects of discourse. The interpreter's fluency in one subject should not be confused with vocabulary expertise or familiarity with other topics.

### **Using “Basic” English**

Problems are also associated with reliance on the foreign official’s knowledge of English. Unless the official is very fluent, the advisor may be misunderstood even while both assume they understand each other perfectly. Even when both parties speak English well, differences exist between American usage and British/Australian/other usage which can lead to misunderstandings. These differences can be the more treacherous because they are totally unexpected, and each side of the discussion assumes that the other understands him perfectly.

### **Using a Third Language**

Using a language which the advisor and the official share, but which is not the mother language of either one, can also compound the possibilities for error and misunderstandings. An added dimension is that it may be a language which has unwelcome political overtones. Languages are tools of communication, but they also carry historic and cultural connotations of which the advisor must be aware.

### **Understanding What Is Heard and What Is Said: When the Advisor’s Terms of Reference Are Not Those of the Foreign Official**

Understanding the differences in connotation of words and differences in concepts is essential for the advisor if he is to communicate effectively. When two cultures are not parallel in their focal points, misunderstandings can occur and inaccuracies can be perpetrated by the application of familiar concepts in a foreign environment. This does not mean that communication is impossible... What it does mean is that communication is not always easy, and the advisor must take special care to ensure that he really understands what he hears, and that his own meaning is conveyed accurately when he speaks. There are ways to minimize the difficulties and achieve the advisor’s goals. Beginning to learn the local language — or at least the minimal expressions of courtesy and greeting — is an important first step. Self-study and help from interpreters can assist the advisor in this.

When two cultures are not parallel in their focal points, misunderstandings can occur and inaccuracies can be perpetrated by the application of familiar concepts in a foreign environment.

### **Nonverbal Communication**

Paying close attention to facial and body language and other forms of nonverbal communication is also important for the advisor, and allows him to gauge reaction before the words are translated. Over time, as the advisor and the senior official become familiar with one another, and as the advisor works to understand the language, gestures, and local customs, communication will become easier.

Signs, facial expressions, and physical gestures that Americans take for granted and routinely use while talking may have far different meanings in other cultures, and an advisor must be very careful to understand the signals he is sending.

## **Office as Battle Space**

The advisor must study his counterpart, learning his history and his cultural and social milieu. He must come to understand what affects the official's thought process and decision making, and learn the local factors that determine the senior foreign official's ultimate success. While much basic information about a foreign official can be obtained from Google, news accounts on the internet, and other intelligence sources prior to beginning an assignment, the best way for an advisor to understand his counterpart comes through physical proximity and observation over time.

## **First Who in Who's Who**

Knowing as much as possible about his counterpart is imperative for the advisor. Learning the truth, however, is a subtle and time-consuming process. Understanding the nature and structure of the senior official's office and agency is as important as knowing a battlefield before an engagement. The organization, the staffing, the place in the government structure, and the duties and responsibilities of the official and his colleagues are all essential knowledge for an advisor.

## **Foreign Officials' Sources of Income**

Knowing how local officials and bureaucrats are paid is essential to the advisor, because income sources directly affect decision making. In the underdeveloped regions of the Muslim world, the disparity between rich and poor may be severe, with both extremes reflected in the bureaucracy of the senior official's agency.

People require services from their government, and services — and the officials who provide them — require funding. In much of the developing world, the western concept of “conflict of interest” is incomprehensible. Senior officials do not place their assets into a blind trust when they assume office. Rather, many assume office in order to get rich, and paying for an office can be a normal procedure at all levels of the bureaucracy, just as enriching their families and friends through their office can be regarded as normal behavior.

In much of the developing world, the western concept of “conflict of interest” is incomprehensible.

The system becomes somewhat more understandable when one realizes that many in the bribe-paying public often do not pay income tax to the government, paying unofficial fees (bribes?) instead when they actually require a government service. It also becomes more understandable when a government has no realistic retirement system. Since they know they cannot rely on receiving a pension once they retire, police, military, and civil service bureaucrats have to earn money for their retirements while they are actually working.

## **Local Perception of Government Service**

The advisor must understand where his ministry or government agency fits in the popular mind, and whether it has a popular constituency and support. In the United States there is an assumption that government officials, police, and military are basically service-oriented, professional, educated, and honest. This is not true in many other countries, and knowing how the public regards senior officials and their bureaucracies is important for the American advisor.

### **Trap of Personally Identifying with Foreign Officials**

This means that the American advisor may inherit friends and enemies whom he has never met, giving him both entrée as well as putting barriers in front of him.

Any intelligent official — especially a shrewd and sly one — will make use of his American advisor as a scapegoat for his own misdeeds and mistakes, claiming that assignments, appointments, or allocation of resources are being forced on him by the American. The advisor will have to find local sources (perhaps a friend willing to be frank with him, perhaps his interpreter or other colleagues) who can keep him informed of what the official is claiming, and how others view the advisor and the minister.

On the other hand, the senior official might use his relationship with his American advisor to enhance his personal power. The official might strengthen his power base by claiming to have personal support from “the Americans” or the international community, a claim that can have great resonance in a cash-strapped country that needs U.S. government assistance.

It is not the American advisor’s role to help the official gain higher office or more power. Trying to groom the senior official for advancement is very likely to earn the ambassador’s displeasure or the unwanted attention of the official’s own boss.

The advisor must always avoid becoming too reliant on his counterpart’s — or any other single source’s — explanation of events or on his information.

The advisor must take care to obtain his own advice and information about local conditions from multiple sources, to listen more than he talks, and to make final judgments with all due deliberation.

At the other extreme of possible advisor-senior official relationships, there are foreign officials who are so incompetent, so corrupt, or so personally unpleasant that working with them in an advisory capacity may simply be impossible. Dealing with this situation is difficult and sensitive, requiring serious consultation with the U.S. military command and the U.S. Embassy. In the end, however, it is counterproductive to remain in a relationship which is so sour that the American advisor is ignored, disregarded, or seriously misused. Breaking the relationship with U.S. mission concurrence is not a sign of failure on the advisor’s part, but a sign of good sense.

### **Other Players on the Field**

In any country where there is an American military officer assigned to advise a senior foreign official, there is certain to be a large number of individuals, offices, agencies, and organizations, both foreign and domestic, which also will have an interest or a need to influence and advise the same official.

### **U.S. Government Writ Large**

In addition to his own U.S. military organization in the country, the advisor may have to deal with various members of the American embassy's country team or any number of American representatives. In many cases, these organizations' functions will be carried out by contractors who are hired to implement development programs, and perform specific training, logistics, or advisory functions.

Except for the conduct of military operations, the senior American official in-country will always be the U.S. Ambassador, who directly represents the President of the United States. In general, the senior official with whom the advisor deals also may be routinely meeting with the American ambassador or other members of the country team (see below), and the advisor may never learn what is discussed in private between the ambassador and the senior official. The advisor must understand that the ambassador's word is the final one, and that the ambassador sets American policy towards the official and his ministry.

Except for the conduct of military operations, the senior American official in-country will always be the U.S. Ambassador, who directly represents the President of the United States.

Various other Americans may see the senior official less often than the advisor does, but if they are directly providing financial assistance to him or are perceived as trusted and discreet partners, they may have far more influence than the military advisor.

### **Country Team**

Every American embassy has a country team, composed of senior American staff of the various U.S. government agencies and military units represented in the embassy. An advisor will probably not be a member of the country team, but he will certainly be called on to brief officials who are, and he will also routinely report through his chain of command to senior military officers who are members.

The advisor must establish a working relationship with the members of the country team, but must be aware that he will not always receive assistance, full disclosure, or cooperation from all members of the team.

### **Other International Players**

Conditions change from country to country, but it is certain that some combination of international agencies and advisors also will be dealing with and trying to influence the senior official. The United Nations (UN) may have a significant presence in the host country, and the UN is composed of a wide variety of different agencies. International organizations like the American Red Cross and the World Food Program (a UN entity) may be very active, and there are certain to be a number of nongovernmental organizations that are in-country. Other countries will have embassies and visiting delegations that affect the senior official's decision-making process as well.

## **Domestic Constituency**

No matter what the American advisor says or does, it is still the domestic constituency which has the greatest impact on the senior official's decision making, and the advisor's best recommendations only will be applied if they happen to coincide with the goals and interests of the official's local supporters. The advisor must know who the official's constituency is and where its interests lie. Ultimately the senior official will have to serve both the interests of his own country and respond to his local constituency.

## **Media**

The advisor should not shy away from the media. Journalists and cameras will be omnipresent around a senior leader, and can be useful and positive factors in the advisor's mission. Most importantly, however, the advisor must follow the country team's and military command's guidelines in any contact with media. Facing a camera is not the time to freelance.

## **Military Assistance Available to the Advisor**

There are resources available from the Department of Defense and Department of State to assist the advisor's mission.

## **Essential Services**

In order to be effective, the advisor must have reliable transportation that will allow him to move freely to ministerial, regional, or provincial offices, to meeting locations, and even to areas across the country that the foreign official would like to visit. Due to the advisor's critical role, this bureaucracy can sometimes be mitigated by coordinating requirements with the military hierarchy. Leasing civilian vehicles which are more in keeping with the vehicles driven by the local population may be a possibility.

Local conditions are not always peaceful and may require the advisor to move through an unsafe area. In these situations, the advisor should be familiar with the rules for requesting force protection. Another consideration involves the impact of this force on the foreign official's perceptions and his willingness to continue to invite the advisor into his office or compound.

Radios and cell phones are essential for the advisor's tasks and are typically plentiful. The advisor should take care to always have extra batteries, a charger that works on the local electrical current, and an appropriate number of payment cards. Cell phones can frequently be out of range, so radios are important to provide quick connectivity to security forces when traveling to and from the foreign official's workplace, to the locations of external meetings, and to visits in other provinces or regions.

Another asset available to advisors is a plethora of country studies and intelligence, both unclassified and classified. Information available typically includes population studies, ethnographic studies, terrain studies, key personnel assessments, and reports from military units operating in the area. Other assets include studies about senior foreign officials developed by various agencies. Such reports are difficult to access, but they are available and will help the advisor develop an understanding of the terrain. Information of this nature can be obtained from both the military headquarters and from the local U.S. Embassy.

Common to military operations is a component of civilian contractors who are hired to provide continuity during enduring operations. These individuals act across the operational continuum, and the duration of their contract will often exceed the duration of the advisor's assignment. Their personal knowledge and tendency to document their work plans, goals, and accomplishments can provide the advisor with a wealth of information.

Military bases offer a significant number of facilities and services, to include meeting rooms and dining facilities. After establishing his relationship with the senior foreign official, it can be useful to invite him to the base and host him for a meal in conjunction with a meeting. A photographer should be present to document the event, and the foreign official should be invited to speak first at the meeting. Refreshments and food should be culturally appropriate. A reliable and proficient interpreter must be present, even if the official speaks English, because many will insist on speaking their own language at a formal or public event.

### **Personal Risk: A Cost-Benefit Analysis**

Although personal safety is important, the wearing of protective gear and the requirement to be armed warrant discussion. Ultimately, the advisor must weigh the risks against the benefits, determine his own level of comfort, and then dispense with personal protective gear inside the workplace. The advisor should also consider wearing civilian clothes in place of a uniform, especially in an office setting.

Ultimately, the advisor must weigh the risks against the benefits, determine his own level of comfort, and then dispense with personal protective gear inside the workplace.

Traveling with a senior foreign official is another situation requiring consideration. The advisor should consult with his military and civilian chain of command to determine the feasibility of traveling with a foreign official and only using host nation support.

### **Preparation and Coordination — Approaching the Job**

The advisor's best weapon is knowledge, and gaining proficiency starts with the day he learns of his assignment and continues until his departure from the position. Figure 3-1 provides a checklist for an incoming advisor that should assist that process.

### Preparation Checklist

- 1. Develop Historical/Situational Awareness of the Country.**
- 2. Obtain Practical Knowledge of the Country.**
- 3. Develop and Employ Personal Contacts.**
- 4. Understand Local and National Holidays.**
- 5. Know and Understand U.S. and International Policy towards the Region.**
- 6. Read Essential Documents.** Read the host nation's constitution and be familiar with the American constitution. Read any Status of Forces Agreements that explain the U.S. military presence. Study international (United Nations or North Atlantic Treaty Organization) declarations involving the intervention or situation within the nation. Read any treaties and agreements to which the host country is a signatory. Know the relevant strategic and policy documents that the host country and the United States have jointly produced or signed (bilateral agreements).
- 7. Be Conversant in the Local Governmental Structure.**
- 8. Know the Basics of the Language.**
- 9. Recognize Nonverbal Communication.**
- 10. Understand and Apply Cultural Knowledge.**
- 11. Seek Knowledge from Your Predecessor.**
- 12. Research the Foreign Official.**
- 13. Understand the U.S. Command Structure.**
- 14. Understand the Key Individuals in the Chain of Command.**
- 15. Coordinate In-country Logistics Support.** The Embassy or military unit will have its own check-in list, but be certain to include the following:
  - Arrange daily transportation.
  - Access to cell phones/radios/chargers.
  - Obtain 24 hours-a-day/7 day-a-week contact information of the interpreter.
  - Secure force protection.
  - Acquire key personnel contact numbers.
- 16. Meet Your Interpreter.**
- 17. Current Advisor.** Spend as much time as possible with the advisor to learn procedures and practices that have worked in the past, things to avoid, office practices, and other helpful information.
- 18. Ask For an Introductory Meeting with the Foreign Official.**
- 19. Observe the Current Status Quo.**
- 20. Take Charge.**

**Figure 3-1. Advisor's preparation checklist.**

## Departing the Country

The advisor's main goal should be to work himself out of a job and make the advisory role unnecessary in the country. By passing his experience on to a successor and, more importantly, to local leaders, he improves his chance of a successful mission.

A major part of the advisor's departure is preparing the way for his successor. Records, accomplishments, failures, a wish list, and as much information as possible should be passed to the incoming advisor and his team. If there is a full advisory team, departure dates can be staggered to ensure that the new personnel have time to learn their duties while some members of the old team are still in place and available for guidance. E-mail contact between an advisor and his successor well in advance of departure is important and fairly easy, and every effort should be made to prevent gaps in the advisory presence.

The advisor should leave time for farewells. To depart precipitously will be an insult to his foreign colleagues and friends and place his successor in an awkward position.

### **Endnotes**

1. An unabbreviated copy of this report by Michael J. Metrisko can be obtained at the following link: <http://www.StrategicStudiesInstitute.army.mil>. This publication is a work of the U.S. Government as defined in Title 17, United States Code (USC), Section 101. As such, it is in the public domain, and under the provisions of Title 17, USC, Section 105, it may not be copyrighted.

2. LTC Mark Grdovic, *The Advisory Challenge*, Special Warfare, January-February 2008, page 23.

## Chapter 4

### Insights into Ministerial Advising, the Afghan Government, and North Atlantic Treaty Organization

(The following is a summary of comments and responses to interview questions for U.S. Army COL Scott King, senior advisor to the Afghan Ministry of Defense [MOD]. COL King was interviewed 5 JUL 2017 after his return from 12 months in Afghanistan. Interview questions are broken down into three categories: ministerial advising, the government of Afghanistan, and the United States and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). The opinions expressed in this chapter are his own.)

#### Ministerial Advising

**Question: Would you explain your role and key tasks with regard to advising in the MOD?**

**Response:** I was the executive officer to the deputy advisor to the minister of defense (DAMOD) and managed the office for the Resolute Support (RS)<sup>1</sup> mission where I integrated the eight essential functions to ensure the alignment and nesting with the minister of defense (MINDEF) and chief of general staff (COGS) intent. My other key task was in support of the senior advisors in supporting them and integrating their efforts for both the ministerial and general staff. I also filled in as senior advisor to the first deputy minister of defense and the MINDEF during underlaps and when the actual senior advisors took leave. I often would represent the principal, DAMOD, at RS key meetings while he was with the MINDEF/COGS or traveling to visit units. The advisor should be the “eyes-on” to help identify solutions. I believe that being a senior advisor in Afghanistan provided me with the opportunity to make one of the greatest contributions of my 29 years of military service. I am proud to have been a part of the DAMOD team and for the work we did in Afghanistan in increasing the defense ministry’s capacity.

“I believe that being a senior advisor in Afghanistan provided with me the opportunity to make one of the greatest contributions of my 29 years of military service.”

**Questions: Is the doctrine, training, and education provided to the advisors adequate in preparing them for this task? If there are gaps, what are they?**

**Response:** I do not believe that we had the right doctrine, training and education for advisors for this mission during my assignment. Frequently I saw advisors trying to implement the American way of doing business on the Afghans instead of helping them achieve their own goals — this is a security force assistance (SFA) training deficiency. Also, most of our institutional-level expertise is located with the Department of the Army civilian (DAC) employees who have senior executive service and senior government service. Although we had many of these employees from the Ministry of Defense Advisors (MODAs)<sup>2</sup> Program, they often were supervised by military personnel who had little experience at the ministry level, much less advising another country.

While there, we were able to initiate the beginning of an Afghan-led ministerial development strategy and as advisors we were just trying to get them (the Afghans) to execute their plan, but as you might expect, there was a “buy in” problem, but we persisted in executing their plan.

**Questions: What best prepared you for your assignment as a senior advisor and why (i.e., experiences, schools, doctrine, training, mentoring)? What should be replicated or improved for future advisors?**

**Response:** My time spent in Training and Doctrine Command probably helped me the most with institutional development because it gave me the experience I needed in dealing with contracting, table of distribution and allowances development, money, resources, acquisition, etc. Additionally, my Army War College education was critical in developing a strategic approach. Ministerial advising and institutional capacity development is not about current warfighting skills and typically is not within the experiences of a basic-branch combat arms officer. Skill sets are something to consider when selecting an advisor. The biggest MOD issues are contracting, acquisition, sustainment, institutional army development, and policy. That was the type of knowledge and experience I found most helpful.

**Questions: What do you consider the most significant challenges to planning and executing Defense Institution Building at the ministerial and institutional levels? What actions best mitigate these challenges?**

**Response:** A shared vision of the unified long-term campaign plan. This plan needs to be developed by the host nation (HN) with attainable metrics that is understood and supported at all diplomatic, information, military, and economic levels of the HN, the United States, and NATO. It is critical that we help them execute their plan. Another significant challenge was the difference between the U.S./NATO decentralized concept and the Soviet centralized mentality — many of the Afghan senior leadership were initially trained by the Soviets. That created its own set of problems in areas like logistics and sustainment. Through their experience with the Soviets, the Afghans had developed a hoard mentality; they would hoard materiel in preparation for a spring offensive. U.S. personnel view logistics and sustainment through a “just-in-time” prism. It is a significant challenge to introduce and garner acceptance of new ways of doing business. Based on the education background of its force, the United States is completely dependent on computers, but the Afghans are not only unfamiliar and uncomfortable with computers but their force also does not have the same educational background. Advisors are often frustrated as they try to advise the Afghans on what they know works for them, instead of trying to figure out what works for the Afghans.

“It is a challenge to introduce and garner acceptance of new ways of doing business.”

**Questions: Who or what entity do you most depend upon in your role as an advisor? Was that a serendipitous discovery or something that you knew about coming into the position?**

**Response:** The SFA coordination cell was the most helpful initially, followed by the senior advisors. It was indeed a serendipitous discovery. I was not aware of my assignment to be a DAMOD advisor until I arrived at Fort Bliss, TX. Unfortunately, for me and other advisors I served with, there was no specific training for this assignment. On the other hand, NATO officers and U.S. civilians get training, but not U.S. Army officers. This is changing, however, and there is now a nascent MODA executive course for officers.

## Government of Afghanistan

**Questions: How did the Afghan government's goals and their desired outcome influence your role as a ministerial advisor? How were they transmitted to you and how have you leveraged them when advising?**

**Response:** They are extremely important; perhaps the most important thing. Though I felt that we shared long-term strategic goals, the ways or the methods to get to that end state were not always aligned. I felt that we did not always take the time we should have to understand all the influences, both internal and external, on the Afghan MOD because these influences were not visible to us. There is an Afghan way and there is a NATO way. These ways often are not aligned. It is not a good idea to try to change Afghan policy or write it for them, but we should try to assist them in defining and communicating their policy. One thing that we need to do a better job at is accounting for Afghan objectives and their willingness or commitment to succeed in reaching these objectives instead of having them sign off on the ones that we develop. Their goals and desires were mostly transmitted through the DAMOD and senior advisors and occasionally directed by the MINDEF. Usually the communication was oral, but it would have been a benefit to all parties if it also were written.

**Questions: Did you have access to the right people in the MOD — meaning those that are the most influential and or effective in order to accomplish your mission? Is it the position within the government that makes the person influential/effective, or is it the personality of the person that creates influence/effectiveness?**

**Response:** We were afforded great access. We were very fortunate because access to the assistant MODs and general staff was fairly unrestricted. Initially the relationship is position based, then it transitions to a personal relationship based on the effectiveness and willingness to assist in their problems, instead of them helping you with your problems.

**Questions: Did you discover that the DIB effort has second and third order effects (beyond the MOD) that changed or shaped the government or country of Afghanistan? If so, what were they?**

**Response:** Amazingly, we saw an improvement in terms of gender bias. There are lots of positive gender initiatives in contracting that would help the economy of Afghanistan.

## United States and NATO

**Questions: Does the United States, NATO, and Afghanistan have the proper authorities in place that allow you to perform your duties as a ministerial advisor? Does the United States have the proper funding in place?**

**Response:** For advising duties, I believe the presence of the current authorities is about right. As is often the case in NATO — there are national caveats that can impact the mission. Being aware of these caveats is critical. Some caveats and restrictions on security affect advising. To be an effective advisor, you often need to travel to observe with your Afghan counterpart the actual situation on the ground instead of reading reports or stories. Funding also is about right. There are more issues with the restrictions by the U.S. Congress on how we use funds that causes additional coordination and sometimes confusion (i.e., the Berry Amendment).

**Question: What are the best coordination practices between the U.S. interagency, NATO, the Afghan government, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and other organizations that are working in Afghanistan?**

**Response:** This is an area that needs improvement. We did not see the effective coordination with NGOs at my position and little with the U.S. interagency. This is an area that should have increased emphasis. We need to take a systems approach vice episodic approach to advising. We need to look at the effects ministerial advising has on other processes and parallel efforts from international partners and the U.S. interagency. With that in mind, we need to get a little more training on international advisors and NGOs and their relationship with the Department of State (DOS). We need some interaction with UN personnel in country. We had an infrequent battle rhythm with the U.S. officers detailed to the DOS and we focused mainly on administrative issues like travel visas. We should have regular and expanded discussion with DOS that pertain to more than just administrative issues.

“We should have regular and expanded discussions with DOS that pertain to more than just administrative issues.”

**Questions: Does the ministerial advisor program need to be professionalized? Does the Army need to professionalize ministerial advising by building a corps of professional ministerial advisors (i.e., establish a military occupational specialty, provide incentives, institute an assessment and selection process, or create an academy with a specialized curriculum)?**

**Response:** I like the concept with the SFA brigade/division/corps. This would bring some professionalism. The problem is that the typical officer is not prepared to do this. A three-month preparation course/program (a little like MODA) for the assignment versus a week that we have now. It is difficult to be a ministerial subject matter expert within active duty military career progression timelines. If you were to do it with active duty military officers, one solution would be to make it a 15- to 16-month assignment and send the advisors to a 90-day preparatory course. Training should not be done in isolation; it should be done with interagency and NATO partners. The course should include instruction in U.S. policies and authorities, DOS plans, policies from the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy, regional orientation and familiarization, and interagency orientation.

“The United States repeats mistakes due to a lack of continuity — we change out personnel with little to no transition conducted.”

Additionally, the personnel training in the course should deploy as a team. The U.S. repeats mistakes due to a lack of continuity due to change-out of advisors with little to no transition prior to departure. It might be better to draw on the expertise from the DAC community and augment their knowledge with some training in military assistance. The personnel selection process could be improved as well. Many advisors are chosen based on timing, availability, the number of deployments, and based on how it will bolster the officer’s service record. In order to get it right over the next 10 years we need to focus on getting the right people, build the right team, expand the team’s preparation, insure the teams have overlap, and establish a training course that insures that all of the advisors are in the same frame of mind.

**Question: Where do you see things going in Afghanistan in the next 10 years?**

**Response:** I am optimistic about the future. Afghan senior ministry personnel are earnest in their intentions. Their army shows improvement due to the youth they have coming into the military. Their hope is in their youth. If there is any difficulty, it lies within the political realm such as external influences, demographics, and local power. In Afghanistan there is little judicial activity with ministerial advising. There is corruption and there is a NATO anti-corruption effort, but they don't have the social security or pensions that we are used to so they do not have the transition to the next generation that we are used to and I believe it leads some to store resources while they can. There is a glass ceiling of sorts for their youth — the current senior Afghan leadership will continue to work as long as they can — again, this is due to the lack of a pension system. There is reason for hope and it lies in the youth of the country.

**Endnotes**

1. For more information, search for Resolute Support at <http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq>.
2. For more information, see <http://dsca.mil/programs/ministry-defense-advisors>.



## Chapter 5

### Advising the Afghan Minister of Defense: A Mid-Tour Assessment

By COL Joseph McLamb, Senior Advisor to the Minister of Defense, 3 APR 2015

“It became clear to me at the age of fifty-eight I would have to learn new tricks that were not taught in the military manuals or on the battlefield. In this position I am a political Soldier and will have to put my training in rapping out orders and making snap decisions on the back burner, and have to learn the arts of persuasion and guile. I must become an expert in a whole new set of skills.”

—General George C. Marshall

The following is a summary of what I discovered in my efforts to learn a whole new set of skills as a senior advisor. This information only reflects what I learned in the first nine months of my assignment and are primarily intended as a broad, philosophical introduction for my successor. Given the introductory nature of this effort, I have deferred discussion of the mechanics of advising and will address those specifics in a second paper closer to the end of my tour to reflect the most up-to-date practices in the Ministry of Defense (MOD).

#### Understanding the Operational Environment

The single hardest task for the senior advisor is to gain a reasonable understanding of the operational environment within the MOD.

Over the past nine months, I worked with two ministers, as radically different in personality, background, and personal style as is possible for two men. Each projected his personality across the ministry in his own way, but despite the rather fundamental differences in the two men, certain aspects of the operational environment remained consistent. I believe I would have been a much better advisor had I recognized these aspects from the beginning. Despite the self-evident nature of the comments below, however, I was several months into my tour before I fully grasped their significance in shaping the operational environment.

#### Minister is a Political Appointee

It is very easy in day-to-day actions to forget that the minister (whether or not he has a military background) was appointed by the president to his current position, had to navigate the parliamentary confirmation process to get into office (or, in the case of an acting minister, faces the prospect of doing so), and serves at the pleasure of the president. No matter how solid his understanding of the military situation, the minister always has one eye on the political situation, and often weighs political factors more heavily than military ones. As an example, small levels of violence in one province may concern the minister more than much higher levels of violence in another if he assesses that the political impact of the first is greater than that of the second. This can be extremely confusing and irritating to a senior advisor who has spent decades in the military, but this also is true whether one is advising the Afghan MOD or the U.S. Secretary of Defense.

In his book, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War* (published January 2014), by former Defense Secretary, Robert M. Gates, the secretary appears to have a broad understanding of military operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, but he provides a more detailed and nuanced discussion of the political battles on Capitol Hill. A senior advisor who does not understand the primacy of political matters in the calculus of the minister is likely to be both frustrated and ineffective.

### **Minister is a Strategic Leader**

Although the minister's duties and responsibilities roughly parallel those of the U.S. Secretary of Defense, as a senior advisor it is incredibly tempting to divert his attention to operational and even tactical issues that are of concern to one or more leaders within the coalition and with which the senior advisor has a level of personal comfort. To be effective, the senior advisor must fight this temptation and do everything possible to keep the minister focused on the broader issues. As an illustrative example, the Afghan assignments process for general officers has been an issue for the past several months, and multiple coalition leaders have provided input into who they assess to be best qualified for particular positions. From a strategic perspective, however, the important thing is not that brigadier general "X" is selected as the commander of brigade "Y", but that the MOD implement and retain an assignment system that routinely and consistently provides highly qualified officers for critical assignments while maintaining the professionalism of the force. As the senior advisor, it is much easier to talk to the minister about the relative merits of specific Afghan officers than it is to discuss the institutionalization of a fair and transparent assignments process. It is only the latter discussion, however, that helps the minister fulfill his role as a strategic leader. When I assumed the role of senior advisor, the only definitive guidance I received was, "Stay strategic in your conversations with the minister." That proved to be much more difficult than anticipated.

To be effective, the senior advisor must ... do everything possible to keep the minister focused on the broader issues.

My natural tendency has been to focus on operational matters, specifically those that appeared to tie directly to the winning of the current battle or operation. On the institutional side, my tendency has been to focus on the problem of the day. Both of these tendencies are harmful to the efforts of a senior advisor. The MOD is properly focused not on the current operation or even the current fighting season, but on building and maintaining an institution that can sustain the Afghan National Army (ANA) into the future. The general staff is the entity charged with the employment of military forces; the minister and his staff should be focused on developing systems that perform the following:

- Develop long-term security strategies that inform budgeting and investment decisions.
- Plan, prepare, and execute multi-year budgets that provide for the needs of the institution with minimum waste.
- Recruit, equip, train, and assign soldiers, noncommissioned officers, and officers in a manner that consistently provides qualified personnel at the right time and right place.
- Maintain and strengthen the professional character of the ANA.

These functions (what we would call “Title X responsibilities” in the United States) are not as interesting or compelling as the business of fighting today’s battle and it may be difficult to maintain the correct focus. Nevertheless, to be an effective advisor to a minister, the advisor must set aside his own comfort and focus on the less exciting, but more strategic, topics.

### **Minister’s True Priorities are Strategic and Political**

Both of the ministers with whom I have worked had written priorities that they shared with their subordinates and the coalition. After watching their actions for some months, however, it became apparent that at the fundamental level the two men had the exact same priorities; there were only two; and both were strategic and political.

The first priority of both ministers was to maintain the support of the international coalition. Although it may not always be obvious from a coalition perspective, the reality is that the minister is painfully aware that the prospects for a safe and secure Afghanistan are essentially zero in the absence of continued coalition support, especially in the form of financial aid. While we tend to focus on those occasions when Afghans are slow to comply with our requests, my observation has been that the Afghans do a tremendous number of things that they would prefer not to do simply to maintain the international coalition. In those cases where the Afghans refuse a coalition initiative, or more commonly implement it only at an infuriatingly glacial pace, this typically means that they have assessed that the initiative, although important to us, is not critical to our strategic objectives. While the Afghans are careful to avoid anything they think may risk the coalition, their understanding is nuanced enough to allow them to push back on things that they believe are not truly vital to us, regardless of our rhetoric.

The second priority of both ministers was to maintain the internal coalition of ethnic groups within Afghanistan, and more particularly within the ANA. While nepotism and corruption are certainly prevalent throughout the MOD, many of the actions that we assume are motivated by crass self-interest are, in fact, intentional efforts to maintain a balance between the highly competitive ethnic groups that make up the population of Afghanistan. A senior advisor who does not recognize that the minister favors maintaining the nationalistic character of the ANA over the support of the coalition will have significant difficulty understanding not only how the minister views his strategic environment, but also understanding the minister’s actions. The need to maintain the national coalition significantly complicates decision making within the MOD, and the minister’s thinking is consistently influenced by this concern.

### **Minister is a Human Being**

Both ministers with whom I worked reflected all the normal human tendencies. They were, at various times — tired, frustrated, angry, enthusiastic, greedy, generous, thoughtful, insightful, petty, narrow-minded, and brilliant. They were, like most men in positions of authority, susceptible to flattery, but were no fools and could usually tell when a coalition leader was being patronizing. Pride and ambition make up no small part of a minister, and a senior advisor is wise to recognize the difference in age and experience between a minister and a U.S. Army colonel. Consistently treating the minister with the same respect due the U.S. Secretary of Defense, to include honoring such simple formalities as remaining standing until invited to sit, is a critical component of success for a senior advisor.

## **Role of the Senior Advisor**

### **Duty Description**

Serves as the senior advisor to the Afghan MOD on the Resolute Support (RS) mission's essential functions such as its train, advise, and assist (TAA) efforts. Acts as the primary conduit for information between the senior civilian leader of the Afghan Armed Forces and the multinational North Atlantic Treaty Organization force on all matters pertaining to the development of the MOD and the ANA, Afghan national strategy, and MOD policy. Advises the MOD about headquarters, RS activities, and initiatives in support of the continued improvement of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. Informally synchronizes TAA activities among coalition advisors, the MOD's office, assistant ministerial staffs, and the ANA general staff to foster long-term sustainability within the MOD. Provides advice and assistance to the MOD Ministerial Development Plan, the National Military Strategy, the Strategic Defense Planning Directive, the ANA Organization and Functions Manual, and other policy and strategy matters. Coordinates and facilitates meetings of coalition senior leaders with the MOD. Supervises all advisors and mentors assigned to the office of the MOD. Advises the deputy advisors for the MOD and the general staff regarding MOD atmospheric, positions on issues of mutual interest, and progress addressing those issues.

### **Member of the Personal Staff of the MOD**

The minister has a small group of trusted agents that manage his office, his time, and his day-to-day activities. A successful senior advisor will be viewed by the minister as a member of that group, which includes the minister's senior aide (who fills much the same role as the executive officer to a U.S. general officer), personal aide(s), and personal security director.

When the members of the minister's personal staff begin to treat the senior advisor as a member of the team, rather than a visitor to the office, the senior advisor is well positioned for mission accomplishment. To reach this level of trust, however, the senior advisor must be ready and willing to "pull his weight" on the team. This can mean things like helping the staff draft letters or talking points for the minister, providing reminders of upcoming events, helping them understand coalition positions on specific topics, preparing the minister for meetings with senior coalition leaders, and serving as a sounding board for the minister's ideas. The senior advisor must be available to the minister at his convenience, not at the convenience of the senior advisor or in accordance with coalition battle rhythms or planning timelines.

### **Primary Advocate to the Minister for Coalition Positions**

When the coalition wants to influence the minister's behavior, the senior advisor likely will be the primary advocate for the coalition's position. In my experience, the minister may seek the senior advisor's views on a topic even after senior coalition members have discussed the topic with the minister. In some cases, the minister's final decision on such matters may be influenced by what the senior advisor says instead of what the senior coalition leader said. The senior advisor must fully understand coalition objectives, or he can inadvertently damage the coalition cause.

Even with a full understanding of coalition goals, the senior advisor must carefully consider his approach when advocating for a coalition position. The following four approaches are presented from least to most effective:

- **Threaten.** The view that the coalition “holds all the cards,” particularly with regard to resourcing, makes it possible for the coalition to threaten to punish the minister for not complying with a coalition request, typically by denying one or more resources which the minister needs to be successful. In my experience, such an approach almost universally works in the short-term, but brings long-term negative consequences that often outweigh the gain.

The negative consequences commonly include the following:

- A sense among the Afghans that the coalition is either bluffing or is actively working against its own strategic interests by denying the Afghans the resources needed to accomplish tasks that further coalition strategic objectives.
- A sense that the coalition is “bullying” the Afghans, which often translates into an unspoken commitment to regain honor by defying the coalition in some other area (often without coalition knowledge).
- A perception that the coalition use of the term “partner” is purely showmanship, hiding what is really a modern, less open version of colonialism.

All of these effects tend to produce results that are far worse than anticipated by those making threats. Additionally, threats appear to be akin to addictive drugs in that increasingly larger doses are required to achieve the same result. If we threaten to withhold \$40 million this year, we may find it necessary to threaten to withhold \$80 million next year. Lastly, even if completely effective, a threat delivered by a senior advisor almost always taints the relationship with the minister in a manner that is difficult if not impossible to repair. As a general rule, the senior advisor should stay far away from threats to the minister in an attempt to influence his behavior. If a threat simply must be delivered, it is best to allow another coalition leader to deliver it.

- **Demand.** A slightly less overt approach is to simply demand that the minister adopt a specific course of action, while reminding the minister of various positive aspects that the coalition has provided in the past (implying, of course, that such aid may not be available in the future should the minister refuse the senior advisor’s advice). While this is certainly more diplomatic than an open threat, my perception is that the Afghans tend to see the difference as largely academic and respond to demands in much the same manner as threats.
- **Advise.** Ministers are generally open to sound advice, especially if it is delivered as input from one advisor within the context of advice from other advisors. For example, the minister might tell his senior advisor that one of his senior subordinates has recommended that the ministry adopt a specific course of action, then ask for the senior advisor’s opinion on the course of action. This opens the door for the senior advisor to make a specific recommendation, and the minister is very likely to give such advice considerable weight. The senior advisor should recognize, however, that the minister is likely seeking advice from multiple sources, both inside and outside the ministry,

and that some of that advice may be counter to the coalition's viewpoint. Advice is usually welcomed when asked for, but is often perceived as a demand when offered unilaterally.

- **Inform.** This is the single most effective tool in the senior advisor's arsenal, but receives far too little attention in advisor training. Simply and openly describing to the minister a working issue, then explaining the coalition position (to include the logic behind the coalition position) is an extremely powerful tool. Being honest about the benefits and costs of the coalition recommendation further empowers the minister. It recognizes that the minister is a senior leader in his own right, and fully capable of making sound decisions if given the information relevant to that decision. By treating the minister as a responsible adult, the senior advisor encourages adult behavior. Not surprisingly, the information that has the greatest impact on the minister is often political, not military. For example, informing the minister that the U.S. Congress has recently questioned the commander of RS about "Topic A" is very likely to influence the minister to adopt a course of action that reflects his desire to support the commander in his engagements with his own government. Advising the same course of action, but basing that advice on sound military arguments, often proves to be less effective in the long term. Ultimately, the senior advisor should inform the minister on a daily basis, advise him when an opportunity presents itself, and almost never demand an action or threaten the minister.

### **Honest Broker to the Coalition for the Minister's Positions**

The minister frequently shares his views on a topic with the senior advisor well in advance of mentioning his views to senior coalition leaders. In some cases, the minister is simply seeking input from his senior advisor on how the coalition is likely to respond to his view. In many cases, however, the minister fully expects the senior advisor to take his views to the senior leaders within the coalition and, within his available means, influence those coalition leaders to recognize the logic of the minister's views, even if they do not completely align with coalition views. For example, it is common practice to complain about political pressures placed on the minister by parliament, provincial governors, and local politicians. In making these complaints, the minister hopes to get his senior advisor to understand that military factors are not the only variables in his decisions, a view that the senior advisor is then expected to share with senior coalition leaders. Another example is when the minister appears to overreact to a small amount of enemy activity in one province, while appearing to treat a much higher volume of enemy activity in another province as a routine matter. In most cases, this apparent dichotomy stems from the minister's assessment of the relative political, rather than military, impact of enemy operations. In explaining this to his senior advisor, the minister expects his assessment to be passed to senior coalition leaders. Even if the minister's logic is rejected by the coalition, his relationship with his senior advisor is likely to remain healthy as long as the minister is confident that the senior advisor represented his views honestly and fairly. A senior advisor who does not devote himself to communicating the minister's views clearly and effectively soon finds his influence with the minister evaporating.

## **“Universal Translator” That Enables Understanding Between the Minister and the Coalition**

About 40 percent of the friction that occurs between the coalition and the ministry stems from a failure of one side to understand the position of the other, often while maintaining steadfastly that it does understand. The potential for misunderstandings is enormous. The Afghans have a different language (several of them), a different religion, a much different civilian culture, and a military culture that is largely based on experience as mujahedin fighters and a Soviet-style army. To add to the complexity, within the coalition itself there are multiple languages and military cultures. (As the Afghans frequently point out, the idea of a unified “coalition position” is often laughable, which may explain the Afghan practice of attempting to “simplify” the coalition position into a single, easily understood statement. We often perceive this, erroneously, as the Afghans asking us to simply tell them what to do.)

The senior advisor can do a great deal to reduce this friction simply by taking the time to question both the Afghan and the coalition positions until he has an adequate grasp of both, and then clearly communicating the positions to each side.

Practically, this often takes the form of preparing the minister for his meetings with senior coalition leaders by briefing him on the likely topics and the positions that may be taken by the coalition, providing as much background as required to enable the minister to understand the reasoning behind the coalition’s position. In many cases, the minister responds by offering his own position and asking the senior advisor for objective feedback. Although there is a great deal of uncertainty in this approach, it is surprising at how closely the meetings between the minister and coalition senior leaders parallel the information provided by the senior advisor in preparing the minister for the meeting. Just as importantly, the minister frequently asks the senior advisor to clarify statements made by the coalition leader after the meeting has ended.

This role makes it important that the senior advisor perform the following:

- Take the time to understand both the coalition and the minister’s views on issues.
- Be diligent in explaining each position to the other party, recognizing that the views may at times be incompatible.
- Avoid becoming emotionally attached to either position.

The last point may be counter-intuitive, and even sound unnecessary. The senior advisor is a member of the coalition, after all, and is committed to achieving coalition objectives. The reality, however, is that in the long run the coalition is best served by an advisor who has open access to and the trust of the minister. To achieve that, the senior advisor must be willing and able to keep one foot in each camp. The moment the senior advisor is seen as merely the mouthpiece of the coalition, his utility within the ministry is nullified.

### **Shape the Advising Effort Across the Ministry by Keeping Advisors Informed of the Minister's Guidance, Direction, and Intent**

Frequent interaction with the minister provides the senior advisor with an understanding of the minister's intent and priorities that are not available to other advisors within the ministry. A critical part of the senior advisor's job is to frequently and clearly share information with other senior advisors within the ministry. Daily, and sometimes more frequent, communication is a key component in fulfilling this role. The senior advisor has no authority over the other MOD advisors, but can go a long way toward making the advisory effort semi-self-synchronizing simply by keeping everyone informed of what is going on inside the minister's office.

A cautionary note is necessary on this topic, however, as there is a natural tendency for coalition advisors to seek opportunities to use the senior advisor as a means of bypassing the Afghan staff process. For example, the advisor to one of the directors within a MOD may have invested hours of effort into helping his Afghan counterpart prepare a staff recommendation on a specific topic, only to become frustrated by the Afghan staffing process. Such an advisor may be forgiven for thinking that the senior advisor to the MOD can serve as a direct route to the minister, bypassing the staff infrastructure between the action officer and the decision maker. The senior advisor should be very hesitant to play this role, as shortcuts through the Afghan staffing process generally lead to much longer delays than assisting the Afghans within their own process. The desire to by-pass the system is almost universal and the senior advisor typically receives requests for such assistance from corps advisors, general staff advisors, and advisors within the ministry itself, each usually accompanied with an appeal based on the criticality and time-sensitive nature of the topic. As a general rule, however, the senior advisor's best course of action is to keep staff actions in the proper staff channels, as frustrating as such channels can be.

### **Lessons Learned**

**As your first priority, maintain your relationship with the minister.** To be successful, a senior advisor must have consistent access to the minister and his personal staff, but such access comes at the discretion of the minister himself. Nothing is easier for a minister than to "freeze out" an advisor that he finds rude or simply unhelpful. Coalition leaders may desire that an advisor "force" the minister to do something, but such an action should be seen for what it is: a "nuclear option" from which the advisor is likely never to return. The best relationship the senior advisor can have with the minister is that of mutual trust and respect.

**Be attentive to the cultural nuances.** If you are fortunate enough to have had a prior tour in Afghanistan, you may already have a leg up in this area, but it is possible that the cultural norms of the urban elite may be substantially different than what one might experience in a more rural setting. As a general rule, the Afghans appear to make some allowances for a new advisor, but they expect you to demonstrate an increased cultural awareness over time, and eventually to help senior coalition leaders understand the Afghan culture as well. An experienced and mature linguist is invaluable in navigating the cultural pitfalls, which tend to be far more nuanced at the ministerial level than in tactical units. Even with such an asset, however, sharp observation and careful attention to detail are invaluable aids as a senior advisor.

**Stick to the unvarnished truth.** Although a healthy dose of tact is a critical component of a successful senior advisor, any attempt at "spin" or "messaging" in communicating with either MOD or coalition leaders is a perilous venture. Instead, an effective senior advisor should seek to gain and maintain a reputation for consistently providing an unbiased and straight-forward

report to both coalition leaders and the MOD. As a general rule, a senior advisor should answer the minister's questions with the same clarity and veracity used with a coalition senior leader, excepting those restrictions due to the classification of coalition data.

**Leave your ego at the door.** Advisors have no authority and this can be a major adjustment for a senior colonel coming out of brigade command. An advisor cannot compel either the coalition or the minister to do anything, and often finds himself being pushed by both in an attempt to influence the other. The surest way for an advisor to lose his perspective and his utility is to attempt to force either the coalition leader or the minister into a course of action. Advisors do not command and any hint that the advisor does not understand this can quickly diminish the trust necessary for success. The senior advisor is subordinate to the minister, so the challenge in influencing the minister's behavior is the same challenge an officer faces in attempting to influence a senior U.S. military officer. Leading a senior leader is in many ways more challenging than leading a subordinate, and an advisor's ego can easily prove to be an obstacle to success.

**Be comfortable in using your own best judgment.** Senior advisors operate largely independently, without immediate oversight and often facing new situations not covered in standing guidance. Like a commander of a cavalry or airborne unit in combat, a senior advisor will find himself separated from the main body and confronting a new situation with limited ability to reach back to higher headquarters for guidance. This requires a certain level of confidence in one's own judgment and abilities, without which a senior advisor is likely to find himself overwhelmed. The daily tasks that a senior advisor completes are relatively simple and do not require a senior colonel. The position is coded as a former brigade commander, however, because of the mature judgment that the Army expects to find within that population.

**Manage your own risk.** The senior advisor travels with the minister, relying on Afghan security forces. As a general rule this is more than adequate; the Afghans have a vested interest in protecting their MOD, and the senior advisor merely stays inside the minister's security perimeter. The risk is not zero, however, and there will be absolutely no one in a position to assess that risk and take the appropriate mitigating actions other than the senior advisor himself. When the minister opts to fly to an area well outside the medical coverage of the coalition, the senior advisor must weigh the risk of flying with the minister against the effect of refusing to go based on his relationship with the minister. There is no easy answer to this problem, but the senior advisor has to recognize the responsibility for making these risk decisions rests with him.

**Maintain your perspective.** It is very easy to get caught up in the atmosphere of perpetual crisis that seems to pervade all large staffs, but this rapidly degrades the ability to serve as a trusted advisor to the minister. Spending extended periods of time completely immersed in the Afghan culture is mentally exhausting. Advisor's must find time each day to do physical training (PT) and exercise critical thinking apart from foreign influence. A sleep-deprived advisor who has given up PT because "there just is no time," or one who endlessly scurries from meeting to meeting when not with the minister, is well on his way to being ineffectual in the position to which he is assigned.

**Carry your own rucksack.** Senior advisors, armed with a staff of zero, must do for themselves tasks normally associated with sergeants and captains. To be successful, an advisor must be a "blue collar" colonel, and not be a burden to either the MOD or the coalition.

## Recommended Reading

Although a lot has been written about advising foreign military leaders, the challenge for the senior advisor is to find material relevant to advising a senior political appointee such as the following:

- Barfield, Thomas, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*. There are lots of good books about the current war in Afghanistan, but Barfield's unique contribution is to put that war within the cultural and political context of Afghanistan. For an advisor to the MOD, this is an exceptionally useful book.
- Cohen, Eliot A., *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime*. Although Cohen does not look at Afghanistan as a case study, he offers invaluable insight into the real relationship between civilian political leaders and their senior military subordinates in wartime.
- Gates, Robert M., *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*. Aside from providing the former U.S. Secretary of Defense's views on Afghanistan (now dated), this book is an outstanding gateway into the mind of a political appointee working at the senior level of his nation's national security organization.
- Gott, Kendall D., *Security Assistance: U.S. and International Historical Perspectives*. One of the articles in this book by Jacob Kipp, *No Infidels Left and the War Goes On: Soviet Military Assistance to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan After the Withdrawal of Soviet Forces, 1989-1992*, page 105, is especially useful. His description of the post-Soviet era in Afghanistan is enlightening and offers something of a cautionary tale for those who believe the Soviets failed because they were incompetent.
- Ramsey, Robert D., *Advice for Advisors: Suggestions and Observations from Lawrence to the Present: Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper 19*. Combat Studies Institute Press, Fort Leavenworth, KS. This entire publication is useful, but Reading 7, page 49, is especially beneficial as a *Senior Officer Debriefing Report*, by MG John H. Cushman (following a 22-month stint as an advisor to a South Vietnamese Corps in 1972). It provides outstanding advice for senior advisors and can be found at [http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/cgsc/carl/download/csipubs/ramsey\\_op19.pdf](http://usacac.army.mil/cac2/cgsc/carl/download/csipubs/ramsey_op19.pdf).

## Chapter 6

### **Report: Lessons Learned in the First 11 Months of Advising the Afghan Army Chief of the General Staff**

**by COL Richard Creed**

(COL Creed was senior advisor to the Afghan Army Chief of the General Staff [COGS], 6 JUL 2015. Context of this chapter incorporates information from Chapter 5, *Advising the Afghan Minister of Defense*, written by COL Joseph McLamb, to provide the reader with an apple-to-apple comparison between advising the Minister of Defense and advising the COGS.)

#### **Perspective and Approach**

There is a daily ebb and flow inherent with advising senior officers and to be effective one's approach must account for human nature and the 16 to 20 hours each day you are not around your principal. Personality always informs how any leader addresses specific topics, particularly contentious issues; many advising points are best made discreetly in conversation rather than in written documents, particularly when your principal does not read English. Discretion and good judgment must inform both what you say and what you report. You must be aware of who your audience is and understand that everything you say or do is observed and reported elsewhere.

Advisors should provide an average read of the attitudes, temperament, and perspectives of the person they advise. They experience a completely different dynamic than those who get to know the same senior leader via one or two meetings per week. People are seldom themselves during meetings, so those who get to know your principal through meetings risk catching him on a really good or really bad day, and that can provide an unbalanced view of that senior leader. People are not the same every day, particularly people under great stress dealing with complex problems. It is the advisor who sees the principal six days per week, who is in the position to provide useful insights to senior coalition leaders that no one else can provide. Being a U.S. military colonel is an advantage for the senior advisor because while a colonel is experienced and professionally educated, he is neither a threat needing to be placated, nor an audience requiring special performances to impress. Good manners and a low key approach reduce cultural and professional barriers. A persistent presence is critical to the relationship and generates benefits that one-hour advising during meetings can never provide.

Your continuous presence in the office of the COGS enables you to earn the trust and confidence of the COGS and his staff; after four to six months one becomes a trusted agent after having proven yourself a value-added asset to the team. There are different ways to become value added, the most obvious of which is doing things other people on the COGS staff cannot do. Being a conduit for privileged information between the Resolute Support (RS) mission headquarters and the COGS is a critical function, one that requires discretion, judgment, and the ability to communicate clearly without causing offense. You are a member of his personal staff, and as such manages access by senior coalition officers, his calendar, and assists the inner office with improving (or creating) products like speeches and orders guidance. There are few people senior Afghan officers can use as sounding boards for their ideas, and just as few with whom they can vent frustrations with fellow Afghans. You serve as the honest broker between other senior members of the general staff with competing ideas, and on occasion, between the COGS and the coalition leadership. How you do so determines the level of trust exhibited in you and your

judgment; it is absolutely critical not to “spin” the facts so as to avoid upsetting people. People at the strategic level need someone to speak the truth, no matter how uncomfortable they might make you feel about it.

Tired people from different cultures, with different interests and agendas talking to each other through an interpreter, often miss key points, talk past each other, and/or have radically different views about how well a meeting went.

Always take written notes no matter who is in the meeting. Participants often disagree about what was agreed to in a meeting, but not until days after the fact. It is critical to focus on what your principal says because you communicate his position to our leadership; it is not your job to be the meeting stenographer. Repetitive note taking allows you to understand your principal and answer quickly when you get asked “What does the chief think?” You are in a unique position because of the meetings you sit in and people you meet. This level of access enables you to integrate and synthesize privileged information. You may not realize it at first, so be careful about jumping to conclusions, but as you gain deeper perspective about critical issues you should become confident enough to connect the dots and make informed assessments. Your value as an advisor comes from your insights, the access you receive as a trusted agent, and your ability to function beyond being a highly paid note-taker. Few people of any rank are in the position to know what you know if you pay close attention to what is going on around you. It is important for you to stand your ground publicly on contentious issues where the coalition consensus might not be based on accurate information. You are often the only one who can do this for the RS commander and it makes a difference.

### **Understanding the Operational Environment**

The most challenging task for the senior advisor, and the one most useful for the coalition team, is to gain and maintain a reasonable understanding of the operational environment within the Ministry of Defense (MOD) and among the general staff. Key personalities inform the environment inside and around the office of the COGS and there are generally more things going on behind the scenes than can be revealed to a foreigner who spends a few hours each day trying to keep up with events. The longer one spends advising, the more one understands how much advisors do not know. You cannot know everything and would drive everyone around you crazy trying to find out. Accept that there is some ambiguity and concentrate on the main thing of importance to the RS commander and your boss, while absorbing all the atmospherics you can while you do.

Much of your situational awareness and insider information about the general staff, and to a lesser extent MOD, comes from the conversations you have with the office staff and those officers coming to see the COGS from the general staff. Take advantage of every opportunity to engage in conversation with general staff primaries as they await their turn to see the chief. You learn something new almost every day that is useful for someone else in the advising enterprise, and because of your position, many of the general officers solicit your support in getting the COGS to approve some initiative of which you are unaware. Your ability to network among the advisors and the general staff rapidly becomes added value to the COGS and RS commander because you can advocate for approval or disapproval from an informed perspective and expedite consideration of one or two matters each week.

## COGS is a Political Appointee

The COGS was appointed by the Afghan president with concurrence from the chief executive and serves at the pleasure of the President. No matter how clear the military situation appears, the COGS will always need to factor in the political situation, and will often be subject to political pressures not explicit in public discussions. Regardless of his specific military experience, education, or training, he is attuned to national and regional political issues of which we may be unaware. It is unwise to conflate or ignore credentials and backgrounds. As an example, small levels of violence in one province may concern the COGS more than much higher levels of violence in another depending on who calls his office to report it and which senior leaders in the executive branch or parliament happen to be from that area. With time you may be fortunate enough for the COGS to share his personal views about happenings in a specific area. Over the course of a year some typical response patterns emerge, particularly since many of the regional dynamics and political players do not change very much. This can be confusing at first, because it never seems like the chosen courses of action (COAs) ever change despite evidence that the COAs do not provide decisive results. It is a source of frustration and irritation to many senior people on the coalition staffs, who see the essence of a military or security issue and want fast answers or decisions in the context of our time-sensitive Western battle rhythm. Our timeline and Afghan political imperatives are not generally synchronized and often may be at odds with one another. A senior advisor who does not understand the importance of political factors in the calculus of the COGS is likely to be both frustrated and ineffective. The same is equally true when it comes to understanding the political factors driving the coalition's decision-making process.

(A senior advisor's) job is to report the facts; it may be impossible to reconcile the points of view on many issues, but living with that ambiguity is part of the job.

## COGS is a Strategic Leader

When I assumed the role of senior advisor, the only definitive guidance I received was, "Stay strategic in your conversations with the COGS." Doing so is much more difficult than it sounds. The duties and responsibilities of the COGS combine those of the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Chief of Staff of the Army and Air Force, and a combatant commander fighting a war. Operational and tactical issues percolate to his level for a variety of good and bad reasons, threatening his ability to maintain a coherent strategic focus. Since policy informs strategy, or should, politics comes into play as well. There is a cultural tendency in the Afghan National Army (ANA) to push decision making to higher levels than we might think necessary because many subordinate commanders and general staff primaries do not want to accept the personal or professional risk inherent in the decision-making process. Since few senior people in the Afghan army ever really "go away," there is a reluctance to cause offense to someone who might repay the favor in the future. Decision making reflects calculations we do not always see and which our principals do not discuss unless asked; sometimes even then, they may choose not to share all the factors involved.

People who have the authority to make routine decisions at lower levels often do not want the responsibility of doing so. This often puts the COGS in the position of spending more time on institutional trivialities and minor tactical decisions than he should. Those unable or unwilling to make what should be routine decisions become hard for the COGS to trust later when they do decide to show some initiative because their motives for being interested in making a decision

come into question. This dynamic is indicative of systemic problems. Providing advice about the decision, or commenting on the competence of those involved, is easy. It does not help the COGS avoid the same problem with another subordinate. Perhaps the problem could be solved with changes to the professional education system, or by using it as a vignette at a corps commander's conference, but those solutions do not generate quick cultural changes. Helping the COGS formulate some written guidance to staff and commanders could make a difference faster, and advising the chief to pursue comprehensive solutions that involve all three COAs might result in long-term institutional changes with strategic impact.

### **COGS Priorities are Strategic and Political**

The first priority of the COGS is to maintain the internal coalition of ethnic groups within the ANA, represented by his advocacy for an apolitical, national army. I define apolitical as non-interference in electoral politics, which is not the same as not participating in them, and as not challenging the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) civilian control of the military. While nepotism and corruption are certainly prevalent throughout the MOD, many of the actions that we assume are motivated by crass self-interest are, in fact, intentional efforts to maintain a balance between the highly competitive interest groups that make up the population of Afghanistan and the officer corps. Ethnic and regional interests are not the only ones bringing pressure to bear; there is a significant divide between professional officers and former mujahedin, and between members of both groups and other members of the same groups who served with the communist or Taliban regimes for some period of time. There are also simple, old fashioned personality conflicts having nothing to do with the backgrounds of those involved.

The take away is to not assume that you know the motivation behind someone's position on a particular topic or be too quick to assume that one position is necessarily more rational than another.

Those Afghans most familiar with American or European cultures are usually the most adept at manipulating our point of view. Regardless of details of any specific issue, the need to maintain a united and apolitical army significantly complicates decision making for the COGS, whose thinking is consistently influenced by this concern.

The second priority of both chiefs of the general staff with whom I have worked has been to maintain the support of the international coalition. The reality is that the COGS is painfully aware that the prospects for a safe and secure Afghanistan are poor in the absence of continued coalition support, especially in the form of enablers like close air support (CAS); intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; and materiel support. While we tend to focus on those occasions when Afghans are slow to comply with our requests, the Afghans do a tremendous number of things that they would prefer not to do simply to maintain coalition support. In those cases where the Afghans refuse a coalition initiative, or more commonly implement it slowly, they may have assessed that the initiative, while important to us, is not critical to our strategic objectives or theirs. While the Afghans are careful to avoid anything they think may risk coalition support, their understanding is nuanced enough to allow them to push back on things that they know are not truly vital to us, regardless of our rhetoric.

Additionally, the COGS has institutional responsibilities that become a third priority and closely resemble the metaphor of building an aircraft in flight. The ANA has never been out of enemy contact, cannot take time off to focus on what we consider garrison or schoolhouse initiatives,

and enjoys no stand-off or sense of sanctuary from insurgent attacks. That reality creates friction. Once one adds the normal challenges of running any big organization and factors in the Afghan political realities you begin to appreciate how challenging it is to be the COGS. Understanding the environment he inhabits and how it inhibits the building of enduring institutions is important when trying to advise and assist. All the easy suggestions have already been made by our predecessors, so if a solution to an ANA problem looks obvious, you probably do not have all the facts.

### **COGS is a Human Being**

Both men with whom I worked reflected all the normal human tendencies of gifted people dealing with difficult problems under conditions of great stress and pressure. They were, at various times, tired, frustrated, angry, enthusiastic, greedy, generous, thoughtful, insightful, petty, narrow-minded, and brilliant. They were, like most men in positions of authority, susceptible to flattery, but were not fools and could usually tell when a coalition (or Afghan) leader was being patronizing. Pride and ambition make up no small part of becoming head of any armed force and a senior advisor is wise to recognize the great differential in both age and experience between a seasoned Afghan general and a U.S. Army colonel. Consistently treating the chief with the same respect due the U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, to include honoring such simple formalities as remaining standing until invited to sit, is a critical component of success.

### **COGS is a Product of His Environment**

There are extensive histories (professional, personal, and political) between and among the senior officers in the ANA, going back in many cases to when those officers were commissioned. The previous COGS was a professional product of a system that began in the “King’s Army,” which reached its pinnacle in the Afghan mind before the civil war began in 1994, and then completely disintegrated during that war. The current COGS served in the old ANA in the 1980s, and then as part of the Northern Alliance in the 1990s, and so has a very different set of perspectives and old comrades. Most senior officers in the ANA believe they know the COGS even when they do not, and he knows just about all of them by reputation, if not personally, regardless of their background. He and the general officers all have strong opinions about each other. Those opinions are informed by considerations like whether someone was regular army or mujahedin, served with the communist-era government or under the Taliban, lived overseas, and their level of education (both civilian and military). Ethnicity, tribe, regional and family affiliations matter as well, since they denote explicit and implicit connections to other personalities in Afghanistan. Generally the COGS views someone as competent or incompetent completely separate from whether they are corrupt or honest; corruption is a label most often applied to someone from a rival ethnic group, but not exclusively. When talking about someone from a different ethnic group, corrupt and incompetent can often be used as synonyms.

### **Role of the Senior Advisor**

#### **Duty Description**

Serves as the senior advisor to the Afghan Army COGS to perform the RS mission’s essential functions such as its train, advise, and assist (TAA). Acts as the primary conduit for information between the senior civilian leader of the Afghan Armed Forces and the multinational North Atlantic Treaty Organization force on all matters pertaining to the development of the general staff and the ANA, campaign planning, operations, force optimization, and the institutional army.

Advises the COGS about RS activities and initiatives in support of the continued improvement of the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces. Informally synchronizes TAA activities among coalition advisors, the COGS office, and the ANA general staff to foster long-term sustainability within the ANA. Provides advice and assistance to MOD's Ministerial Development Plan, the National Military Strategy, the General Staff Planning Guidance, the ANA Organization and Functions Manual, and other policy and strategy matters. Coordinates and facilitates meetings of coalition senior leaders with the COGS. Supervises all advisors and mentors assigned to the office of the COGS. Advises the deputy advisors for the MOD and general staff regarding atmospheric, positions on issues of mutual interest, and progress addressing those issues.

### **Member of the Personal Staff of the COGS**

The chief has a small group of trusted agents that manage his office, his time, and his day-to-day activities. A successful senior advisor will be viewed by the COGS as a member of that small group, which includes the chief's senior aide (who fills much the same role as the executive officer to a U.S. general), his personal aide(s), and personal security detachment commander. When the members of the personal staff begin to treat you as a member of the team, rather than a visitor to the office, you have earned your way into the inner circle. To reach this level of trust, however, the senior advisor must be ready and willing to prove he is value added to the team. Access works both ways, so you must be available for the COGS and his office, willing to travel, and share in the daily experience of running the armed forces. This translates to helping the staff draft letters or talking points for the COGS, assisting with calendar management, coordinating coalition positions on specific topics, preparing the chief for meetings with senior coalition leaders, and serving as a sounding board for his ideas. You are his honest broker. The senior advisor must be available to the COGS at his convenience, not at the convenience of the senior advisor or in accordance with coalition battle rhythms.

### **Primary Advocate to the COGS for Coalition Positions**

When the coalition wants to influence decisions and behavior by the COGS, the senior advisor serves as the primary advocate for the coalition position. The COGS seeks the senior advisor's views on a topic even after coalition general officers have discussed the topic with him. In some cases, his final decision on a matter may be as influenced by what the senior advisor says as by what the senior leader said. The senior advisor must fully understand the issue at hand in the context of coalition objectives, or he can inadvertently damage the coalition cause.

Even with a full understanding of coalition goals, however, the senior advisor must carefully select his approach when advocating for a coalition position. There are two techniques for this approach and each is significantly different from the other. The following explains each approach:

- **Advise.** The COGS is generally open to advice, but more so when it is requested as opposed to offered. The COGS might tell his senior advisor that one of the general staff reported a problem or is recommending a specific COA and ask for the senior advisor's opinion on the issue. This opens the door for the senior advisor to make a specific recommendation in the context of a conversation, and the chief is likely to give such advice considerable weight. Advice is usually welcomed when asked for, but is often perceived as a demand when offered unilaterally unless done diplomatically and infrequently. The exception is when passing messages directly or indirectly from the RS commander. The most effective way to advise, particularly on contentious

matters, is to ask questions about a problem to generate conversation and then offer some thoughts on what the COGS shares with you. One also can create opportunities to advise by informing him about a situation and then using the subsequent conversation to offer suggestions. Do not try to rush him or force a decision, but rather trust that the issue is likely to come up again. Steady advocacy can have lasting effects. Showing up each day with a checklist of things to tell him to do quickly results in polite disdain, often indicated by the COGS not taking any notes while you are speaking. If he writes down what you say, then you are effectively providing some advice he may be interested in following. The current COGS has little use for advice from people who cannot do anything to help implement the suggestions they make.

- **Inform.** This is the single most effective tool for the senior advisor and requires the ability to establish a personal connection that stimulates conversation. It is during that conversation that one can advocate for the COA that best supports the mutual goals of Afghanistan and the coalition. Simply and openly describing a working issue to the COGS in a polite and dispassionate manner, then explaining the coalition's position, to include the logic behind that position, is extremely beneficial to you both. It recognizes that the COGS is a senior leader in his own right, fully capable of making sound decisions if given the information relevant to that decision. By treating the COGS as a responsible adult, the senior advisor encourages adult behavior. He can handle the truth. You have the ability to provide him inside information that informs a more educated perspective that simply does not happen in large group meetings. The information that has the greatest impact is often political, not military. Basing advice on sound military arguments proves less effective in the long term than informing the COGS about the political components of a particular issue important to the coalition and then letting him sort out the military implications.

The senior advisor should inform the COGS on a daily basis, advise him when an opportunity presents itself, and spend as much time as possible listening to the issues presented to him for action by the general staff. Being patient almost always pays off; do not offer solutions to problems you do not understand. Be persistent in an understated manner for a sustained period of time and you are likely to be rewarded with greater acceptance for what you advocate. If your COA is the best one, events tend to bear out your position over time, making it much more palatable for the COGS to accept. An indicator of true success is when the COGS advocates something you suggested as his own idea.

### **Primary Advocate to the Coalition for the COGS**

The COGS frequently shares his views on a topic with the senior advisor well in advance of mentioning his views to senior coalition leaders. In some cases, the COGS simply wants to understand how the coalition is likely to respond to his view. If you do not know, find out quickly. But in many cases he fully expects the senior advisor to take his views to the senior leaders within the coalition and get them to recognize the validity of his views, even if they do not completely align with those of the coalition. An example of this is the common practice of complaining about political pressures coming from parliament, provincial governors, and local politicians to take some action beyond the organic capabilities of the ANA. CAS and ISR support are the most common requests based on inaccurate information provided too late to actually influence events on the ground. The COGS hopes to get his senior advisor to understand that military factors are not the only variables in his decisions; the senior advisor is then expected to share this "view" or information with senior coalition leaders.

Sometimes the COGS, under pressure from the Afghan MOD and president, will appear to overreact to enemy activity in one province, while treating a much higher volume of enemy activity elsewhere as a routine matter. The apparent inconsistency stems from his assessment of the relative political, rather than military, impact of the enemy operations. If he explains this to his senior advisor, then he expects his assessment to be passed to senior coalition leaders. Even if the request for support is rejected by the coalition, the COGS's relationship with his senior advisor is likely to remain healthy as long as the COGS is confident that the senior advisor advocated (even unsuccessfully) for him. Rest assured that he will find out whether or not you advocated for him in subsequent conversations with senior coalition leaders when you are not around. Any senior advisor who does not advocate for the COGS soon finds his influence evaporating.

### **“Universal Translator” Who Enables Understanding Between the Minister and the Coalition**

Much, if not most, of the friction that occurs between the coalition and ANA senior leadership stems from a failure of one side to understand the position of the other while maintaining steadfastly that it does understand. The potential for misunderstandings is enormous. Most senior Afghans speak *Dari* (a variety of the Persian language) and/or Pashto (an Eastern Iranian language and one of two languages common in Afghanistan), understand a little English, come from a multi-ethnic tribal culture, and are most familiar with a military culture largely formed from experience as mujahedin fighters and a Soviet-style army. Senior coalition officers often represent different military cultures and speak English as a second language. Bilateral national arrangements between coalition nations and GIROA further complicate conversations, so it is easy to understand the Afghan practice of attempting to “simplify” the coalition position into a single, easily understood statement. We often perceive this, erroneously, as the Afghans asking us to tell them what to do. What they seek, however, is clarity. Often, the person best positioned to provide that clarity is the senior advisor who observes the different engagements personally, knowing what the participants are trying to say.

The senior advisor can do a great deal to reduce this friction by taking the time to question both the Afghan and the coalition position on a particular issue until he has an adequate grasp of both, and then clearly communicating the positions to each side. Practically, this takes the form of preparing the COGS for his meetings with senior coalition leaders by briefing him on the likely topics and the positions they will take. Your goal should include providing as much background as required to allow the COGS to understand the reasoning behind the coalition position. The COGS may respond by offering his own position, and then asking you how that position will appear to the coalition. Surprisingly, the dialogue at the meeting often parallels the “rehearsal” done to prepare the COGS. Just as importantly, the COGS may ask his advisor to clarify statements made by the coalition leader after the meeting has ended. If he does not, but you notice a potential misunderstanding, then it is incumbent upon you to seek clarification before either side begins to take action based on a misunderstanding.

To enable understanding between the COGS and the coalition, the senior advisor should perform the following actions:

- Take the time to understand both the coalition and COGS viewpoints on issues.
- Be diligent in explaining each position to the other party, recognizing that a particular viewpoint may be incompatible with the other.
- Avoid becoming emotionally attached to either position. This last point appears to be counterintuitive. The senior advisor is a member of the coalition, after all, and is committed to achieving coalition objectives. The reality, however, is that in the long run the coalition is best served by an advisor who has open access to and the trust of the COGS. The senior advisor must be willing and able to keep one foot in each camp. The moment the senior advisor is seen as merely the mouthpiece of the coalition, his utility within the office of the COGS comes to an end.

### **Shapes Advising Efforts by Keeping General Staff Advisors Informed**

Frequent interaction with the COGS provides the senior advisor with an understanding of his intent and priorities that is not available to the other general staff advisors. A critical part of the senior advisor's job is to frequently and clearly share information with other senior advisors. Daily, and sometimes more frequently, communication is a key component in fulfilling this role. The senior advisor to the COGS has no authority over other advisors, but can better serve the advisory effort by keeping everyone informed about what the COGS expects the general staff to be doing. Your duty position has many more implied responsibilities than specified ones. Simply submitting a daily report without sharing key points and COGS guidance with those who advise other senior Afghans does not advance the RS mission. If your fellow advisors can ask leading questions about the guidance they receive from the COGS or share that guidance in the context of assisting their Afghan leaders they add effective value added to the overall effort. To be truly effective means that you must be willing to become an informal leader among your fellow advisors.

The benefits that come from being proactive work both up and down the Afghan chain of command. Your fellow advisors can share what is and is not happening in the offices of the general staff, which is exceedingly useful information if shared discreetly with the COGS. It is important that the sources of your information be protected so that the relationships between your fellow advisors and their Afghan counterparts are not poisoned by the perception that everything they do is reported to the COGS. Holding onto some reports until they can be shared at an appropriate time is often more effective than going over a list of issues reported to you each time you see him. Sharing information indirectly, dropping hints of problems, and asking leading questions is a way to have professional discussions with the COGS about important matters without the impression that all conversations are reports about problems in the ANA.

One of the most important shaping efforts you make as senior advisor to the COGS is your role as the honest broker. There will be many times when you are the only person in a room of general officers who knows that some assumption or assertion made by the group in support of a coalition COA is incorrect. It is your job to speak up and represent the Afghan position as presented, as well as the intent of the COGS. No one else in a RS meeting can do that, and it is critically important that you provide that insight.

If you let an erroneous assumption or assertion become fact inside the RS staff it is likely to become a contentious issue with the Afghans later, and one that you will spend much time and energy trying to manage. It is best to address such issues as soon as they present themselves, before staff inertia sets in.

### Lessons Learned

**Nourish Your Relationship with the COGS.** The best relationship the senior advisor can have is one of mutual trust and respect, and that relationship requires daily attention.

**Leave Your Ego at the Door.** An advisor cannot compel the COGS or fellow coalition advisors to do anything and will often find himself being pushed by both in their attempt to influence the other. There will be many times when you report the COGS or Afghan position on an issue and your audience will act like the points you are making represent your own personal position on that same issue.

**Be Comfortable Using Your Own Best Judgment.** Senior advisors operate largely independent of any oversight and often face new situations not covered in standing guidance. This requires a certain level of confidence in one's own judgment and abilities. Otherwise, a senior advisor may find himself overwhelmed by untenable circumstances.

**Manage Your Own Risk.** The senior advisor travels with the COGS, placing his personal welfare in the hands of the COGS security team. As a general rule this is more than adequate. However, there is no one in a position to assess any risk or recommend appropriate mitigating actions other than the senior advisor himself.

**Maintain Your Perspective.** It is very easy to get caught up in the atmosphere of perpetual crisis that pervades most large staffs, but this rapidly degrades your ability to serve as a trusted advisor to the COGS. Advisor's must find time each day to do physical training and exercise critical thinking apart from foreign influence.

**Carry Your Own Rucksack.** To be successful, an advisor must be a "blue collar" colonel and not be a burden to either the COGS or the coalition.

### Recommended Reading

The following publications provide additional insight for a senior advisor:

- Barfield, Thomas, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton Studies in Muslim Politics) 25 MAR 2012. This publication provides useful cultural and political context of Afghanistan and serves as an outstanding reference when seeking understanding about a foreign country many have never visited.
- Cohen, Eliot A., *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen, and Leadership in Wartime* (9 SEP 2003). Although Cohen does not look at Afghanistan as a case study, he offers invaluable insight into the real relationship between civilian political leaders and their senior military subordinates in wartime.

- Gott, Kendall D. (Managing Editor), *Security Assistance: U.S. and International Historical Perspectives: The Proceedings of the Combat Studies Institute 2006 Military History Symposium*. (See Jacob Kipp's article, *No Infidels Left and the War Goes On: Soviet Military Assistance to the Democratic Republic of Afghanistan After the Withdrawal of Soviet Forces, 1989-1992*, page 105. Kipp's description of the post-Soviet era in Afghanistan is enlightening and offers something of a cautionary tale for those who believe the Soviets failed because they were incompetent.)
- Ramsey, III, Robert D., *Advice for Advisors: Suggestions and Observations from Lawrence to the Present: Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper 19*, Combat Studies Institute Press, Fort Leavenworth, KS. This entire publication is useful, but the best advice I have seen for advisors is a senior officer's debriefing report (see Reading 7, page 49) by MG John H. Cushman, commanding general for Headquarter's, Delta Regional Assistance Command, who also served 22 months as an advisor to the South Vietnamese Corps in 1972.



## Chapter 7

### Developing Capacity for an Enduring Security Force

By James A. Schear, William B. Caldwell IV, and Frank C. DiGiovanni

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When asked how long the United States should stay (in Afghanistan), one elder replied:

“Until the moment that you make our security forces self-sufficient. Then you will be welcome to visit us, not as Soldiers, but as guests.”

—Senator Carl Levin, 11 SEP 2009  
(stated during a speech on the floor of the Senate)

The Taliban and other insurgent elements fighting against the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GoIRA) are convinced they will succeed if they simply wait us out. They think if they maintain their influence in key areas such as Helmand and Kandahar provinces, they will be poised to regain control of the entire country when coalition forces begin to drawdown in the next few years.

What these enemies of the Afghan government fail to grasp is that they cannot outlast a self-sufficient and self-sustaining Afghan National Security Force (ANSF). As North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Secretary-General Fogh Rasmussen has stated, the Taliban “might think they can wait us out.<sup>2</sup> But within a year or so [of summer 2010], there will be over 300,000 Afghan soldiers and police trained and ready to defend their country. And they can’t be waited out.” The mission to develop these forces, and build the Afghan government’s capacity to sustain them into the future, belongs to the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A).

#### Empowering Partners to Defend Themselves

The NTM-A capacity-building mission is not only a strategic pillar of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) strategy, but it is also a U.S. national security imperative that has been articulated at all levels of our government. The national security strategy charges our military with the responsibility to “partner with foreign counterparts, train and assist security forces, and pursue military-to-military ties with a broad range of governments.”<sup>3</sup> Reinforcing this theme, then Secretary of Defense Robert Gates argued that “the effectiveness and credibility of the United States will only be as good as the effectiveness, credibility, and sustainability of its local partners... Building the governance and security capacity of other countries must be a critical element of U.S. national security strategy.”<sup>4</sup> Although the Department of Defense (DOD) has made progress in answering the secretary’s call to improve our partners’ abilities to defend themselves, there is more to be done — particularly in Afghanistan.

NTM-A has been charged with building Afghan capacity in four primary areas: training and equipping the Afghan National Army and police, developing the ministries of interior (MOI) and defense (MOD), improving the country’s human capital, and investing in Afghanistan’s physical capital. To establish an enduring force that can provide security for its country’s population over the long term, the most critical task is to develop effective and accountable security ministries.

Only after Afghanistan's security institutions are self-sufficient and self-sustaining will it be possible for the Afghan government to make geographic gains durable.

### **Sharing Ministry-Level Expertise**

The Ministry of Defense Advisor (MoDA) Program developing these critical and complex ministries requires a mixture of humility and realism. While technical assistance can help, ministerial capacity must ultimately be homegrown; it cannot simply be “exported” by well-intentioned foreign partners to their host nation counterparts.

DOD recently tapped its considerable institutional resources to make a vital contribution to advising efforts. Drawing on its own pool of civilian expertise, the DOD established the MoDA program in 2009. The program pairs civilian specialists with officials at the Afghan MOD and MOI. Seventeen of these senior DOD civilians deployed to Afghanistan in the summer of 2010, advising their Afghan counterparts in specialized fields such as logistics, financial administration, and human resources. The program marks a significant evolution in the DOD approach to institutional capacity-building. It combines rigorous pre-deployment training in mentoring skills with a structured reachback capability that allows advisors to make full use of DOD resources. Additionally, the program provides backfill funding for each advisor's parent organization during deployment and emphasizes the importance of building relationships with partners that will continue long after advisors return home. Recognizing the program's immediate contributions and the growing need for civilian expertise in the development of Afghan security institutions, ISAF Commander General David Petraeus called for the program to expand dramatically by summer 2011.

The MoDA program, with its emphasis on civilian-led institution building, is only the latest innovation in the Defense Department's ongoing advisory efforts in Afghanistan. Military advisors began working with Afghan forces in the early days of the war, and their importance grew as building sustainable Afghan-led security institutions became a priority. However, these American advisory efforts were often carried out on an ad hoc basis, utilizing uniformed or contract personnel who did not always possess the requisite experience in the fields where their services were sought, or who lacked sufficient working knowledge of the sociocultural context into which they were being deployed. While filling tactical-level advisory requirements has proved relatively straightforward, if demanding, the sheer diversity of ministerial-level portfolios makes it more challenging to align advisory expertise with ministerial needs.

Ministry-level advising requires diverse yet specialized skill sets.

The Afghan MOD slaughterhouse is a prime example of specialized skill sets. This organization is responsible for procuring meat products to feed the 136,000-strong Afghan National Army. Originally, a U.S. Army colonel was selected as an advisor based primarily on his knowledge of hunting — the battlefield equivalent of a meat processing background. With the institution of the MoDA program, the Afghan army slaughterhouse now has a civilian advisor from the Defense Commissary Agency with over 20 years of experience providing safe, quality meat. This level of experience cannot be found within the uniformed ranks, and few contract agencies could provide the combination of slaughterhouse expertise and functional knowledge of a defense ministry.

## Bringing Civilian Assets to Partner Capacity Building

With the capability to leverage such specialized skill sets, the MoDA program is an example of the growing DOD capacity to play a reconstructive role in societies transitioning from war to peace. The core objective of these efforts is the development of effective security institutions that are accountable to civilian leadership. Putting civilians in charge of the military separates the coercive force within a nation from its political decision making. This creates a culture in which the armed forces focus on defending the nation while remaining independent of political concerns, leaving civilian-led ministries to navigate the nuanced political landscape.

The MoDA program was designed to foster civil-military partnerships.

In Afghanistan, where the political landscape is still solidifying, civil-military partnership is especially important. Afghanistan's survival as a democracy depends largely on the ability of its army and police forces to provide security to the Afghan population, regardless of political affiliation or ethnic background. After decades of conflict, the Afghan military has considerable control over Afghanistan's nascent security institutions. Many key positions in Afghanistan's MOI and MOD are filled by former army commanders who bring with them a wealth of tactical experience. But in a country that has not had a functioning central government for many years, their civilian credentials are understandably lacking. This is a key area where MoDA program advisors can be of use.

MoDA civilian advisors have assets that military and contract advisors lack. They deploy straight from positions within DOD and typically have years of experience in those jobs. They remain in their positions after their return, bringing back close personal and professional relationships with their Afghan counterparts. These links help form an important part of the foundation of an enduring security partnership between the United States and Afghan government.

Like military advisors, MoDA advisors have the flexibility to contribute outside their original mandate. This is a benefit that cannot be provided by contract advisors, who must complete their tasks according to a specific contract. Kimberly Ekholm's experiences as an advisor illustrate this capacity for innovation. As a DOD-trained executive assistant and advisor to Enayatullah Nazari, first deputy to the MOD, Ms. Ekholm, was asked to begin training Minister Nazari's staff to use e-mail. However, she found that a ministry-wide lack of computer skills meant that other departments would be unable to access and respond to the messages that the deputy minister and his staff sent. So Mr. Nazari asked her to extend the e-mail training course to the entire ministry. Before beginning, she surveyed staff from all departments to find out what skills they had acquired from past training programs and developed a curriculum based on their needs. Her experience as a civilian opened doors that a uniformed advisor might not have been aware of, allowing her to design and execute a computer training course in coordination with the Afghan Defense Ministry's public affairs, communications, and personnel training departments.

The MoDA program complements a range of other institution-building initiatives within DOD and beyond. Defense security cooperation programs such as the Defense Institution Reform Initiative, Warsaw Initiative Fund, and Defense Institute of International Legal Studies training program help our allies undertake security sector reforms and strengthen their military capabilities. The U.S. Department of State, Department of Commerce, and other government agencies have their own advisory programs that contribute importantly to capacity-building efforts in Afghanistan and other partner states around the world.

However, the MoDA program is unique in that it builds on deployment mechanisms developed by the recently established civilian expeditionary workforce to recruit the most qualified DOD civilians and provide them the support they need to be effective. Unlike other programs that place staff in U.S. field offices, the MoDA program sends civilians to work directly within a partner government, working inside the country in need. The program's ability to draw experienced specialists from the Secretary of Defense's own staff sends an important message of American commitment to our allies.

### **Putting the Right Advisors in the Right Places**

A successful advisory program must address both the supply of qualified advisors and the demand for their services. The MoDA program has developed mechanisms for both, a model that will become increasingly important as the need for civilian defense advisors grows in Afghanistan and around the world.

To meet this demand, the MoDA program works closely with American and NATO forces and the Afghan government to identify the requirements within the security sector that can best be addressed by civilian expertise. Effective identification of the right person for the right advisory position requires flexibility and recognition of the critical role that personality plays in a successful advisory effort.

Many MoDA program advisors have taken on unexpected tasks and responsibilities, responding to needs that were only apparent once they were on the ground in Afghanistan.

For example, John Gillette brought a background in business development and an appreciation for innovative solutions to his role as advisor to MG Hotak, First Deputy Minister of Defense for Acquisition and Training. Gillette was originally assigned to advise another official, but he impressed MG Hotak with his matter-of-fact manner and dedication to finding long-term Afghan-led solutions. After turning down other advisors who could not address the kinds of problems that Gillette had decades of experience solving, MG Hotak specifically requested that Gillette be assigned to work with him. The two quickly developed a rapport necessary to accomplish tasks together.

Personal connections such as these are central to forging an enduring partnership between DOD and Afghan ministries. The experiences of MoDA advisors, who have drawn on their individual talents and experiences to break through language and cultural barriers and form lasting bonds with their Afghan counterparts, highlight the principle at the heart of DOD civilian advisory programs — people build institutions.

Ensuring a supply of talented and experienced advisors is just as important as matching their individual skills to meet specific demands, the MoDA program was designed to draw on sustainable DOD personnel resources — marking a significant evolution from previous case-by-case military and contracted advising initiatives. The program's backfill mechanism provides funds to advisor's parent organizations, allowing them to temporarily fill a position while their employee is overseas. Reducing the strain on the advisor's employer serves two purposes: It helps attract the most qualified candidates for advisory positions and it ensures that they are able to resume their positions within DOD when they complete deployment. When they return home, MoDA participants bring professional connections to their counterparts in Afghanistan's security ministries and a new wealth of knowledge and experience to DOD.

The MoDA program also offers participants considerable opportunities for personal and professional development. Several advisors have asked to extend their year-long deployment to two years, and as the program expands, the level of interest from DOD civilians suggests that it is achieving its goal of sustainability while also helping foster a culture in which more and more civilian experts are becoming directly involved in security capacity-building overseas. As demand for DOD constructive capabilities grows, the ability to deploy civilian resources will need to develop further. The MoDA program is an important step in this direction.

### **Filling a Department-Wide Gap**

Intensive pre-deployment training helped advisors become immediately effective after arriving in Afghanistan, and has been key to the program’s success thus far. Participants receive seven weeks of extensive, experiential training in culture, language, and advisory skills, as well as adaptability, resiliency, and personal safety training. Some of the unique aspects of this preparation include a personality inventory that measures innovation and critical thinking skills, along with training that encourages an “adaptive stance” to complex decision making, risk communication, and executive “branding” techniques that provide skills that MoDA advisors can use to help Afghan officials build public confidence in the security ministries.

Although MoDA senior civilians are experts in their functional areas, the training provides some of the additional core competencies needed to be successful advisors. These competencies include mentoring and advisor skills, where participants learn to focus their advisory efforts around the program’s four overarching objectives: supporting local ownership; designing projects for sustainability; demonstrating empathy, humility, and respect; and doing no harm. Advisors receive intensive language and cultural instruction, with a ratio of three students to one native speaker for an hour and a half each day for the entire course.

In the first five-week phase of classroom training, senior-level American and Afghan officials, regional experts, and instructors from the United States Institute of Peace worked closely with the first class of MoDA program advisors.<sup>5</sup> In the second phase, a 10-day immersive field exercise at the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center introduced advisors to the realities of living on a forward operating base and gave them the opportunity to test their advising skills — in an academic, controlled environment with native Afghan role players and interpreters — before they were called on to use these skills with their Afghan counterparts. The trainees also learned about personnel security and were introduced to the Marine Corps’ “Combat Hunter” situational awareness course. Subsequent courses will include an increased focus on physical and mental preparedness, more immersive role playing and practical exercises, and an increased emphasis on assessing student progress during the course.

### **Harnessing Departmental Resources**

The MoDA program includes a structured reachback mechanism, making it easier for advisors in the field to draw on DOD resources. This enhances the natural links that advisors have to their parent organizations.

Reachback connections to DOD resources are among the most valuable assets that MoDA program advisors bring to their Afghan counterparts.

Ms. Ekholm, who worked for the Department of Defense Education Activity (DODEA) before joining the MoDA program, was able to call her former colleagues for help when a staff member from another department in the Afghan MOD asked her for assistance in setting up an English language course. DODEA shared its English as a Second Language program curriculum and instructor training methods with her, which Ms. Ekholm was able to adapt.

Similarly, Rasheed Diallo, who advises officials in charge of audits and personnel for the Logistics Directorate at the Afghan MOI, looked to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers' Command Supply Discipline Program (CSDP) for a model checklist to use in conducting internal audits of departments, providing critical support to the Afghan National Police. While the Army's CSDP checklist gave the MOI a template to work from, Mr. Diallo and his Afghan counterparts tailored the checklist for use in an Afghan environment. The fact that it was a joint effort was critical to the project's success. With Afghan buy-in and ownership, this kind of initiative is much more likely to continue to be implemented after the advisors leave.

Ultimately, the goal is to support the Afghan army and police. Mr. Diallo and the other MoDA advisors work with key leaders in the MOI and MOD to increase their capacity and capabilities to generate, train, and sustain forces. They focus on three key areas: structural changes, crafting of policies and laws in support of Afghan parliament, and the development of a logistics system. Less than a year into deployment, the advisor efforts have been translated into tangible results that have a direct impact on the sustainability of Afghan forces. For example, Mr. Diallo's assistance in the development of internal audit mechanisms for the Afghan National Police will help ensure transparency and oversight of everything from the police bakery and laundry services to the explosive ordnance disposal unit. As the senior civilian advisor to the Director of Supply and Sustainment at the Afghan MOI, Rick Pollitt is training his Afghan counterparts to develop systems for weapons accountability and ammunition management — measures that are crucial to keeping weapons out of the hands of insurgents.

### **Looking Ahead**

Ministerial capacity is clearly growing. Structurally, both the MOD and MOI have created recruiting and training commands critical to developing stable systems for recruiting demographically representative personnel and establishing a common standard of training. The ministries have advanced policies and advocated laws necessary to generating, training, and sustaining Afghan forces. Their successes include the creation of a formal document detailing the size and composition of each force, and they will soon implement a comprehensive personnel system that includes merit-based promotion, established career paths, and retirement systems. To sustain the force, the ministries have developed a regional logistics system, helping push supplies beyond the distribution points in Kabul and Kandahar.

The field of logistics is one in which MoDA advisors have been especially active. Mr. Pollitt has also worked with his Afghan counterparts to develop a transformational logistics reporting tool to track equipment and supplies distributed to police forces in over 300 districts, helping ensure that the Afghan police get needed supplies in an efficient and transparent manner. Soldiers and police in the field are consistently found to be short of food, clothing, and other necessities, making the institutionalization of these kinds of systems essential to the long-term viability of the Afghan security forces. The next step will be to create a "push" system, where logistics planners identify what should be needed at each unit and push it to them, without waiting for a request. This system gets supplies to those who need them before they would otherwise be missed.

In the current “pull” system, units wait to request supplies until they have identified a need. Units fail to forecast future shortages and, as a result, go without. This is unacceptable in any security force, and even more so in one that is consistently in combat.

As the MoDA program prepares to deploy its second group of civilian advisors to Afghanistan in spring 2011, significant challenges remain. Expanding the program will mean addressing the administrative issues that complicate the task of sending a large number of civilians overseas. New systems need to be designed to make civilians more deployable, and mechanisms for tracking trained specialists within the DOD workforce will become a key element of targeted recruiting.

As MoDA program administrators tackle the supply-side challenges of increased civilian deployment, the demand for defense specialists will grow. With the creation of Afghan infantry and basic police units largely completed by the end of 2010, coalition forces will be able to focus on establishing units specializing in logistics, intelligence, maintenance, and other areas that a professional, enduring force requires. More capable security ministries will be needed as these new units increase the complexity of maintaining Afghan forces. As their need for specialized knowledge increases, ministry officials will require skilled advisors to help them address these difficult issues.

Ultimately, the task of building the capacity of the ANSF is a “duel in strategic endurance,”<sup>6</sup> with insurgent forces determined to wait us out, and international political support wearing thin. However, while coalition forces will be thinned out over the next few years, NTM-A, in some form or another, will have an enduring presence supporting the ANSF. Whether it evolves into an office of security cooperation similar to those in U.S. embassies across the globe, or something more robust, the United States and Afghanistan will have a significant military-to-military relationship with strong civilian support for years to come. The MoDA program is ideally positioned to support this partnership today and well into the future.

Recovery from 30 years of warfare does not occur quickly. Political patience and a large initial investment in building Afghan capacity are needed to restart the Afghan economy and provide security to a society that has suffered decades of violence. The payoff will be professional security forces that are able to protect the Afghan population, creating room for the development needed to sustain peace and stability.

No matter how the political winds may blow in the future, and regardless of the international presence remaining in Afghanistan, “we must leave the Afghan people with an enduring capability and force generation capacity” to provide for their own security.<sup>7</sup> By developing the ANSF and the ministries that will sustain it, we are ensuring that Afghanistan will be safe in the hands of its own soldiers and police — forces that Afghanistan’s enemies won’t be able to outlast.

## Endnotes

1. *Developing Capacity for an Enduring Security Force*, by James A. Schear, William B. Caldwell IV, and Frank C. DiGiovanni, PRISM magazine, Volume 2, Issue 2, page 137. Any copyrighted portions of this journal may not be reproduced or extracted without permission of the copyright proprietors. PRISM should be acknowledged whenever material is quoted from or based on its content. This article can be found in the PRISM magazine at <http://cco.ndu.edu>. The authors wish to acknowledge the assistance of Nathan K. Finney, Adelia Saunders, Beverly Popelka, and Kelly Uribe in the preparation of this article.

2. Anders Fogh Rasmussen, Monthly Press Briefing, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, June 7, 2010, available at [www.nato.int](http://www.nato.int).
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## Chapter 8

### Professionalizing Ministerial Advising

**Dr. Raymond A. Millen**

(The following is an abbreviated report originally published by the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute.)<sup>1</sup>

#### Introduction

Since 2003, the United States government has manifested a renewed interest in ministerial advising. The intent of this study is to make the case for an association of professional ministerial advisors as well as enumerating advisory best practices.

The United States has yet to perfect ministerial advising. As opposed to combat advising, the practice of ministerial advising lay dormant for years. Ministerial advising in Iraq and Afghanistan assigned advisors receiving little or no training or preparation for the mission. Beginning in 2010, the Department of Defense instituted a Ministry of Defense (and Ministry of Interior) Advisor (MODA) training program. As experience shows, ministerial advisors must possess a diverse host of knowledge, which marks them as professionals.

#### MODA Training and Selection Aspects

1. To be effective, training and education must occur in peacetime.
2. The interagency approach should consolidate the current advisory training from various U.S. agencies, garnering funding, facilities, faculty, and administration efficiencies.
3. Advisory tours must be of sufficient length to preserve continuity of effort.
4. To attract motivated high-quality candidates for advisor duty, incentives are imperative.

#### Considerations for a Professional Ministerial Advisory Corps

The establishment of a professional Ministerial Advisory Corps would permit the United States to engage and influence willing host nations on capacity-building programs (i.e., security sector reform, governance, and essential services), relying on professional subject matter experts. As important, host nation counterparts are more likely to see the value of the reform programs, the advisory mission, and the partnership with the United States. The Ministerial Advisory Corps requires an expeditionary character, ready for deployment upon call-up.

Professionalizing the Ministerial Advisory Corps requires a formal education through an established academy. Currently, various U.S. agencies conduct separate advisory training in support of capacity-building missions.<sup>2</sup> While each provides superb advisory training, there is a danger these training programs will suffer from budget cuts during periods of austerity. Additionally, because these are separate training programs, duplication of effort is inevitable.

A National Security Council (NSC) study committee should identify a lead department to organize the education program to compensate for the shortfalls, seek efficiencies, and create unity of effort.

Conceptually, training should consist of three phases: basic, specialized, and predeployment.

### Basic Advisory Course

The basic advisory course would constitute a generic advisory curriculum to expose candidates to the rudiments and best practices of advising. For the purpose of structure, this study references the Department of Defense's MODA as a curriculum framework administered by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency.

Coursework is enhanced by guest lecturers, which includes "former U.S. ambassadors, Afghan officials, Department of State (DOS) officials, retired military officers, and leading think-tank academic" members. The program brings in senior facilitators, who assist with student discussions and assimilation of daily coursework.

#### Basic Advisory Course Fundamentals

- Encapsulates the art of advising.
- Instruction on knowledge and skills constitutes the science of advising.
- Important adjunct to the course material is the "Advisor's Toolkit."

The program encapsulates the art of advising in a set of guiding principles, titled "The Code of Conduct," designed to "support U.S. missions." Additionally, "overseas contingencies strengthen the security ministries of partner states...(and)...forge long-term relationships" with counterparts (covered in the principles and guidelines section).<sup>3</sup>

MODA instruction on knowledge and skills constitutes the science of advising, providing advisors with the "tools necessary for an advisor to advise effectively," transforming "their professional competencies into advisory competencies," and thereby producing "reflective practitioners and effective, successful advisors." The MODA program evaluates candidates for appropriate personality traits and attributes in an effort to provide counterparts with compatible advisors. In the proposed academy basic course, a specific region or host nation is not addressed.

An important adjunct to the MODA course material is the basic "Advisor's Toolkit," which is a collection of practical suggestions and information for study<sup>4</sup> which includes the following:

- **Personal Security.** Topics include stress resilience, predictive threat profiling, and personal security and observation skills.
- **Advisor Skills.** Topics include innovative skills preference inventory, the role of the advisor, the art of asking questions, metacognition and the reflective practitioner,

institution building tools, cross-cultural adaptability, working with interpreters, mediation and negotiation, principles of good governance and comparative government, risk communication, engaging your counterpart, and measuring progress.

Aside from the instruction, the basic course also serves an administrative purpose. Scrutinizing an advisor's personality traits is imperative due to the importance of building rapport (see Best Practices section on Essential Personality Traits and Attributes in the course curriculum). Unless deployed for an immediate advisory mission, graduates from the basic course return to their civilian or federal vocations until called-up for service and deployment training.

### **Specialized Training**

The academy should hold periodic refresher training, seminars, and conferences to maintain the proficiency of graduates as well as introduce new advising techniques and knowledge.

Aside from serving as an incentive for drawing quality advisors, the opportunity to attend specialized training at a partner university also increases the advisor's competence and value to an advisory counterpart. The Ministerial Advisory Corps administration would manage the advanced degree program, encouraging interested students to seek degrees in public administration, political science, economics, and/or law. The degree program should include proficiency in prominent languages such as French, Spanish, or Portuguese.

### **Predeployment Training Course**

For advisors slated for a specific advisory mission, the predeployment training course provides refresher training from the basic course, but with special focus on the destination country. The curriculum would focus on the local language, culture, history, political/military/police structures, rule of law (political structure and constitution), NSC, as well as the U.S. and host country's missions, policies, and programs. Practical insights from facilitators and subject matter experts on the host nation or region would help fill the knowledge gaps. The program should assign "a cultural partner from the host country" to provide insights and advice. The course would culminate with a capstone advisory exercise at a training facility with ethnic role players serving as ministers, staff, and security for realism.<sup>5</sup>

As with the MODA program, the deployment Advisor's Toolkit would provide supplemental information<sup>6</sup> on language, culture, and country familiarization as well as U.S. and host country mission, policies, and programs. Since advisors likely will have a counterpart identified, biographical information should be available. The program should set aside a two-week transition time with the advisor's predecessor for continuity of effort.

The course should conduct video-teleconference sessions with relevant U.S. embassy officials and the command element of the combined/joint task force if applicable. Advisors also should receive current phone numbers and e-mails of relevant U.S. agencies, embassy offices, combined/joint staff, relevant United Nations offices, and other organizations.

### **Considerations for the Ministerial Advisory Corps**

The ministerial advisory program must provide a competitive salary for the training courses and deployment missions. If the mission is in a conflict area or post-conflict area in transition, advisors should receive hazardous duty pay.

Like the U.S. military reserves, Ministerial Advisory Corps members would remain fully employed in their chosen vocations, with the government making arrangements with the employers for the advisors to attend training courses and deployment missions. Advisory tours should be at least two years and a point system should apply to advisors with points awarded for training, graduate school, and deployments. The evaluation system should be designed to enhance the advisor's career field so as to remain competitive with peers.

The government agencies most interested in ministerial advising are the U.S. Departments of State, Defense, Treasury, and Justice and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). The basic course also is valuable for intended advisors below the ministry level, such as civil affairs, police, customs, and other subnational government positions.

### **Best Practices for Advising**

Best practices for advising should form the core of the advisory program curriculum, pervading classroom instruction, lectures, and seminar discussions. These are goals the advisor strives to master.

Establish rapport and professional stature; the advisor is the link to trust. Be careful not to rush this process.

### **Establishing Rapport and Professional Stature**

Building rapport with a counterpart is the initial and most important goal for the advisor.<sup>7</sup> Advisors must not view the establishment of rapport as a discrete event. The counterpart must have confidence in the assistance programs and in the U.S. partnership; the advisor is the link to that trust. Overselling yourself arouses suspicion and delays acceptance. Building rapport must be balanced with professionalism. As a professional, the advisor maintains both a close, but appropriate, relationship with his counterpart so as not to be seen as “going native” or compromising his professional integrity.

### **Gaining Competencies**

Education and self-study establish the basic foundation for competency and proficiency. A good advisor's skill set includes language ability, cross-cultural adaptation and knowledge, and a solid foundation in American history and politics, as well as expertise in his particular military field.<sup>8</sup> Advisors need to arrive with a reasonable macro understanding.<sup>9</sup> Upon arrival in country, the first task of the advisor is the transition meeting with his predecessor to review his continuity file. This transition meeting is essential for continuity of effort, so it is incumbent upon the ministerial advisory program to ensure it is preserved above all other considerations.

If the advisory mission coincides with a U.S.-led coalition operation, the advisor should become acquainted with the combined/joint staff (or Office of Military Cooperation staff), since it can provide a wealth of information on current policies, strategies, programs, and other initiatives.

In view of the limited time between call-up and deployment, the advisor should concentrate on knowledge central to the assigned ministry. Advisors should avoid using the terms “advisor” or “mentor” with host nation officials. In Grdovic’s view, “advisor” suggests the counterpart is not a professional.<sup>10</sup> As a substitute, the advisor should refer to himself as a special assistant to the counterpart.

### **Language Proficiency and Cultivating an Interpreter/Translator**

The literature and expert opinions are unanimous regarding the necessity of language proficiency. The advisor must optimize available resources to communicate effectively with the counterpart. One potential asset is the interpreter/translator (hereafter referred to as interpreter). Cultivating the interpreter is one of the most important activities for the advisor. The advisor needs to work with his interpreter so they become an effective team. The advisor should ascertain whether the job endangers the interpreter due to his association with the United States or the host government. The advisor establishes the ground rules for the interpreter (i.e., what is expected of him).

It would be a grave mistake for the advisor to assume the counterpart speaks little or no English. He may not speak English well, but he may understand plenty. This assumption should apply to other officials in the office as well.

Ninety percent of problems with documents is due to poor translations, so the advisor needs to go over each paragraph with the interpreter to clear up any potential language barriers.

The advisor should optimize other uses of the interpreter. For example, the interpreter can perform the following actions:

- Be a local language teacher for common terms, phrases, and idioms.
- Alert the advisor to special events, significant incidents, cultural norms or taboos, religious events, ministry work hours, and/or political sensitivities.
- Provide advice concerning the propriety of gifts to the advisor’s counterpart for holidays, departures, family events, and other special occasions.
- Assist in route planning for trips to other locales, noting dangerous places to avoid.

### **Essential Advisor Personality Traits and Attributes**

Not everyone is suitable for advising. A poor advisor is worse than no advisor at all, so the following underscores those traits an advisor should try to master. The basic course should embed these attributes in the curriculum.

#### **Patience**

Metrinko cautions that host nation officials are not compelled to complete tasks on the same timeline as newly assigned advisors. The advisor must allow time for his recommendations to germinate, allowing the counterpart to consider the advice at his own pace.

### **Perseverance**

Persistence nurtures the relationship with the counterpart. It forms the foundation of negotiation, serving to engage the counterpart in a dialogue about policy challenges and decisions.

### **Tact**

Having two meanings, tact is the faculty to speak appropriately for the occasion, as well as the ability to use good judgment when faced with complex situations.

### **Professionalism**

Advisors must remember that success is the domain of the host nation, but advisors are usually held accountable for any failures.<sup>11</sup> The advisor will likely be confronted with an ethical dilemma involving perceived corruption.<sup>12</sup> Advisors must understand the difference between corruption in Western parlance and cultural norms in society. If corruption is identified, the advisor must remain an ethical role model, leveraging his rapport, persuasion, and quiet counsel regarding the potential consequences to the counterpart's country, his family, and his reputation.

### **Knowledge of the Human Terrain**

Metrinko suggests advisors must seek proficiency in the culture, linguistics, social customs, and beliefs of the society in which they are immersed.<sup>13</sup> An understanding of organizational cultures helps the advisor anticipate occurrences of interagency parochialism, unhealthy competition, and jealousies, which explains resistance to reforms, policies, and initiatives.

### **Self-Reliance**

Advisors must demonstrate the ability to function in a foreign environment without a great deal of supervision.<sup>14</sup> Advisors must feel comfortable dealing with uncertainty and resolving problems at their level without the need to check with superiors beforehand.

### **Ability to Negotiate**

If a topic is likely to encounter resistance, the advisor must have a strategy, outlining background, pertinent facts, the likely multi-ordered effects of each option, and the benefits afforded to the counterpart.<sup>15</sup> The advisor should explain an issue from differing angles, using different words to help the counterpart understand it fully. The advisor must conscientiously engage his counterpart in private when possible, asking for his thoughts and advice, listening actively and showing through verbal cues and body language that his input is valuable. The advisor can float ideas to the counterpart to gauge receptivity, but without the risk of rejection. The advisor should not present advice requiring an immediate decision.

## Preservation of Value to Counterpart

Perceived value is an amalgam of partnership, pleasant personality, and the benefit to the counterpart. This can be accomplished in due time by a gradual demonstration of your capabilities in an unassuming, but firm, manner. Be positive, but not dogmatic, in your approach to any subject; however, if you are not sure of the subject matter, it is better to say so and take timely measures to obtain the correct information.

To attempt to bluff through a problem only results in irreparable loss of prestige.<sup>16</sup>

## Affability

Building relationships is pivotal to success ... the advisor must have a pleasant personality, stressing the importance of teamwork. Since advisors are not commanders or even remotely in charge of the ministry offices they are advising, their personalities become a critical component for success.<sup>17</sup> The advisor must be everyone's respected associate — not solely the counterpart's special assistant. He should show consideration and respect to junior officials, office workers, even the janitors and tea servers, because they may be relatives of the counterpart and they most definitely will report on how the advisor treats them when out of earshot from the counterpart.<sup>18</sup> A sense of humor is essential, and selective self-effacement has a way of disarming captious people.

## Intellectual Curiosity

As the section on gaining capabilities specifies, an advisor must arrive on the job with diverse expertise, over and above that required for the advisory position. Metrinko contends that “the advisor must understand American policy, and know the limits of what he can and cannot say or do.”<sup>19</sup> A demonstrated enthusiasm to learn about the host nation's history, language, and culture, as well as its political, legal, military, police, and logistical systems will impress the counterpart and his staff, as long as the advisor does not appear to be lecturing. At times, the counterpart may not be familiar with certain policies, systems, strategies, and directives, so the advisor must devise methods to enlighten him without embarrassment.<sup>20</sup>

## Cultural Astuteness

MODA defines culture as “socially transmitted knowledge, behavioral patterns, values, beliefs, norms, and lifestyles of a particular group that guides their world view and decision making.” Achieving cultural competence is a multiple stage process, which includes the following cultural aspects:

- Awareness
- Knowledge
- Sensitivity
- Competence

The U.S. Army Research Institute concludes that “advisors who invested more effort in understanding the counterpart’s perspective, suppressing cultural biases, and comparing cultures also tended to have counterparts more willing to accept their advice.”<sup>21</sup> In this regard, the advisor often needs to serve as an inter-agent, reconciling U.S. policies, programs, and systems with the host nation’s traditional practices and procedures. To make the merge work, the advisor must identify disconnects and explain the reasons to each party.

### **Conduit for Resources**

The advisor often serves as a conduit for funding, equipment, and supplies. However, the counterpart must not perceive that this is the advisor’s main function or sole source of value. Advisors must point out that flooding a country with money and resources often contributes to inflation, the black market, kleptocracy,<sup>22</sup> and political corruption. Moreover, when the funding source dries up, the country lacks the revenue to sustain well-meaning, but expensive, programs.

### **Health Consciousness**

Working in a foreign culture is often disconcerting and stressful, so the advisor must have the temperament to adapt.<sup>23</sup> MODA counsels that health fitness is an essential trait.<sup>24</sup> Taking a holistic approach to “mental, emotional, and physical well-being,” MODA counsels advisors to practice total fitness through eight areas: psychological, behavioral, social, spiritual, physical, nutritional, medical, and environmental.<sup>25</sup> Advisors are encouraged to watch over each when deployed. If left unattended, the effects of stress become more pernicious.<sup>26</sup> The advisor can take positive action to counter stress. Maintaining one’s health is usually the first casualty of the advisory mission because of the pace of the mission.

**Principles and Guidelines**

The MODA program encapsulates the art of advising in a set of guiding principles (see Figure 8-1), titled “The Code of Conduct.” These tenets provide guideposts for advisors in accomplishing the broader purpose of the mission.<sup>27</sup>

TENETS	BROADER PURPOSE
Provide competent advice with humility, empathy, and respect for their host-nation counterparts and institutions.	Personal Conduct for Relationship Building
Uphold the highest standards of professionalism worthy of a representative of the United States government.	
Promote local ownership and pursue inclusive policies that place host-nation partners in the lead.	Capacity Building
Emphasize sustainability when building partner capacity, and prioritize actions that produce enduring benefits.	
Do No Harm by actively coordinating development activities, considering their potential effects on power dynamics, and anticipating unintended consequences.	
Pay due regard to their mental and physical health, and take personal responsibility for their conduct and security within the terms expressed by the relevant authorities.	Personal Responsibility

**Figure 8-1. Advisor’s Code of Conduct.**

Metrinko also offers the following seven general guidelines:<sup>28</sup>

1. The advisor can assist and consult, but he cannot command.
2. The advisor should have expertise, but he does not have the last word.
3. The advisor must cooperate with other players, both foreign and American.
4. The advisor must be a true American, but not an “ugly” American.
5. The advisor should not be a hypocrite.
6. The advisor should be humble.
7. The advisor must be helpful, but also credible.

Advisors should regularly refer to these principles (Code of Conduct) and guidelines, particularly when making difficult decisions or under stress.

### Conclusion

In view of the evolving security environment and commitments, the United States will find that an investment in professional advisors reaps benefits exponentially above the costs. The investment requires organization, planning, and leadership. The old ways of creating advisors in the midst of a conflict reveals a history of too much misunderstanding, irrelevance, and missed opportunities, resulting in excessive expenditures, waste, redundancy, and ultimately suboptimal results.

The initiation of such a program requires the attention of the NSC, because the requisite interagency cooperation, consensus, and coordination will not occur without presidential authority. In order to establish the needed authorities, Congress needs to provide the legislation to preserve the advisory institution through successive presidential administrations.

The creation of a Ministerial Advisory Corps is an investment in human capital, but without extraordinary expense. The consolidation of administration would reduce redundancies, streamline operations, and produce uniform training standards. The basic course provides the fundamentals of advising not only for ministerial advisors, but also for those involved in security sector reform and security force assistance. Since basic course graduates return to their normal jobs, they would remain gainfully employed until mobilized, thereby making the program both cost effective, dynamic, and sufficiently large enough to sustain a number of advisory missions simultaneously.

Professionalization of the advisory corps occurs as a result of advance degrees, the deployment course, and advisory experience. To attract quality advisors, the Ministerial Advisory Corps must offer salary and career enhancing incentives. At the same time, proper evaluation of advisory candidates is essential to ensure they are suitable for service. For continuity of effort, advisory tours should be at least two years since the historical evidence suggests one-year or shorter tours do not achieve the desired effect.

The use of best practices captures those skills, character traits, and attributes which produce outstanding ministerial advisors. In the long term, an investment in the Ministerial Advisory Corps increases the prospect for fragile states to adopt needed reforms, which in turn increases stability. In this manner, effective advising serves as a preventative measure, mitigating the root causes of instability and conflict. To this end, it is more beneficial for the United States to deploy an advisory corps than an Army corps.

### Endnotes

1. An unabbreviated copy of this report by Dr. Raymond A. Millen can be obtained at [http://pksoi.army.mil/default/assets/File/professionalizing\\_ministerial\\_advising\\_millen-paper.pdf](http://pksoi.army.mil/default/assets/File/professionalizing_ministerial_advising_millen-paper.pdf). All Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI) publications are available on the PKSOI homepage for electronic dissemination. Hard copies of this report also may be ordered from the PKSOI homepage at <https://pksoi.army.mil>.

2. Specifically, the Office of Technical Assistance, U.S. Department of the Treasury; International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program, U.S. Department of Justice; Human Rights and Governance Center, USAID; MODA, DOD; DOS, Bureau of Counterterrorism, Office of Criminal Justice and Assistance Partnerships; and Defense Security Cooperation Agency. U.S. Innovation Partnership Advisory Roundtable: *The Future of U.S. Government Advising Missions*, U.S. Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C., 20037, 15 JAN 2015.

3. MODA Program course overview, page 4.

4. MODA Program Advisor's Toolkit.

5. MODA Program course overview, page 10 through 14.
6. MODA Program Advisor's Toolkit.
7. Ramsey, pages 20, 47, 93, 43 through 144, 161; See also Hausrath, *The KMAG Advisor*, page 3; U.S. Department of the Army, Field Manual 31-73 (inactive), *Advisor Handbook for Stability Operations* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 18 OCT 1967), accessed on the website for *The Virtual Vietnam Archive*, Texas Technical University, at <http://www.vietnam.ttu.edu/virtualarchive/> 24 February 2015; Michelle Ramsden Zbylut, Kimberly A. Metcalf, and Jason Brunner, *Advising Foreign Security Forces: Critical Incidents Describing the Work of Advisors*, U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences, Research Report 1951 (U.S. Army Research Institute, October 2011), page 4; Army Technical Publication (ATP) 3-07.10 (FM 3-07.10) (also U.S. Navy NTTP 3-07.5, U.S. Air Force AFTTP 3-2.76, and U.S. Marine Corps MCRP 3-33.8A), *Advising: Multi-Service Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures for Advising Foreign Security Forces* (1 November 2014), page 34; Joshua J. Potter, *American Advisors: Security Force Assistance Model in a Long War* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press), 2011, page 7.
8. Michael J. Metrisko, *The American Military Advisor: Dealing with Senior Foreign Officials in the Islamic World* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute and Strategic Studies Institute, August 2008), page xii.
9. Metrisko, pages 77 through 78.
10. Mark Grdovic, *The Advisory Challenge in Special Warfare*, Vol. 21, Issue 1 (January-February 2008), pages 25 through 26.
11. Hausrath, *The KMAG Adviser*, pages 15 through 16; ATP 3-07.10, page 34.
12. According to the U.S. Army Research Institute, "contending with ethical dilemmas and challenges are a pervasive component of the performance context in which advisors operate." Zbylut, Metcalf, and Brunner, page 7.
13. Metrisko, pages 17, 35.
14. Metrisko, page 17.
15. The U.S. Army Research Institute identifies this type of negotiating as proactive influence tactics. "The most used proactive influence tactics were offering support, rational persuasion, and apprising counterparts of the benefits of taking action." Zbylut, Metcalf, and Brunner, page 5.
16. MATA Handbook for Vietnam, published by the U.S. Army Special Warfare School, Fort Bragg, NC (January 1966), page 216. Although this handbook was originally created to assist the military advisor in the performance of his duties in Vietnam, it contains useful reference material that is still relevant for today's advisor. It can be found at <http://cgsc.contentdm.ocw.org/cdm/ref/collection/p4013call11/id/1459>.
17. Metrisko, page 5; Hausrath, page 15; Ramsey, page 11; FM 31-73, page 51; Zbylut, Metcalf, and Brunner, page 4; ATP 3-07.10, page 35.
18. Metrisko, pages 53 through 54.
19. Metrisko, pages 36 through 37.
20. Ramsey, page 160; MATA Handbook, page 216.
21. Zbylut, Metcalf, and Brunner, page 6.
22. Webster's Dictionary online at <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/kleptocracy>.
23. Hausrath, pages 3 through 4; Ramsey, pages 18 and 20; MODA Advisor Tradecraft Handbook, page 61.
24. MODA Advisor Tradecraft Handbook, page 4.
25. *Ibid*, pages 62 through 65.
26. MODA Program Advisor's Toolkit, PS-1; MODA Advisor Tradecraft Handbook, page 77.
27. MODA Program course overview, page 4; MODA Advisor Tradecraft Handbook, page 5.
28. Metrisko, page 5.



**Appendix A****Acronyms**

ANA	Afghan National Army
ANDSF	Afghan National Defense and Security Forces
ANSF	Afghan National Security Force
ASCC	Army service component command
AWfC	Army Warfighting Challenge
CAS	close air support
COA	course of action
COGS	Chief of General Staff
CSDP	Command Supply Discipline Program
CSTC-A	Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan
DAC	Department of the Army civilian
DAMOD	Deputy Advisor to the Minister of Defense
DIB	Defense Institution Building
DOD	Department of Defense
DODEA	Department of Defense Education Activity
DOS	Department of State
GCC	geographic combatant command
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HN	host nation
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
ISR	intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance
LD	learning demand
LURD	Liberians United for Reconciliation and Democracy
MINDEF	Minister of Defense
MOD	Ministry of Defense
MODA	Ministry of Defense Advisors
MOI	Ministry of Interior
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	nongovernmental organization

NSC	National Security Council
NTM-A	NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan
PT	physical training
ROLIC	rule of law indicators
RS	Resolute Support (mission)
SFA	security force assistance
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SSR	security sector reform
SU	situational understanding
TAA	train, advise, and assist
UN	United Nations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USC	United States Code
USIP	United States Institute of Peace

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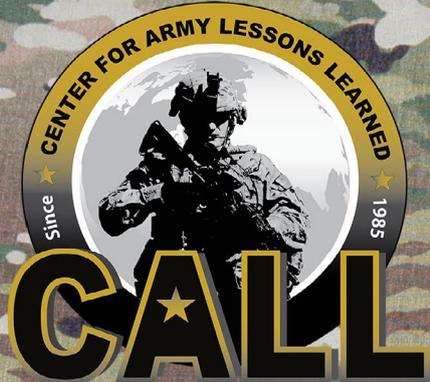
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