



The NRDC-ITA public affairs office in Kabul an Initial Perspective

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One month into a six month tour of Kabul and the NRDC-ITA PAO is flying the flag. A busy schedule of interviews, press releases and planning for the upcoming Afghan elections has meant a high tempo of operations.

The three members of the Public Affairs Office who normally operate within the Headquarters at Solbiate Olona have embraced their new surroundings and have quickly integrated themselves into the HQ ISAF Public Affairs Operation. With the focus of the world on Afghanistan this has proved a busy period for all concerned. The

daily routine sees numerous media engagements with media outlets from across the globe wanting to get a piece of the action.

Recent kinetic events within the capital have seen much reporting on a resurgent Taliban, although inaccurate these reports have served to focus the team on the requirement for speedy and coordinated action across the media environment. A more proactive approach has been required by all and planning has begun to ensure that the media are kept informed and in line with the current situation on the ground.

Afghanistan is seen by many of the world's media to be the place to be and as such numerous interviews have been arranged and coordinated by the PAO to ensure that the correct story reaches the correct audience. In addition to dealing with the world's media the focus of the PAO has been on engagement with the local Afghan media.

A classic counter insurgency imperative is to win the hearts and minds of the people. Afghanistan is very much a war amongst the people and as such the campaign will be won or lost amongst the populace. In a country where the population is diverse, disparate and divided by differing loyalties, creeds and cultures the information campaign is complex and difficult to determine. The media operation is vital to ensuring success and in shaping the battlespace. In conjunction with Information Operations and Psychological Operations, the media piece contributes to the overall outcome of the campaign. The Public Affairs Office is building the relationships with local media in order to engender the engagement that will allow the people of Afghanistan to understand and embrace the actions been taken to ensure a better future for the people and the country

as a whole. Recent engagements between PAO personnel have proved to be fascinating and we have all benefitted from engagement with the ordinary Afghan people, it will be down to us to develop those relationships further to engender a meeting of the minds. This campaign will be sustained in the western press but won in the Afghan.

There are many challenges and frustrations ahead and we are operating in a complex environment that will require flexibility and patience. "The environment is made all the more complicated by a media that must be fed in order to keep it happy!" said Major Marian Predoica (NRDC-ITA PAO). "We have to understand that the media is apart of the modern day battlefield, we must keep it engaged and ensure that we temper the need for accuracy with the need for speed of message delivery".

There will be many tough times ahead and the elections in August will be a focus of our efforts. There is no doubt that the elections will be instrumental in ensuring a future for this country and the media will have a major role to play in both the execution and the outcome.

