



FALL 2013

COMMANDER ISAF'S AFGHANISTAN UPDATE

The Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) proved capable of securing the Afghan people during their first fighting season in the lead. They have also demonstrated their competence to support political transition events next year. During this period they gained confidence, demonstrated cohesion, and further developed their capabilities, thus largely limiting insurgent violence to less populated areas. In virtually all tactical engagements the ANSF demonstrated tactical overmatch vis-à-vis the Taliban. ISAF forces continued to provide enabling capability in support of ANSF operations, but the Afghans were

fully in the lead. ANSF operations supported the scheduled political transition by facilitating successful voter registration and setting the conditions for the political process leading to the 2014 elections. Significantly, the only unilateral operations conducted by ISAF were in support of our own security, sustainment, and redeployment. I am confident that the ISAF campaign is on track to meet our objectives.

The ISAF campaign is focused on preparing the ANSF for full security responsibility by the end of 2014. For the last few years we have been primarily fielding the ANSF and combat-advising at the unit level. Our efforts to date have enabled Afghans to assume the lead, take the fight to the enemy, and secure the population. Today, we have almost completed fielding the force,

but our progress is not yet sustainable. As this period comes to a close, ISAF is reorienting to deliver security force assistance designed to develop ANSF sustainability. Much work remains to be done in developing the institutions, systems, and processes necessary to sustain a modern, professional army and police force. Our advisory effort will shift from developing ANSF combat capability at the unit level to ensuring that end-to-end processes are established across all critical functional areas. At the Ministry of Defense (MoD)/Ministry of Interior (MoI) level, our focus areas will include planning, programming, budgeting, acquisition, and manpower processes. In the fielded forces, we'll seek to close remaining capability gaps in critical areas such as aviation, intelligence and logistics. At all levels, we'll support the ANSF in improving leadership and addressing poor literacy, corruption, and attrition. Our advisory effort will also emphasize respect for human rights, operating in accordance with and supporting the rule-of-law.

In a broader context, our efforts developing Afghan forces and supporting political transition will strengthen the Afghan State, providing the security and time needed to develop and mature. Effective security and governance are the foundational elements for an enduring political settlement to the conflict and for honoring our commitment to a sovereign, secure and unified Afghanistan that is never again a safe haven for terrorists that threaten this country, the region or the world.



THE THREAT

The Taliban-led insurgency has failed to achieve its stated operational objectives during the 2013 fighting season. They were unable to contest population centers or hold large areas of terrain. Despite a concerted outreach effort to increase their influence, the number of Afghans who support the Taliban remained below 15 per cent. The insurgency does not represent an existential threat to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) or the ANSF, and this is unlikely to change over the next 12 to 18 months. Overall, continued pressure on insurgent net-



works limited the operational ability of the Taliban, Al Qaeda, the Haqqani Network, and other extremist organizations. While these groups have managed to conduct attacks that garnered media attention, the resilience of the Afghan people and the competency of the ANSF to provide a suitable response has meant the damage to the perception of security was greater on audiences outside of Afghanistan than on the population. Finally, the endurance of the insurgency continues to be based on sanctuary outside the country.

PARTNERSHIP WITH AFGHANISTAN

The fundamental partnership between ISAF and the ANSF remains strong. ISAF and GIROA remain committed to working together in pursuit of shared strategic objectives. There is occasional anti-ISAF rhetoric but this does not reflect the day-to-day relationship with our Afghan partners. The number of civilian casualties attributable to ISAF as a portion of operations conducted has continued to reduce during the reporting period. We will continue to focus on the protection of non-combatants.

Afghanistan's ability to meet the requirements outlined in the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework (TMAF) has the potential to affect our partnership. The International Community representatives at the Senior Officials Meeting in Kabul on 3 July 2013 expressed concerns over GIROA's ability to achieve specific deliverables. The government of Afghanistan needs to demonstrate progress in meeting non-security goals and budget execution to enhance its credibility. Within the realms of defense and security, ISAF efforts now focus on developing enduring institutional and functional ministerial capabilities that are designed to sustain the ANSF and deliver transparency, accountability and

oversight. Ministerial Advisory Groups (MAGs), supported by executive level functional expertise, are maintaining focus on four key developmental pillars: Logistics, Acquisition and Resource Management; Inspector General, Transparency, Accountability and Oversight (IG TAO); Strategic Policy and Plans; and HR management. Particular attention is being provided in efforts to assist the MoD and MoI in civilianizing their workforce, pay and entitlement reforms, advancing gender integration and adherence to the rule-of-law and human rights, as required by Afghan law and the TMAF. We have also seen improved GIROA cooperation in resolving freedom of movement restrictions at border crossings, and a reaffirmed commitment to the Military Technical Agreement (MTA). This is evidenced by the re-introduction of the Joint Coordinating Body (JCB) to address MTA challenges and disputes. The JCB includes representatives from the Ministry of Finance, the Attorney General and the Ministry of Interior Afghan Borders and Customs department. Sources of friction in the partnership remain, however, including civilian casualties, Afghan political interference in ANSF operations, prisoner and detainee releases and sporadic challenges to the MTA.

ELECTIONS

The 2014 Presidential Elections will be a defining event in the ISAF campaign. As the lead for elections security, the MoI made significant progress this quarter planning and preparing election security; we assess that security preparations for the 2014 elections are well advanced compared to the 2009 election preparations. A number of challenges remain to be addressed including the provision of sufficient, trained female searchers, insurgent threats to election officials and the electoral process, voter intim-

idation, voter education, and the perception of insecurity particularly in some rural areas. As GIRoA continues election planning, ISAF's principal role will be enabling and assisting the ANSF to provide for secure and inclusive elections. ISAF is prepared to support the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC), ANSF, and international monitors with aviation, medical and other logistic support throughout the elections process upon request.

FORCE POSTURE

In addition to reorienting to functionally based security force assistance, we are fully engaged in re-posturing the force to accommodate reductions in force levels and prepare for the Resolute Support mission. We are carefully balancing operational requirements with redeployment imperatives and force protection. During this period we closed or transferred 23 bases and sites of tactical infrastructure. These adjustments were aligned with the ISAF Theater Basing Road Map and our plans for election support. These force posture adjustments have and will continue to significantly reduce our operational reach



and situational awareness. We will strive to mitigate these challenges with expeditionary reach capabilities while leveraging the knowledge and support of our Afghan partners. We will further mitigate risk by maintaining an appropriate reserve combat capability. The appropriate composition of Security Force Assistance Teams (SFAT) to match the Afghan need is critical at this stage in the campaign. I also consider the full manning of the remaining SFATs as crucial in order to maximize partnering opportunities in the remaining months of the ISAF campaign and to facilitate transition to the Resolute Support mission.

REGIONAL RELATIONSHIPS

Afghanistan has made some progress in improving regional relationships. The Shanghai Cooperation Organization Council this summer was considered a success in that it helped to positively advance the reintegration of Afghanistan into the region. Afghanistan's relationship with Pakistan was enhanced during President Karzai's August meet-

ing with Prime Minister Sharif. The Karzai-Sharif meeting provided the political space for a subsequent and successful four-star trilateral military-to-military engagement in Rawalpindi. The overall military-to-military relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan improved incrementally over the past few months through this tripartite process.

OTHER CHALLENGES

Uncertainty. Throughout Afghan society from the Government, to the Districts and the ANSF, there is uncertainty concerning the International Community's commitment in 2015 and beyond. Absent confidence and hope for a brighter future, many Afghans are planning for the worst. We are seeing indicators of this in reports about Afghan currency depreciation, falling real estate prices, capital flight, and young, well-educated Afghans electing to emigrate. Uncertainty and fear also spur hedging behavior by Afghan power-brokers, as well as by Pakistan and other regional actors. I believe that these concerns will be addressed in part by the signing of the United States–Afghanistan Bilateral Security Agreement (BSA) and the NATO Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). These agreements, coupled with clarity on the scope and scale of the post-2014 mission and associated financial commitments (Tokyo and Chicago), will significantly enhance the confidence of Afghans and erode the will of insurgents. Al-

though the information environment is particularly challenging and dynamic today, I believe with the cooperation of Afghan leadership, it can be quickly turned around. **Drivers of Instability.** Corruption undermines the effectiveness, cohesion and legitimacy of GIRoA. It continues to alienate elements of the population and generates popular discontent which deters investment, diverts international assistance and impedes both economic growth and government revenue, corruption also facilitates the narcotics trade and threatens the long-term viability of the Afghan government. GIRoA counter-narcotics efforts have decreased this year; accordingly, 2013 Afghan opium production is on track to surpass 2012. The nexus among the insurgents, criminal networks and corrupt political and community leaders will continue to threaten GIRoA, International Community and ISAF goals. In response, our focus is on developing robust and transparent budget and accounting systems in the security ministries.

LOOKING FORWARD



The next few months will also see a significant re-posturing of the force as we move toward our Resolute Support lay-down. The signing of the BSA, subsequent NATO SOFA and announcement of post-2014 force levels will significantly enhance the confidence of the ANSF and the Afghan people over the coming months. Afghan confidence and optimism about the future are essential to set the conditions for successful elections and moving the campaign forward.

In the coming months we will be decisively engaged in assisting the Ministries of Interior and Defense in their efforts to secure the electoral process and the elections of 2014. We recognize the criticality of inclusive, transparent and credible elections, with an outcome acceptable to Afghans. As mentioned above, preparations are well ahead of those made to secure the 2009 elections. I am confident in the ANSF's ability to secure the elections process and Election Day. As we support elections planning, we will also accelerate our transition and security force assistance focused on ANSF sustainability.