



**COMISAF ADVISORY AND ASSISTANCE TEAM**

**CAAT SPECIAL REPORT**

**AFGHANS IN THE LEAD:  
FROM COMPREHENSIVE POPULATION-CENTRIC COIN  
TO SECURITY FORCE ASSISTANCE**

**FEBRUARY 2012**

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**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

**Problem:** ISAF must adjust its partnering approach and accelerate the progression of ANA and ANP development to achieve the desired end state by 2014.

**Discussion:** Currently, CF commanders' success is not tied directly to the ANA's and ANP's ability to operate independently by 2015. There are commanders who on their own initiative have been successful in partnering and have taken on an advise and assist role with their respective ANA and ANP partners. However, often, ANA and ANP units have ineffective partnering relationships with CF units or are not partnered at all. There is no guidance on how partnering translates into the Battle Space. There is no plan that provides, in concrete terms, what is expected of commanders. How much progress should my partnered ANA or ANP unit accomplish during my rotation? Who will measure it? How much of the warfighting functions am I directly responsible for? Many CF commanders are more focused on the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism engagements than ensuring their partnered units are developing on an undefined schedule. To ensure our partnering efforts succeed, CF commanders should fight less and partner more. Sacrificing combat power to invest in training, advising, and assisting is counterintuitive when insurgents are attacking them on a routine basis. Although commanders know that there is a timeline, and that they should be transitioning with ANSF, we must remind ourselves what the Coalition will look like on 1 January 2015, accept that, and start working towards this goal as soon as possible. Otherwise, ISAF and ANSF will find themselves falling short of our goals.

**RECOMMENDATIONS:**

(NIU) **Mindset and mission shift.** Clarify that ANA and ANP are the BSO. Articulate for CF commanders that their success is tied to the progress and success of ANA and ANP performing as the BSO. In addition to the mindset shift, ISAF must define for its commanders an ANSF development trajectory with a clear end state for ANA and ANP units. Then commanders can then assess if they and ANA and ANP are on schedule.

(NIU) **Construct an advisory and assistance force framework.** ISAF needs a sufficiently well-trained, organized, and equipped advisory and assistance framework that addresses doctrine, enablers, unity of effort, and capacity that is aimed at standardizing and simplifying the advise and assist mission.

(NIU) **Implement a subjective operations assessment process.** Introduce a dual assessment mechanism whereby ANA and ANP assessment teams and their advisor teams construct an assessment report in tandem. The assessment mechanisms would incorporate commanders' subjective professional assessments with a broader assessment tool, different from the CUAT, which incorporates the ability to accomplish critical BSO functions.

(NIU) **Leadership development.** Focus ANA and ANP leadership development primarily on junior officers and NCOs. Make junior officers and NCOs accountable for training programs, readiness of personnel, resupply, and maintenance.

(NIU) **Create and implement an advise and assist plan.** Create and implement a comprehensive and uniform advise and assist plan, encompassing all echelons of command, with clearly defined objectives and performance measures with milestones, and a sustainment strategy. This plan should include a well defined Red-Amber-Green cycle which supports individual and collective training and operations.

**AFGHANS IN THE LEAD*****Change of Mission: From Comprehensive Population-Centric COIN, to Security Force Assistance*****OVERVIEW**

(NIU) Partnering – creating trust-based, habitual and enduring relationships with Afghan partners by living, training, and fighting together – has failed to produce developed combat ready ANSF. With the advent of the surge recovery, partnering, as a method to develop the ANSF to receive irreversible security transition across Afghanistan by 2015, will not bring us to our required end state. Furthermore, partnering will become less effective as ISAF reduces troops and accompanying enablers to conduct partnering tasks. In the time remaining before 31 December 2014, ISAF is going to have to make dramatic changes to its mission if the ANSF is going to be positioned to secure the gains made by Coalition Forces (CF) over the last few years. Specifically, CF must change their mindset from one of winning a COIN conflict to advising and assisting the ANSF as the true Battle Space Owners (BSOs). To prevail in this campaign and position itself for irreversible security transition, ISAF must change its mission to one of Security Force Assistance, develop and implement an Afghanistan-wide advisory and assisting model, and focus on ANSF leadership development.

**THE ISSUE**

(NIU) On 29 August 2009, COMISAF issued an ISAF Partnering Directive to assist the GIRoA in protecting the Afghan population and defeating the insurgency that is challenging its sovereignty. Partnering became an essential skill for CF as a method to build an effective ANSF necessary for the transition to Afghan-led security and stability. The intent was that by partnering at all command echelons there would be an improvement in the planning and executing of combined operations, metrics would be more effective, and ISAF campaign plan effects would be reassessed and adjusted. In this approach, ANSF would be the supported command and ISAF the supporting command.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

(NIU) **Mindset and mission shift.** Clarify that ANSF is the BSO. When all parties recognize that ANSF commanders are the BSOs, then it should be clear who is supported and whose success is most critical. The definition of success for CF commanders must be articulated and promulgated. ISAF must accept some risk since ISAF commanders will have to reinvest combat power to the task of partnering, advising, and assisting ANSF. In addition to the mindset shift, ISAF must define for its commanders an ANSF development trajectory with a clear end state for ANSF units. This trajectory is not just based on force levels but includes force capability and capacity to develop targeting packets, plan, execute, and sustain combat operations. Then commanders can assess if they and ANSF are on schedule.

(NIU) **Construct an advisory and assistance force framework.** To accelerate ANSF development and professionalization within the framework of the announced Transition Process (*Inteqal*) and reduction of ISAF troop levels in preparation for the end of combat operations in 2014, ISAF needs sufficiently well-trained, organized, and equipped advisory and assistance formations capable of teaching, coaching, and advising ANSF. They must provide for their own force protection, and be able to call in combat enablers, such as CAS, IF, INTEL, MEDEVAC, and logistics resupply. ISAF must create a common doctrine for the advise and assist missions. The next

step is to build an advisory and assistance force framework aimed at the kandak/district, brigade/provincial, and corps/regional levels with its own chain of command to simplify the command relationships with the conventional forces in theater, and to synchronize and standardize the various types of advisory and assistance elements such as OMLTs, POMLTs, SFATs, VTTs, etc. The final step is to bring all advisory capacity in theater together under the created framework and to assign combat units to build additional advisory and assistance teams. The advisory and assistance force should have an expert mobile team supervising and coaching the advisory and assistance teams to overcome the lack of training and expertise in advisory skills of most of these teams.

(NIU) **Implement a subjective operations assessment process.** Without a thorough assessment outlining ANSF capability gaps, ISAF cannot determine the appropriate advisory capacity to ensure that ANSF units are properly advised and assisted. A possible solution is to introduce a dual assessment mechanism whereby ANSF assessment teams and their advisor teams construct an assessment report in tandem. It starts with a thorough capability gap analysis of all tactical and operational level ANSF units. Following this analysis, issues should no longer be reported via a prescriptive reporting cycle, but based on the commander's subjective professional judgment of the threat, the capability of the ANSF to secure an area in relation to that threat, the capacity of the ANSF to hold, and the willingness of the leadership to conduct operations. Reporting should not only be executed by the senior combat commanders (brigade and battalion level), but also by the junior combat commanders (troop and company level). Guidance that can be uniformly applied from the tactical to the strategic level and is not overly prescriptive is required to avoid fragmented and ineffective advice and assist efforts. Metrics used to assess progress must be driven by the commander's objectives and linked to the end state. Instead of large numbers of metrics aimed at generating capabilities, provide collectors with the combat commander's topics such as: "How many operations are planned, led, and evaluated by ANSF in the lead? What is the partner ratio?"

(NIU) **Leadership development.** Focus ANSF leadership development on junior officers and NCOs. They are the new generation of military leaders in Afghanistan. Encourage and empower junior leaders to make decisions with minimal guidance from the senior leadership. Make junior officers and NCOs accountable for training programs, readiness of personnel, resupply and maintenance.

(NIU) **Create and implement an advise and assist plan.** Create and implement a comprehensive and uniformly agreed to advise and assist plan, encompassing all levels from the strategic to the tactical, with clearly defined objectives and performance measures, milestones for achieving these objectives, and a strategy for sustaining the results achieved. This plan should include a well defined Red-Amber-Green cycle which supports individual and collective training and operations. ANSF development needs to be measured with further metrics and aggressive timelines that track progress, enabling IJC to adjust resources based on continuous assessments.

**PARTNER WHERE NEEDED, ADVISE WHERE POSSIBLE**

**(NIU) IMPERATIVES FOR SUCCESSFUL ADVISING AND ASSISTING THE ANSF**

**Mindset and Mission shift**

- Remember: Afghans are the BSO
- Emphasize developing the professionalism of the ANSF, and not on kinetic actions
- Define success for commanders in terms of ANSF progress
- Highlight the value of partnering, advising, and assisting for both ISAF and ANSF
- Incorporate partnering, advisory and assistance methods as constant elements in the training program
- Develop a partnering, advising, and assisting plan.
- Create training teams with trainers that have mastered the warfighting skills
- Create mobile training teams to train specific tasks to the Afghans

**Assessment**

- Provide ground truth reporting
- Don't assess the ANSF based on Western standards
- Use measures of performance/effectiveness metrics; percentage of partnered operations planned, led, and evaluated; effectiveness of logistics operations
- Provide combined ANSF/ISAF assessment teams at the kandak/district, brigade/provincial, and corps/regional level
- Assess enabling capabilities

**Leadership development**

- Create a "professional development plan" with a clear end state and objectives
- Make ANSF leaders accountable for their plans and objectives
- Increase the stature of the ANSF NCOs
- Teach ANSF NCOs to account for their people and equipment

**Advise and assist**

- Operate by, through and with the Afghans
- Be value-added to your partner/advisee
- Remember that all eyes are focused on what you are doing
- Share the hardship of the ANSF
- Do what you say

**Information Operations**

- Teach the Afghans to integrate non-kinetic effects with kinetic operations
- Let them inform the population about why they are conducting operations (Why are you in the village? Why are you conducting Night Ops?)
- Motivate ANSF leaders to solve the problem themselves. Ask them how they would do this?
- Appeal to traditional Afghan warrior pride. Ask: How would Massoud/Mujahedeen have done this?

**THE INTENT OF CAAT VIEWS IS TO SHARE UNCLASSIFIED REPORTS TO UNITS DEVELOPING TRAINING PLANS IN PREPARATION FOR DEPLOYMENT INTO THE AFGHANISTAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS. ALTHOUGH UNCLASSIFIED, THESE REPORTS CAN CONTAIN SENSITIVE INFORMATION ON CURRENT TACTICS, TECHNIQUES, AND PROCEDURES. RESPECTFULLY REQUEST THAT LEADERS HANDLE THIS INFORMATION TO BOTH SUPPORT TRAINING REQUIREMENTS AND PROTECT EFFECTIVE PRACTICES.**

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