

U.S. Marine Corps Advisors in Afghanistan, Phase 2 Report

Team Composition and Afghan Police and Army Performance

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Interim Report

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Cover photo: Afghan soldier conducts a security patrol with U.S. Marines of 3rd Battalion, 9th Marine Regiment, May 2011. Photo by Regional Command Southwest Team.

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Contents

Introduction.....	1
Key findings.....	2
Outline	2
Approach.....	3
Findings	5
Explaining the results	7
Next steps	9
Conclusion	9
Appendix A: Advisory Team Composition.....	11
Appendix B: Statistical Analysis.....	13

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Introduction

The commanding general, I Marine Expeditionary Force (I MEF) asked CNA to conduct a study on how I MEF can best organize and train Marine teams to advise the Afghan National Army (ANA) and Afghan Uniform Police (AUP), known collectively as the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF).¹ As part of this project, CNA also considered the closely related issue of evaluating Afghan army and police units in operational terms.

The research has been conducted in two stages. In the first phase, we identified criteria for judging the success of Marine advisory teams. Advisory team progress is inexorably linked with the performance of ANSF units.² These evaluation criteria therefore focus on the ANSF and the ability of police and army units to operate at a reasonably professional, independent, and sustainable level—the paramount NATO/ISAF goals for the Afghan security forces during the transition period that ends in 2014.³

Using a wide set of data, including original interviews with Marine advisors, academic and policy studies, and historical accounts, CNA identified six ANSF performance yardsticks: (1) basic skills; (2) accountability, pay, and administration; (3) logistics and maintenance; (4) intelligence; (5) presence; and (6) public confidence.⁴

Building on phase 1 research, phase 2 examined more closely the organization, size, and skill sets of the teams that advised the Afghan

¹ The AUP is the single largest component of the Afghan National Police (ANP), which also includes specialized units such as the border police and the paramilitary Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP). The focus here is on the AUP and the army, although the study includes one ANCOP unit.

² CNA, “Determining Best Practices for ANSF Advising,” core project proposal for I MEF, 9 December 2011, p. 1.

³ North Atlantic Treaty Organization, “ISAF’s Mission in Afghanistan,” http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_69366.htm, accessed May 20, 2012.

⁴ William Rosenau and Carter Malkasian, *Criteria for Measuring U.S. Advisor Effectiveness in Afghanistan*, CME D0026827.A1/PV1, CNA Interim Report, February 2012, p. 1.

army and police. Understanding linkages between team composition and ANSF performance can help I MEF evaluate and strengthen its processes for building and training Marine advisory teams.

Key findings

This draft paper presents preliminary findings from the second phase of our study, which centered on a quantitative analysis of 11 ANSF units and the 15 Marine teams that advised them. Almost all of these teams were deployed in 2011. Our key findings are as follows:

- On average, the advisory teams had a positive impact on their respective ANSF units.
- Twelve of the 15 teams had a positive effect on Afghan army and police units.
- No team had a negative impact on ANA or AUP performance, although three teams had no measurable effect.
- Logistics, intelligence, and independent operations/presence were areas of significant ANSF improvement.
- There is a strong correlation between the presence of military policemen (MPs) on advisory teams and Afghan police performance.
- Augmenting advisory teams with MPs is likely to enhance the performance of the AUP.
- There is no correlation between the size of the teams and ANSF performance; nor is there a correlation between the rank of the Marine officer in charge (OIC) and Afghan army or police progress.
- However, our statistical analysis suggests that on average the advisory teams were composed in a way that contributed to the progress of Afghan police and army units.

Outline

The remainder of this paper is divided into two main sections. Section 1 describes CNA's research approach. Because the available data posed analytical challenges, we need to be explicit about our research

methods. Section 2 presents our findings in greater detail. Some of these findings, such as the absence of a correlation between rank of Marine OIC and Afghan army and police performance, may seem counterintuitive, since some former advisors say that greater Marine leadership experience translated into more ANSF effectiveness. In this section, we offer possible explanations for these apparent contradictions. In addition, we discuss the implications of these findings for the way I MEF organizes and prepares advisory teams for Afghanistan. Finally, we describe additional research we expect to undertake during the remainder of this project. In particular, we plan to analyze a set of data that will add a new level of fidelity and granularity to the assessment of the ANA and AUP.

Approach

The emphasis during this phase of the project has been on the quantitative analysis of the ANSF and the Marine teams that advised them. Although qualitative methods contribute to our understanding—indeed, the first phase of our project was purely qualitative—these approaches have obvious limits. Statistical analysis offered a way to develop insights beyond what was possible by strictly qualitative methods.⁵ That said, our analysis was augmented with interviews with former advisors, policy studies, and memoirs by participants. This qualitative information was particularly useful as we sought to give context to our findings.

Our research during this phase of the project proceeded in the following steps:

1. Using rosters provided by the Advisor Training Group (ATG) at Twentynine Palms, California, we identified specific teams and their composition—that is, their size, their OIC’s rank, and the military occupation specialties (MOSs) of their members. OIC rank is used over combined rank of team members because it offers a simple way to numerically convert a rank to number (on a scale of 1 to 6). In addition, data on ANSF performance

⁵ Of course, quantitative approaches also have limits. Having incomplete data presents one obvious challenge, as discussed in footnote 10 below.

do not have sufficient fidelity to allow correlation to NCO ranks. We then determined which Afghan army and police units the teams advised.⁶

2. In the next step, we collected data on the performance of Afghan police and army units over time. The Commander's Unit Assessment Tool (CUAT) and district-level narrative assessments conducted by Marines and other organizations were the most important sources of information. We assigned numerical values (on a scale of 1 to 5) to the six metrics identified in phase 1 of the study.⁷
3. Finally, we correlated ANSF performance with advisory team composition. From this statistical analysis, we determined the degree to which ANSF improvements during advisory team deployments were associated with the components of the Marine teams. We measured progress in terms of changes in ANSF performance over time—that is, before, while, and after an ANSF unit was advised by a particular team.

Note that we correlated ANSF performance with five Marine Corps specialties: infantry, military police, intelligence, administration, and logistics. However, the small number of personnel with intelligence, administration, or logistics backgrounds (each team typically had one or fewer Marines with these specialties) made it impossible to draw any statistically sound conclusions about the relationship between these MOSs and Afghan police and army progress.

⁶ Since records on deployed advisory teams are sketchy, inaccessible, or nonexistent (particularly in the case of teams that served in the past), this sub-task proved challenging. Using the Combined Information Data Network Exchange (CIDNE) and other sources, we were able to link the names of advisory team members and ANSF units. As part of this sub-task, we also determined (in general terms) when each team advised the Afghans. The ATG provided us with the rosters of 35 teams. However, we were unable to match 24 of those teams with ANSF units, so those teams were not evaluated.

⁷ Perhaps surprisingly, there were very little data on basic combat skills (metric 1), so we excluded it from further analysis. To reflect a wealth of data as well as their overlapping nature, we changed “presence” (metric 5) to “presence/independent operations.”

Findings

For the purposes of this study, advisory team performance is defined by the Afghan units those teams advised.⁸ Our analysis assessed the capabilities of 11 ANSF units before, while, and after 15 Marine teams advised those Afghan forces. Some ANSF units were advised by Marine teams multiple times at different periods.

On average, the Marine teams had a positive impact on the ANSF. Five teams had a large effect; two had a medium impact; five had a small impact; and three had no apparent impact. Afghan army and police progress was particularly pronounced in three areas: intelligence, independent operations/presence, and logistics. Seven ANSF units showed gains in intelligence capabilities; six showed improvements in independent operations/presence; and six improved their logistics.⁹ These results are summarized in table 1 below. (See appendices A and B for additional summaries and details of our statistical analyses.)

Our statistical analysis showed no correlation between the size of the advisory teams, which varied from 14 to 29 men, and the performance of the Afghan units.

Nor is there a correlation between OIC rank (which ranged from second lieutenant to major) and ANSF performance. That is, ANSF teams advised by relatively small teams or by teams with junior OICs did as well those advised by larger teams or by teams with more senior leaders. In addition, there is no correlation between any given Afghan army or police unit's progress and the presence of infantrymen on the advisory team. However, there is a high correlation between

⁸ CNA, "Determining Best Practices," p. 1.

⁹ However, we hypothesize that significant further gains in the logistical capabilities of ANSF units are unlikely. Much of the highly dysfunctional Afghan logistics system exists outside the area of responsibility of any given AUP unit or ANA *kandak* (battalion). Moreover, given the considerable institutional and organizational shortfalls at higher echelons (e.g., brigade, corps, province, ministry) it is doubtful that an increase in the number of logisticians on an advisory team would translate to an increase in ANSF logistics performance.

progress of the Afghan police and teams with military policemen on their rosters.

Table 1. Summary of Marine advisory teams and ANSF progress

Advisory team	ANSF unit	Net change in performance*	Area(s) of progress
Team 1 1/5 PMT	Sangin AUP	2	Logistics, intelligence
Team 2 1/5 ETT	2/2/215 ANA	2	Independent operations/presence, accountability
Team 1 V21 ETT	2/1/215 ANA	3	Independent operations/presence, accountability
Team 4 II MEF	707 th Regional AUP	0	n/a
Team 5 V36 ETT	3/1/215	3	Logistics, independent operations/presence, intelligence
Team 2 V23 ETT	1/1/215 ANA	1	Logistics
Team 6 3/4 PMT 1	2/1/ANCOP	0	n/a
Team 7 3/4 PMT 2	Nawah AUP	1	Independent operations/presence
Team 1 1/3 ETT	2/1/215 ANA	3	Logistics, accountability, intelligence
Team 1102 V16 PAT	Kajaki AUP	3	Logistics, Independent operations/presence, intelligence
Team 1109 V24 PAT	3/2/215 ANA	1	Intelligence
Team 3/3 AT Team 1	2/1/215	0	n/a
Team 1 29 PAT	Marjeh AUP	3	Logistics, accountability, intelligence
Team 3 26 PAT	Nawah AUP	1	Intelligence
Team 3 PMT 1/5	Kajaki AUP	1	Independent operations/presence

* 0 = no change; 1 = small change; 2 = significant change; 3 = large change.

This analysis has two important implications for the way I MEF organizes its advisor teams:

1. Our analysis suggests that on average the advisory teams were composed in a way that contributed to the progress of Afghan police and army units. We know this because the overwhelming majority of the teams (12 out of 15) saw progress within the Afghan units they advised. While there is no correlation between team size, OIC rank, and ANSF performance, we do know that

whatever the size of the team or the rank of its OIC, Afghan units, on average, progressed. In other words, the way the teams were composed “worked” for the Afghan police and army.

2. The analysis points to one way in which advisory teams should be enhanced. It is impossible to say whether adding logisticians, intelligence specialists, or administrators to advisory teams would boost ANSF performance. Common sense suggests that it would, but our analysis cannot confirm this reasonable hunch. Similarly, the presence of infantrymen on advisory teams does not correlate with ANA or AUP progress. Again, common sense suggests that the ANSF, and particularly the ANA, would benefit from infantry-heavy teams—but again, our statistical analysis does not bear this out. However, we can say with confidence that AUP units advised by teams that included MPs developed more than police advised by teams without MPs. In our judgment, augmenting advisory teams with MPs is likely to contribute measurably to ANSF performance.

Some of our findings, including team size and OIC rank, may seem counterintuitive. Advisors who have served in Helmand province highlight the importance of robust teams, with a minimum of 18 or 19 members. In the judgment of former advisors, that minimum size is necessary for independent operations, security, effective maintenance, and other requirements. In their view, advisory teams should also be composed of experienced, seasoned Marines. In the words of one major who advised the ANA in northern Marjeh in 2011, “You should deploy as a company commander before you serve as an advisor.” According to a captain who advised an ANA brigade in 2011 and 2012, “Advising is very tough on 19- and 20-year-olds on their first combat tour.” Some advisors also stress the importance of deploying teams with a heavy component of infantrymen, particularly when they are expected to advise the Afghan army.

Explaining the results

What might explain this gap between the perceptions of some advisors and the results of our statistical analysis? Two explanations suggest themselves. First, the set of advisory teams and ANSF units available for analysis was relatively small. If a larger set were available,

it might be possible to establish a correlation between advisory team size (above a certain minimum level), OIC leadership, the presence of infantrymen, and ANSF progress. Put another way, having more complete data might allow for a statistically sound linkage to be made.

Second, it could be the case that the relationship between team size and composition and Afghan army and police development is less significant than some observers and participants believe. To be sure, accounts of U.S. advisory missions going back to the Vietnam War stress the importance of advisor maturity and previous professional military experience, particularly in combat. At the same time, this literature highlights the importance of patience, creativity, and empathy—attributes not necessarily resident in the infantry or in more senior OICs. Indeed, some Marine advisors who served in Helmand stress the centrality of leadership capabilities over rank, experience, or a special set of skills. “It can’t just be somebody who is a subject matter expert on a particular technique,” according to a Marine captain who advised the police in Nawah district. He explained:

If you have a guy who has demonstrated good Marine Corps leadership traits and practices, then you want to take that guy over a guy who may know what he’s doing....He’ll make them want to be like him. When we had really good [Marine] leaders...the policemen who were corrupt and worthless left. They just picked up their stuff and said ‘I can’t be the same corrupt bozo that I was because I’ve got this Marine here who is not going to let me act this way.’

By comparison, the link between MP presence and AUP performance seems more straightforward. NATO/ISAF policy emphasizes the development within the AUP of rudimentary civil police attributes, skills, and norms, such as responsiveness to the public, relatively humane detention, and simple investigative abilities. Although MPs are by definition not civilian police officers, they almost certainly possess more law-enforcement skills than the average infantryman.

The AUP, while relying to some extent on provincial and national-level logistics and other support systems, is primarily a district-centered institution, as reflected by the fact that police are recruited locally. In this respect the AUP differs markedly from the army, which is a self-consciously national institution. It seems possible that MPs

were able to exert a more direct influence and have a more pronounced effect on the relatively self-contained AUP units they advised.

Next steps

Subsequent research will focus on the significant activity (SIGACT) database and the operations of the 11 ANSF units discussed in this paper. In particular, we will examine incidents involving direct and indirect fire, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and detainees. By examining the narrative portion of incident reports, quantifying the information therein, and subjecting the data to statistical analysis, we will develop a fuller understanding of how the ANSF meets evaluation criteria over time.

For example, analysis will show how far AUP units patrol beyond the district centers—one indicator of police presence outside the relatively comfortable confines of these built-up areas. Our analysis should also generate new insights on Afghan army and police intelligence capabilities. For instance, the study of SIGACT data will reveal the degree to which the security forces are able to gather and distribute information from detainees.

When we combine these analysis results with data collected during earlier phases of the project we will have a picture of ANA and AUP performance that is unique in its depth and scope. Moreover, we believe that this analysis represents a novel and useful way to evaluate ANSF progress.

Conclusion

This paper presented preliminary findings from the second phase of our research on best practices for organizing and training I MEF advisory teams bound for Afghanistan. Understanding the linkages between the performance of the Afghan army and police and the composition of advisor teams was the focus of this stage of the project. Toward that end, CNA analyzed a set of data on Marine teams and the Afghan units they advised.

Our quantitative assessment suggested that the advisory teams, on average, had a positive impact on ANSF performance. This suggests,

among other things, that the way the teams were composed “worked” for the Afghan police and army. In many instances, logistics, intelligence, and independent operations/presence improved measurably for the Afghan army and police during and after they were advised by the Marine teams.

Perhaps surprisingly, we found no correlation between ANA and AUP progress and the size or composition of the advisor teams. On average, ANSF units advised by Marine teams that included a large percentage of infantrymen performed no better than Afghan forces advised by teams with few or no infantrymen. Similarly, units advised by relatively small Marine teams progressed to the same degree as those advised by larger teams. Finally, ANA and AUP units advised by teams led by more senior Marines performed at the same level as those advised by teams with more junior officers in charge. However, there was a strong correlation between ANSF progress and the presence of military policemen on the teams that advised them.

These findings have two important implications for I MEF. First, broadly speaking, the composition of the advisor teams seems appropriate. It is not clear from our statistical analysis that increasing the numbers of personnel with low-density specialties such as logistics or intelligence would contribute to the performance of the ANA or AUP. Second, the strong correlation between Afghan police and army development and the presence of MPs on the advisor teams, suggests that I MEF should consider adding more MPs to the teams bound for Helmand province.

Appendix A: Advisory Team Composition

Advisory team	OIC Rank*	Team size	Intel MOS	Infantry MOS	MP MOS	Logistics MOS	Admin. MOS
Team 1 1/5 PMT	3	24	0	8	9	0	0
Team 2 1/5 ETT	4	21	1	11	0	2	1
Team 1 V21 ETT	2	18	0	11	0	1	0
Team 4 II MEF	4	14	2	2	1	3	1
Team 5 V36 ETT	3	19	1	11	0	2	0
Team 2 V23 ETT	3	16	1	11	0	0	0
Team 6 3/4 PMT 1	3	21	0	8	8	0	1
Team 7 3/4 PMT 2	1	18	0	7	7	0	0
Team 1 1/3 ETT	3	26	0	20	0	0	0
Team 1102 V16 PAT	2	18	0	0	16	0	0
Team 1109 V24 PAT	3	29	1	17	1	1	0
Team 3/3 AT Team 1	3	17	0	11	0	0	0
Team 1 29 PAT	2	17	0	1	14	0	0
Team 3 26 PAT	3	24	0	5	8	0	0
Team 3 PMT 1/5	2	21	0	9	6	0	0

* 1 = second lieutenant.; 2 = first lieutenant; 3 = captain; 4 = major.

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Appendix B: Statistical Analysis

Types of Correlation	Average net change in performance	Variance of net change in performance	Correlation coefficient	Interpretation
ANSF performance - OIC rank	1.6	1.4	-0.3	No association between ANSF performance and OIC rank
ANSF performance - team size	1.6	1.4	0.1	No association between ANSF performance and team size
ANSF intelligence performance - Intel MOS	0.5	0.3	-0.2	No association between ANSF intelligence performance and number of Intel MOS
ANSF logistics performance - Logistics MOS	0.4	0.3	-0.2	No association between ANSF logistics performance and number of logistics MOS
AUP performance - OIC rank	1.6	1.3	-0.4	No association between AUP performance and OIC rank
AUP performance - team size	1.6	1.3	0.1	No association between AUP performance and team size
AUP performance - MP MOS	1.6	1.3	0.9	Strong association between AUP performance and number of MP MOS
ANA performance - OIC rank	1.9	1.5	-0.2	No association between ANA performance and OIC rank
ANA performance - team size	1.9	1.5	0.1	No association between ANA performance and team size
ANA Performance - infantry MOS	1.9	1.5	0.2	No association between ANA performance and infantry MOS

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