



Security in Afghanistan

Major General Richard Nugee, Chief of Staff of ISAF Joint Command

'It was June last year...when the Afghans took command of the battle space and the Afghans became the lead for security responsibility. With that, we stopped being at the front doing all the fighting with them in behind. They're now at the front, and all we do now is advise them. So a fundamental change, and a fundamental change of culture. We're now an advisory team, rather than actually doing the fighting ourselves, and most importantly, we do very, very, very few what we call "independent" or "unilateral" operations. The only things we do on our own are a little bit of force protection around our bases. Everything else is done by the Afghans where we're there just helping them, and we're providing some support if they get into trouble.'

The Afghan National Security Forces

Brigadier Rob Thomson, Deputy Commanding General for Regional Command Southwest

'They've come a huge way in capability, so we see them even using helicopters, on occasion, to do casualty evacuation, we see them using helicopters to allow the Commanders to go and do battlefield circulation, and moving supplies. Even three weeks ago they moved the ballot papers down to Zaranj, right down on the western edge of our area, in a place which we don't go to. This was an Afghan operation, planned and executed by Afghans, and we really didn't have to do much other than just understand that they were coming through our airfields.'

Training an Army

Brigadier Bruce Russell, Chief Mentor at the Afghan National Army Officer Academy

'Well most militaries in the world have a school where they train their officers, for us in the UK it's the Royal Military Academy, Sandhurst...The UK has been exporting the...Sandhurst model around the world for over a hundred years, to, in fact, 50, at least 50 other countries. Some with a great deal of success, some with no success at all...The Afghans were keen to also have their officers trained in the British way, along the lines of Sandhurst. In 2012, President Hamid Karzai and Prime Minister David Cameron signed a memorandum of understanding where we undertook to deliver the creation of an Afghan National Army Officer Academy in the Sandhurst mould. Therefore, I am out here with a group of about, eventually, a hundred or so mentors, and we are helping to develop the institution itself...but also invest an awful lot of time and effort in making the instructors - and the instruction is delivered nearly totally by Afghans -...here are as best as we can make.'

We haven't just taken the Sandhurst programme and then Afghan-ised it and given them that - far from it. When it comes to things like the war studies, all the examples are examples from their own history; many of them actually beating the British, which they always find highly amusing...The other trick, of course, is to make sure that the programme is structured in a way that is flexible...So it must be written in a way that the Afghans are able to make sense of it when we are not here, and they are able to make adjustments to it, and so on. That's not wanting to belittle their ability to do that, far from it, but people change over in this academy just as they do in every other academy, so it must be future-proofed as well.'

Training Women in the Army

Captain Danielle Huggins, Australian Defence Force Female Platoon Commander Mentor at the ANAOA

'Some surprising things I've come across is the female sergeants in their training last year, haven't actually been taught the same stuff that the male sergeants have, purely because their jobs here are so limited. They haven't been taught tactics or field craft. They've been focused towards the non-front-line skills that the women in the defence force need here. The other thing would be they're really keen to learn. The opportunity for the female sergeants to do an instructor training course with male Sergeants, they jumped at because they were all learning the same thing, and they were curious to see if they would be taught the same as the men...Most of the women have family or friends in the military, and so they've got the support of their families. There are some women who have kept it away from their families, and there's one girl that only has her mother that knows. That's just one, but most of them do have family that encourage them to join, and are happy for them to join, and that's fantastic but I'm hoping that women across Afghanistan can all join at one stage.'

Training the Police

David Oram, Head of Kabul Field Office for the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL)

'...We're trying to encourage the Afghan National Police from being paramilitary to being more civilian orientated, being more community focused. That really means listening to what the people want. That really means...having a bit more respect for the rule of law than perhaps, currently, has been in place in Afghanistan...In Afghanistan, most of the policing is done on checkpoints. In Kabul, for instance, every few hundred metres there will be another checkpoint. There will be another static police officer. The concept of patrol and response really isn't what the Afghan National Police, certainly in Kabul, are about at the moment. We're trying to offer, where appropriate, different alternatives to just purely checkpoint based policing, with a man with a gun, effectively.'

Female Afghan Police Officers

Christine Edwards, Senior Police Advisor for the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL)

'I think at the moment, they're officers that we're training, but they're only employed in admin roles, or making tea, so for me, the hope would be that they would do what we did a number of years ago in the British Police Force. You have a women's department where they have specific roles that are more suited, because I think I'd be unrealistic to say that they'd have an equal role to males in this culture because I don't think that will happen. But we've now got our first Head of a Police District that is a female...I know a lot of them; their families still don't know they're in the police force. We had a female who has been in 27 years and her family still doesn't know that that's what she does. She just goes out in civilian clothing in the morning and comes home, so they have no idea, and they all have to have the permission of their families...so it is a difficult process and it's not respected. It's a pretty low-level - they're similar [seen in a similar way] to prostitutes. That's how they're seen, so it's not a credible career for females in Afghanistan really.'

Reflections on Handing over Security

Lieutenant General John Lorimer, Deputy Commander of ISAF

'...We've got an organisation of 352,000 almost, we're almost there. They recognise the part that they play in the country. They are hugely popular. They are confident, they are capable but also, they are credible in the eyes of the Afghan people. If they can build on that foundation, in the next couple of years there are a few areas that they need to work on in terms of the Air Force, their Special Forces, their Intelligence, and getting the Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Interior to provide that kind of direction and top cover that a professional police force, a professional army requires.'