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Supporting the ISAF Campaign Plan: NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan/Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan Prepares to Support the International Security Force

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At the end of the 2010 London Conference on Afghanistan, the government of the United Kingdom announced that “a more stable and secure Afghanistan is vital to our national security and to that of the wider world.” The plan for the Afghans to take the lead in their own security by early 2011 came with an increase in Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) to 305,000, enhanced provincial and lower-level government capability, and measures to tackle corruption. These are demanding tasks, given the increase in recent violence. Promises of International debt relief and aid could mean little without stability, but stability is untenable without security and legitimate governance. So what are we doing to achieve this vision of a stable and secure Afghanistan?

On 21 November 2009, the Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A), the U.S. Headquarters charged with training and advising the Afghan Police, Army, Ministry of the Interior, and Ministry of Defense closed its doors. Well, not quite. CSTC-A never really went away; for political and monetary reasons it still exists, mainly to provide a link to U.S. funding and activities beyond the remit of Coalition Nations. What took its place is a new, 3-star General Officer Headquarters: NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A), commanded by Lieutenant-General William B. Caldwell IV, recently the commander of the Combined Arms Center and Fort Leavenworth, KS. Elevating the command to a 3-star position was more than a symbol of President Obama’s refocusing of the effort in Afghanistan on building the capacity of the ANSF, the new command comes with a possible increase of \$15 billion over the next three years and the transfer of authority for training fully to NATO.

The task for the Coalition and the fledgling Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan is truly daunting. Everyone, it would seem, has an opinion on what our efforts here should look like. Some argue for a more tribal-centric focus. Others argue for a more centralized government. Still others argue that the real effort should be geared towards extremists in Pakistan. And there are even those who think we should just pull out altogether. One person who offers a more nuanced position is Sarah Chayes who posits in her *Afghanistan Policy Action Plan* that tribal identity is a reaction from external pressures and that most Afghans (or at least Kandaharis) look back on the days of centralized control from Kabul with nostalgia. ISAF has adopted much of her comprehensive plan.

Perhaps the most difficult task we have is to balance the tensions between what needs to be done for the long-term viability of Afghanistan and what is required in the short-term for political reasons. Much of the Western nations' electorates do not see a compelling national security interest in deploying troops long-term to Afghanistan and will most likely not tolerate slow progress in an effort that has been going on for more than eight years.

With this complexity as a backdrop, planners from within the 1,500-person strong NTM-A/CSTC-A headquarters are working to develop an order that will reorganize and partner us with the Afghans in such a way as to best prepare the Afghans to handle their own security as soon as possible. In addition to our own staff, we have welcomed Afghan representation and staff from other NATO Headquarters and the European Police (EUPOL). The planning group members from the headquarters hail from the U.S., Turkey, Italy, Britain, Australia, Canada, the Netherlands, and France.

Our planning started with direction from the Commander- International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF), General Stanley A. McChrystal. The mission of this headquarters is to develop the ministries and institutions of the ANSF, generate new soldiers and police, and resource the fielded force. The President, in his State of the Union speech acknowledged there would be difficult days ahead in Afghanistan, but that we were increasing troops and training ANSF so that they could "begin to take the lead in July of 2011." He said that "we will reward good governance, work to reduce corruption and support the rights of all Afghans".

This will be a difficult mission but not impossible. The Afghans are making progress: the Taliban attack on 18 January in Kabul was successfully dealt with by the ANSF; and the Army and the Police have very high approval ratings according to polls. The Afghanistan effort now has more resources than before and a higher priority. The key now will be for NTM-A/CSTC-A to strike a balance between the short-term need for improvement in the areas of security and numbers of troops trained with long-term requirements such as leadership, improvement in the area of corruption, and transparency of government processes. Progress in those last three, while paramount for the future viability of Afghanistan, will not be quick or easy.

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