

Afghanistan

Efforts to stabilize Afghanistan faced serious challenges in 2007. Insecurity, corruption, and narcotics production and trafficking continued to worsen despite military operations.

During the year in review, international and national security forces continued operations designed to clear districts of Taliban fighters, and inflicted damage on the movement's command structure. However, Afghan administration and police have often been unable to hold territory after the withdrawal of the Afghan National Army and North Atlantic Treaty Organization-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Nor was violence limited to the south; insurgents were active in several districts in and around Kabul itself, and increased their use of guerrilla and terrorist tactics.

Insurgency was not alone to blame for the deterioration in security. From the national to the district level, poor governance—including corruption and impunity of police and other government officials—was a growing problem. The patience of the Afghan people with government appeared to be wearing thin.¹ However, efforts to reform the police received new momentum with the deployment of a European Union police mission, and new resources to overhaul the Afghan National Police.

The cultivation of poppies—which provides the raw material for heroin production—surged to a new record high this past year. The lucrative drug economy not only financed violence and corruption, but also continued to motivate spoilers—within and outside government—for whom legitimate government authority is a threat to business.

Background: OEF, ISAF, and UNAMA

The ongoing operations in Afghanistan have their proximate origins in the 11 September

2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. The military response by the US-led coalition forces under Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) unseated the Taliban government.² OEF remained focused on counterterrorism operations inside Afghanistan, leaving responsibility for rebuilding the Afghan state—and providing the requisite security—to other operations.

The signatories of the Bonn Agreement gave primary responsibility for security to the Afghan authorities, but they also recognized that developing effective institutions would take time. In the interim, they called for deployment of a UN-mandated international security force. ISAF was subsequently established pursuant to UN Security Council Resolution 1386 (2001). Its mandate was “to assist the Afghan Interim Authority in the maintenance of security in Kabul and its surrounding areas, so that the Afghan Interim Authority as well as the personnel of the United Nations can operate in a secure environment.”³ Forty-five hundred international troops were sent to Afghanistan for an initial six months under British command.

In March 2002, Security Council Resolution 1401 established the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), which was mandated to support the political transition to a permanent Afghan government, to maintain peace and stability through the good offices of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), and to assist in aid coordination. UNAMA followed a “light footprint” approach, based on the principle that the Afghan government would lead the stabilization and reconstruction effort.

ISAF was initially deployed only in Kabul and the immediate vicinity, where it patrolled the city and provided security to key political events, including the 2002

UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)

• Authorization and Start Date	28 March 2002 (UNSC Res. 1401)
• SRSB and Head of Mission	Tom Koenigs (Germany)
• Senior Military Advisor	Brigadier Philip Jones (United Kingdom)
• Senior Police Advisor	Roberto Bernal (Philippines)
• Budget	\$123.5 million (1 January 2006–31 December 2007)
• Strength as of 31 October 2007	Military Observers: 15 Police: 3 International Civilian Staff: 223 Local Civilian Staff: 1,040 UN Volunteers: 31

For detailed mission information see p. 230.

the south, southeast, and east of the country, clearing districts of Taliban fighters and inflicting damage on the movement's command structure. Intelligence made possible the arrest and targeting of key leadership in both Afghanistan and Pakistan. But, in some instances, Afghan authorities have been unable to hold territory after the withdrawal of the military.

Military operations struggled to support the overarching political goals of statebuilding, by protecting nascent government institutions and creating space for development, while avoiding political pitfalls. From the military perspective, OEF and ISAF faced calculations between short-term tactics to aggressively pursue insurgents, and long-term strategy to win over Afghans to the cause of the government. Yet continued civilian casualties from military operations have further eroded Afghan support for foreign troops. Aggressive tactics—especially air strikes—also created tensions between ISAF and OEF forces over their respective sensitivities toward civilian populations. Some actors who were engaged in political and reconstruction activities argued that military tactics unintentionally exacerbated local political tensions.

ISAF now has the geographic reach that

many initially envisioned, but its presence in regions previously devoid of an international military or a strong government has provoked an armed response from insurgents and other would-be spoilers. During the years when there was no international security presence, warlords, drug traffickers, and insurgents consolidated their hold. ISAF forces in the north, the west, and the central highlands region continue to play a stabilization role, but in the south and the southeast they are engaged in a violent counterinsurgency.

Because of caveats on the use of some NATO contingents' troops, ISAF forces in the south were largely unable to draw on troops or assets based elsewhere in the country for reinforcement. This was increasingly a source of tension within NATO, with some members arguing that the caveats meant placing force protection ahead of mission needs.⁵ High casualty rates sustained by the Dutch and Canadian contingents in particular created difficulties for those governments in maintaining domestic support for their troops' continuing deployment.

Taliban fighters increasingly are relying on guerrilla tactics, improvised explosive devices, and suicide bombing as a way to avoid direct combat. Nationwide, suicide attacks and kidnappings have accelerated; nine months into the year, both the number of attacks and the number of casualties appeared set to overtake those of 2006.⁶

Recognizing the cross-border dimension of the insurgency, Afghan and Pakistani tribal leaders convened a Peace Jirga in August 2007. More striking, in September, President Hamid Karzai mooted peace talks with senior Taliban leadership. OEF counterterrorism operations will likely influence their decision; few insurgent leaders have been willing to participate in the national reconciliation program in place since 2006.

Governance and Corruption

As noted, the cultivation of poppies surged to a new record high this past year. Some

8,200 tons of opium were produced—34 percent more than in 2006, and a twofold increase over 2005.⁷ The lucrative drug economy not only finances violence and corruption, but also continues to motivate spoilers—within and outside government—for whom legitimate government authority is a threat to business.

There is ongoing discussion between NATO and the UN regarding a greater role for ISAF in counternarcotics. Meanwhile, the Afghan government is under pressure from the United States to authorize controversial aerial spraying of poppy fields, which some fear could drive farmers to support the Taliban.

Efforts to reverse what some saw as Afghanistan's slide toward a narcostate focused on furthering the rule of law. Ending corruption within the government would be a vital step toward redressing the current backslide. Although police reform is receiving renewed attention, questions linger as to whether it is moving in the right direction. Vetting of police officers has largely stalled, while international trainers are in short supply. The Ministry of Interior as a whole remains plagued by problems, undermining its effectiveness and its legitimacy in the eyes of Afghans.

This is part of a wider problem. There are few effective governmental institutions through which to deliver security and essential services to the population, most importantly at the subnational level. Citizen engagement with the state is instead often marked by corrupt and predatory officials.

Reform of the police received renewed effort with the deployment of a European Union police mission in June 2007 (EUPOL Afghanistan). The mission is off to a slow start, however. Afghan recruits have been in short supply, Turkey has held up agreement between NATO and the EU over security guarantees for provincially deployed trainers, and the EU mission commander resigned three months into his appointment. Critics observe that an increased EU civilian role might substitute for a more robust military role by wary member states. The



Swedish ISAF soldier examines an Afghan woman in the Faiz Abad district of Seberghan province north of Kabul, 16 June 2007.

AP Photo

United States is planning to spend a total of \$2.5 billion during 2007–2008 to overhaul the police, including retraining all 72,000 officers. Progress here, too, has been modest, while the use of US military personnel for police training has raised concerns about militarization of the police—underscoring fundamental differences in vision over police reform and the urgent need for harmonization of approaches.

Reconstruction and Security: The Provincial Reconstruction Teams

Insecurity has narrowed the range of civilian actors operating in the south and southeast and limited the operational capacities of the remaining agencies. In this gap, reconstruction activities are channeled through provincial reconstruction teams (PRT).

The PRTs—small, provincially based deployments of civilians and military personnel first introduced in 2002—were an early attempt to jointly merge development and security roles in support of statebuilding. Since their inception, there has been disagreement over their function. Many within the assistance community have argued that the PRTs, by pro-

Box 3.1.1 Peacekeeping Principles and Guidelines: The UN's Capstone Doctrine

UN peacekeeping has been a major tool in the management of interstate and intrastate conflicts for nearly sixty years. But despite the critical role that peace operations have come to play, especially in the post-Cold War period, the only documented body of principles instructing UN peacekeepers in the field and at headquarters is a set of vague guidelines produced in 1995, *Peace Operations 2010*.¹ The year 2007, however, saw some progress in this area with the UN's release of a new set of principles and guidelines for its peacekeeping operations, known as the Capstone Doctrine. A product of the UN's Peacekeeping Best Practices Section, this document represents the first major doctrinal contribution produced by Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO).

The development of a clear doctrine for UN peacekeepers is part of DPKO's larger reform agenda, as set out in *Peace Operations 2010*. The reform agenda aims to improve DPKO's ability to launch

new peacekeeping missions with increased professionalism, and increasing the efficiency of its management of existing missions. In this context, the Capstone Doctrine, which is still pending approval by Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno, aims to serve as an overarching guide for DPKO until it is reviewed again in 2010.

The fruit of an extensive consultative process, and drawing on the UN's history in the field as well as landmark reports such as *An Agenda for Peace* and the Brahimi Report, the Capstone Doctrine captures the dramatic evolution of UN peacekeeping over the past six decades. The comparative advantages and limitations exhibited by UN peacekeeping—lessons learned—inform Capstone's fundamental standards, which will instruct practitioners in the conduct of UN peacekeeping operations. The Capstone Doctrine provides instructions on a wide range of issues, including the evolving

international environment, administration and planning, the complex dynamics of managing integrated missions, and supporting host populations. While the document attempts to provide the most comprehensive multidimensional doctrinal guidance, covering the complex nature of contemporary peace operations, it does not provide military doctrine, as that will remain the prerogative of member states.

Recognizing the continued evolution of peacekeeping doctrine and the need for further refinement, the Capstone Doctrine by no means represents the final word on the matter, but it is hoped that the doctrine will initiate deeper consideration and debate within UN headquarters, in the field, and among the UN's peacekeeping partners. In this vein, future iterations of the Capstone Doctrine will benefit from regular engagement with member states, particularly troop-contributing countries, the permanent members of the Security Council, as well as experts.

Source: United Nations, *Capstone Doctrine, Draft 3* (New York: Department of Peacekeeping Operations, June 2007), <http://pbpu.unlb.org/pbps/pages/public/viewprimarydoc.aspx?docid=481>.

Note: 1. United Nations, *Peace Operations 2010* (New York: Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 1995), <http://www.un.org/depts/dpko/dpko/articles/article191006.html>.

viding humanitarian and development assistance, blur the line between the military and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Instead, it has been argued, they should focus on stabilization functions—security sector reform, presence patrols, and force multiplication—and limit their engagement on reconstruction to large-scale projects or government infrastructure.

Through engagement with the UN, the Afghan government, and the NGO community, the PRT concept evolved and expanded, although differences among individual commanders, lead-country approaches, and areas of operation mean variations in PRTs' respective approaches. Nonetheless, even proponents

of the use of PRTs in insecure regions concede that PRT activities are not always the most appropriate, and that willingness to enter dangerous areas is not a substitute for prior experience in development. Some civilian officials, while recognizing that such projects are important, argue that there should be greater oversight over how this money is spent. In particular, there is a continual risk that embarking on development projects without an understanding of the local market or political context—and thus of the potential impact of the project—can undermine, rather than support, local stability. The Afghan government has leveled criticism that PRT projects often fail to address government-identified commu-

nity priorities. During 2007, though, ISAF was making greater efforts to follow the interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy.

Reconstruction and Development

The interim Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) of 2006 laid out priorities for development and means of achieving the Afghan government's vision. The parallel Afghanistan Compact represents the political agreement between the Afghan government and international community to achieve the ANDS benchmarks. Together, they provide the overall framework for rebuilding the country.

Over the past year, the government held public, subnational consultations on the full ANDS—slated for completion in 2008—in all provinces. The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board (JCMB), which oversees the Compact, largely focused on establishing structures and reporting mechanisms, so far limiting its impact on the ground. Meanwhile, insecurity and poor governance have driven a “quick fix” approach among donors, diverting attention from the Compact. Policy and funding decisions are often made outside the JCMB. As with security and governance, the development benchmarks outlined in the Compact will likely not be met on time unless the Afghan government and international community summon the necessary political will and resources for reform of government institutions and the JCMB, which has been criticized for, among other things, being too inclusive and therefore unwieldy.

Strategic Coordination

If there was one theme that focused efforts in 2007, however, it was the challenge of strategic coordination—specifically the effort to reconcile what should be complementary, but at times proved to be competing, goals of counterinsurgency and statebuilding.

Though the challenge of strategic coordination is not unique to Afghanistan, the operation in Afghanistan is complex and, in many respects, unique. It is a partnership among the Afghan government, UNAMA, ISAF, the US coalition forces under OEF, and myriad other

multilateral and bilateral actors. Each has a different mandate, different capabilities, and different access to resources.

Coordination among international and national actors alone will not determine whether efforts to stabilize and rebuild Afghanistan succeed. However, absent a hierarchy among OEF, ISAF, and UNAMA, coordination was vital to ensuring that these distinct missions acted in concert, rather than at cross-purposes, in pursuing their political, peacemaking, and reconstruction goals. As managing insecurity became a greater priority, coordination among international military forces and civilian political and development organizations has become increasingly salient—both for improving the efficacy of counterinsurgency operations and for increasing space for political and development activities.

Yet, as Lieutenant-General David Richards, former commander of ISAF, warned during his tenure, “Lack of unity and co-ordination between the numerous different organizations and agencies often manifests itself in a situation close to anarchy, both military and civil.”⁸ In addition to separate organizational mandates, effective coordination between military and civilian organizations faced further challenges, including fundamental differences in cultures and approaches. The practice of using relatively short rotations, especially of military personnel, worked against a long-term contextual understanding of the situation on the ground, and also prevented the development of interpersonal relationships between counterparts. These factors affected ad hoc and institutionalized coordination from the international to the district level throughout the year.

From the national to the provincial level, numerous coordination mechanisms have been established to “deconflict” activities, prevent duplication of efforts, and improve strategic alignment between the statebuilding and counterinsurgency goals of the Afghan government and military and civilian actors. The Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, established in April 2006, oversees and assesses implementation of the Afghanistan Compact. Other

examples include the PRT Executive Steering Committee, which serves as a forum for discussion about coordination of the PRTs, and the PRT Working Group, a subsidiary of the committee that consults with the broader group of government, NGOs, and the UN. At the regional level, the first conference between ISAF Regional Command–East and UNAMA—held in April 2007—marked a significant step in coordinating ISAF’s security role with the governance and development work of UNAMA.

NATO’s senior civilian representative, appointed in 2003, represents the North Atlantic Council locally and liaises with ISAF, the Afghan government, UNAMA, other civilian agencies, and donor governments. The senior civilian representative does not have any authority over the commander of ISAF, however, arguably replicating a political-military split within ISAF itself.

Two relatively new mechanisms at the national level—the Policy Action Group and the Comprehensive Approach Team—warrant attention for their potential roles in reversing insecurity and its causes.

The Policy Action Group. In response to the deterioration of security in southern Afghanistan, the Policy Action Group (PAG) was established in July 2006. The PAG is convened by the National Security Council and brings together the president; key ministers, including those of Defense and Interior; UNAMA; ISAF; the US coalition forces; and important diplomatic representatives. It functions as a crisis management decisionmaking body that meets on a biweekly basis and attempts to make real-time decisions and take coordinated action. Proponents argue that the PAG provides one of the few forums that convenes key figures, providing a unique possibility to deliver results.⁹

The PAG is focused on enabling sustained development in four key provinces: Kandahar, Helmand, Zabul, and Uruzgan. The impetus was the intensity of the insurgency encoun-

tered by ISAF following its deployment to the south. However, the ANDS and the Afghanistan Compact were predicated on the country being at peace or becoming peaceful, conditions not present in these provinces. Proponents of the PAG argue that both processes are conflict-insensitive and therefore do not provide for timely response to crises.¹⁰ The PAG, viewed as a way to coordinate government and international efforts in high-risk districts in order to rapidly provide an environment for development, has emphasized targeted reform of the government administration, establishment of auxiliary police units, and focusing support to “Afghan development zones”—areas secured by ISAF and Afghan security forces in which governance, reconstruction, and development are synchronized. Initial concern that the PAG replicated existing coordination structures of the ANDS and the JCMB appear to have been allayed, as the PAG has situated itself as an enabler of the ANDS.

Perhaps the PAG’s biggest flaw is that, due to poor subnational governance, its priorities are not articulated from the provincial level to the center, and therefore problems discussed at the highest levels may not be reflective of local priorities. Likewise, the National Security Council no longer has regional offices and has limited potential to transfer enhanced capacity from the center to the provincial and district levels, where it is most needed.

Another concern is that the bilateral composition of the PAG is not regionally inclusive. Despite both recognition that Afghanistan’s problems require regional solutions, and the acknowledgment in August 2007 by Pakistan’s president, Pervez Musharraf, that the Taliban has used tribal areas as safe havens, no regional countries participate in the PAG. The strength of the PAG thus far has been its operation as an efficient, high-level crisis management body, but its capacity to produce tangible improvements on the ground have yet to be proven.

The Comprehensive Approach Team. The Comprehensive Approach Team (CAT) is convened

on a regular basis by the planning cell within ISAF and includes ISAF forces, UNAMA other UN agencies, and NGOs. The usual point of engagement between ISAF and civilians is through the NGO Civil-Military Working Group, which provides a forum for NGOs to voice concerns about military, government, and donor reconstruction and development projects. The CAT, by contrast, is focused on military operations. Whereas civilians are usually excluded from the military planning process, CAT meetings provide a forum for the UN and NGOs to directly interact with ISAF's military planners, both to influence the direction of its military operations and to provide a perspective on its six-month planning process.

The transparency of the inner workings of the planning process marks a radical departure from previous processes in Afghanistan, and has resulted in increased confidence among ISAF, the UN, and NGOs. A new ISAF plan under development incorporates feedback from the civilian side of the peacekeeping and assistance operation. ISAF and UNAMA are now able to determine where participation has been meaningful, while the process also provides an opportunity to improve areas where engagement is still difficult.

Conclusion

There is increasing recognition by both the government of Afghanistan and the international community that the counterinsurgency cannot be won by military means alone. As a result of constructive engagement, trust and coordination between the international civilian and military actors in Afghanistan are improving. It remains to be seen whether these processes will yield tangible results that are able to change realities on the ground.

At the same time, the international community may need to scale back its expectations, while increasing its time horizons. Both counterinsurgency and the underlying state-building objective it serves are long-term endeavors. A sustained international presence may be required for some time to come. And the declining security situation and difficulties in establishing stable governmental structures in the country underscore that Afghanistan and its international partners still face a *peacemaking* challenge, along with continued peacekeeping and peacebuilding needs.

Notes

1. See Asia Foundation, "Statebuilding, Political Progress, and Human Security in Afghanistan: Reflections on a Survey of the Afghan People" (Kabul, 2007).

2. Unlike other international actors that operate at the formal invitation of the Afghan government, there is no status of forces agreement between the government and the coalition forces.

3. UN Security Council Resolution 1386. ISAF's mandate additionally "*requests* the leadership of the International Security Assistance Force to provide periodic reports on progress towards the implementation of its mandate through the Secretary-General" (*italics in original*).

4. The Bonn Agreement is formally known as the Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-establishment of Permanent Government Institutions.

5. International Crisis Group, "Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency: No Quick Fixes," Asia Report no. 123 (Kabul, 2 November 2006), p. 15.

6. By 1 October 2007, 100 suicide bombings had killed 290 people, a rate expected to surpass the 123 bombs and 305 deaths of 2006. Kirk Semple, "Bomber Attacks Bus of Afghan Soldiers; 30 Dead," *New York Times*, 1 October 2007. In the first eight months of 2007, "reported security incidents"—which includes bombings, firefights, and intimidation—were up to 600 per month versus some 500 per month in the same period in 2006, a 20 percent increase. Likewise, 2,500–3,000 people—a quarter of them civilians—had been killed by insurgency-related violence by 1 October 2007, also a 20 percent increase over

the same period in 2006. Fatality rates for NATO and US soldiers were up nearly 20 percent, to 161 deaths. Finally, attacks and bombings killed 379 Afghan police in the first eight months of 2007, compared with 257 in 2006. David Rhode, "Afghan Police Suffer Setbacks as Taliban Adapt," *New York Times*, 2 September 2007.

7. UN Office on Drugs and Crime, "Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007," Executive Summary, p. iv, http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/afg07_exsum_web.pdf.

8. Quoted in International Crisis Group, "Countering Afghanistan's Insurgency," p. 18.

9. Personal interview with a UNAMA official, Kabul, 16 September 2007.

10. Ibid.