



Adjunct Professor of International Affairs

July 30, 2008

- MEMORANDUM FOR:** **Colonel Michael Meese**
Professor and Head Dept of Social Sciences
- CC:** **Colonel Cindy Jebb**
Professor and Deputy Head Dept of Social Sciences
- SUBJECT:** After Action Report—General Barry R McCaffrey USA (Ret)
VISIT NATO SHAPE HEADQUARTERS AND AFGHANISTAN -- 21-26 July 2008
- 1. PURPOSE:** This memo provides a strategic and operational assessment of security operations in Afghanistan in support of US European Command. Be glad to conduct a Faculty Seminar and Cadet Class lectures based on this report during this fall semester.
- 2. SOURCES:**
- A. SHAPE Headquarters – NATO -- Mons, Belgium:**
- 1.) One-on-one multi-hour session, **General John Craddock, Supreme Allied Commander, Europe (SACEUR)**.
 - 2.) NATO Strategic Overview Briefing. SHAPE Headquarters – Mons, Belgium. **MG Rudy Wright, USAF, Deputy Chief of Staff Operations:**
 - a. **BG Turgay Bakkal, TUR A, Assistant Chief of Staff, J3**
 - b. **BG Jesús Díaz del Río Español, ESP MC, Assistant Chief of Staff, J6**
 - c. **RADM Stefan Tandeki, POL N, Assistant Chief of Staff, J4 (Acting DCOS Spt)**
 - d. **Andrew Brentnall, Special Advisor to SACEUR**
 - e. **COL Paul Shewry, GBR A, Director Strategic Direction Centre (SDC)**
 - f. **Commander Ostilio de Majo, ITA N, Military Assistant to SACEUR**
 - g. **LTC Kevin Marcus, USA A, Office of Director of Staff**
 - 3.) Working Lunch. **General Karl-Heinz Lather (German Army), Chief of Staff; SACEUR:**
 - a. **MG Rudy Wright, USAF, Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations**
 - b. **Stephen Covington, International Affairs Advisor to SACEUR**
 - c. **COL Tucker Mansager, USA, Executive Officer to SACEUR**
 - d. **COL Paul Shewry, UK Army, Director SDC**
 - e. **COL Roderich Kiesewetter, German Army, Executive Officer to Chief of Staff**
 - f. **COL Stuart Bradin, USA, Chief of Staff, NATO Special Operations Forces Coordination Centre (NSCC)**
 - g. **Commander Ostilio de Majo, Italian Navy, MA to SACEUR**
 - 4.) Working Dinner – Château Gendebien. **SACEUR; General Karl-Heinz Lather;** other senior military and civilian officials:
 - a. **Ambassador Larry Butler, Political Advisor to SACEUR**

- b. **MG Rudy Wright, Deputy Chief of Staff, Operations**
- c. **Stephen Covington, International Affairs Advisor to SACEUR**
- d. **COL Patrick Warren, Senior MA to SACEUR**

5.) Discussion, **NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer**, C-17 en route and return from Afghanistan.

6.) One-on-one discussions, **POLAD, Ambassador Larry Butler**.

B. Afghanistan:

1.) Private Briefing. **MG Dutch Remkes, USAF and COL Mark Kelly, USAF**.

2.) Opium and Heroin – The Afghanistan Challenge – **Vincent M. Balbo, DEA Country Attache**.

3.) The Military Situation Afghanistan, **General David McKiernan, USA, Commander, International Security Assistance Force; senior staff:**

- a. **LTG Jonathan Riley (UK Army)**. Briefing: “The Information Operations Campaign”.
- b. **COL Pat McNiece, Deputy J2**. Intelligence Briefing.
- c. **LTC Damian Marsh, Chief Ops**. Operations Briefing.

4.) Private strategic update -- **General McKiernan; LTG Riley (UK); SACEUR**.

5.) **Afghanistan Minister of Defense, General Abdul Rahim Wardak**; senior staff. Update on the Afghan National Security Situation.

6.) The Afghan Economic Situation. Meeting with **World Bank President and CEO, Robert B. Zoellick**; **SACEUR**.

7.) The Economics, Politics, and Culture of Afghanistan. ISAF Headquarters.

- a. **Dr. Ashraf Ghani**, Chairman, The Institute for State Effectiveness (ISE). Former finance minister of Afghanistan.
- b. **Mr. Christopher Alexander**, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General of Afghanistan, UNAMA.
- c. **Ambassador Bill Wood**, U.S. Ambassador to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
- d. **Mrs. Hedvig Boserup**, Deputy Managing Director & Director of Business Development, Turquoise Mountain Foundation.

8.) Khyber Pass. Border Coordination Element. Khyber Border Coordination Center. **Update briefings:**

- a. **BG Mark Milley**, Deputy Commanding General (Operations) CJTF-101 and Regional Command East.
- b. **MAJ Robert Brown**, Khyber Border Coordination Center, OIC
- c. **COL Chris Pearce**, CJTF-101
- d. **LTC Pierre Gervaise**, CJ2
- e. **LTC Patrick Quinn**, D/CJ5
- f. **MAJ David Spensop**, TF KING
- g. Afghan and Pakistan military officials.

9.) Working Dinner – The Economics, Politics, and Culture of Afghanistan. Hotel Serena -- Kabul, Afghanistan.

- a. **SACEUR**.
- b. **Ambassador Christopher Dell**, Deputy Chief of Mission to the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan.
- c. **Mr. Patrick Hamilton**, Deputy Head of Delegation, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC).
- d. **Hashmat Khan**, Rahimi Films International, Kabul Afghanistan.
- e. **Mrs. Hassina Sherjan**, President, Boumi Fashion, Aid Afghanistan for Education.
- f. **Mr. Jahid Mohseni**, Moby Media.

10.) Kandahar Air Field. Operations and Intelligence Briefing. **COL Peter Petronzio, 24th MEU Commanding Officer; LTC Trollinger, S3 24th MEU.** Headquarters, 24th MEU.

11.) Visit 1st Battalion, 7th Marines. Field Location FOB Dwyer. **LTC Anthony Henderson,** Commander, 1st Battalion, 6th Marines.

12.) One-on-one session, **MG Robert W. Cone,** Commanding General, Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan.

3. CONTEXT:

This report is based on a series of briefings and conversations at SHAPE Headquarters in Mons, Belgium and then subsequent field observations in Afghanistan while accompanying General John Craddock SACEUR during his command update visit. I am very appreciative that the JCS Chairman Admiral Mike Mullen approved the trip and gave me his own take on the situation prior to my travel in theater.

It was an honor to learn about the current challenges in Afghanistan while traveling with John Craddock. He was one of the most courageous and effective battalion commanders I have ever observed in action. (Awarded one of the only two Silver Stars in 24th INF Division during Desert Storm.... in heavy combat.... his command tank hit twice by heavy recoilless AT rounds...Craddock shooting enemy infantry off his tank at close range with a pistol.)

General Craddock has gone on to gain enormous experience through distinguished service as a Balkans peacekeeping commander, as the senior military trainer for US forces in Europe, as the senior military assistant to the US Secretary of Defense, and then as the Joint Combatant Commander in Southern Command (the Latin-American theater). There are few senior military leaders in this generation who have his talent, lack of ego, and sophisticated grasp of the international political and military environment. He is highly respected by the NATO community as pragmatic and mission-oriented.

This report is also based on continuous personal research, unclassified data provided in-country during this trip, and first-hand observations gained during my many field visits to both Pakistan and Afghanistan during the period 2003 forward to the current situation.

The conclusions are solely my own as an Adjunct Professor of International Affairs at West Point and should be viewed as an academic contribution to the national security debate. No one in NATO-SHAPE or the ISAF Command in Afghanistan has vetted this report.

4. THE BOTTOM LINE: SIX ASSERTIONS.

- Afghanistan is in misery. 68% of the population has never known peace. Life expectancy is 44 years. It has the second highest maternal mortality rate in the world: One of six pregnant Afghan women dies for each live birth. Terrorist incidents and main force insurgent violence is rising (34% increase this year in kinetic events.) Battle action and casualties are now much higher in Afghanistan for US forces than they are in Iraq. The Afghan government at provincial and district level is largely dysfunctional and corrupt. The security situation (2.8 million refugees); the economy (unemployment 40% and rising, extreme poverty 41%, acute food shortages, inflation 12% and rising, agriculture broken); the giant heroin/opium criminal enterprise (\$4 billion and 800 metric tons of heroin); and Afghan governance are all likely to get worse in the coming 24 months.
- The magnificent, resilient Afghan people absolutely reject the ideology and violence of the Taliban (90% or greater) but have little faith in the ability of the government to provide security, justice, clean water, electricity, or jobs. Much of Afghanistan has great faith in US military forces, but enormous suspicion of the commitment and staying power of our NATO allies.
- The courageous and determined NATO Forces (the employable forces are principally US, Canadian, British, Polish, and Dutch) and the Afghan National Army (the ANA is a splendid success story) cannot be defeated in battle. They will continue to slaughter the Pashtun insurgents, criminals, and international terrorist syndicates who directly confront them. (7000+ killed during 2007 alone.) The Taliban will increasingly turn to terrorism directed against the people and the Afghan National Police. However, the atmosphere of terror cannot be

countered by relying mainly on military means. We cannot win through a war of attrition. The economic and political support provided by the international community is currently inadequate to deal with the situation.

- 2009 will be the year of decision. The Taliban and a greatly enhanced foreign fighter presence will: strike decisive blows against selected NATO units; will try to erase the FATA and Baluchi borders with Afghanistan; will try to sever the road networks and stop the construction of new roads (Route # 1 -- the Ring Road from Kabul to Kandahar is frequently now interdicted); and will try to strangle and isolate the capital. Without more effective and non-corrupt Afghan political leadership at province and district level, Afghanistan may become a failed state hosting foreign terrorist communities with global ambitions. Afghan political elites are focused more on the struggle for power than governance.
- US unilateral reinforcements driven by US Defense Secretary Bob Gates have provided additional Army and Marine combat forces and significant enhanced training and equipment support for Afghan security forces. This has combined with greatly increased US nation-building support (PRT's, road building, support for the Pakistani Armed Forces, etc.) to temporarily halt the slide into total warfare. The total US outlay in Afghanistan this year will be in excess of \$34 billion: a burn rate of more than \$2.8 billion per month. However, there has been no corresponding significant effort by the international community. The skillful employment of US Air Force, Army, and Naval air power (to include greatly expanded use of armed and reconnaissance UAV's : Predator, Reaper, Global hawk, and Shadow) has narrowly prevented the Taliban from massing and achieving local tactical victories over isolated and outnumbered US and coalition forces in the East and South.
- There is no unity of command in Afghanistan. A sensible coordination of all political and military elements of the Afghan theater of operations does not exist. There is no single military headquarters tactically commanding all US forces. All NATO military forces do not fully respond to the NATO ISAF Commander because of extensive national operational restrictions and caveats. In theory, NATO ISAF Forces respond to the (US) SACEUR...but US Forces in ISAF (half the total ISAF forces are US) respond to the US CENTCOM commander. However, US Special Operations Forces respond to US SOCOM.....not (US) SACEUR or US CENTCOM. There is no accepted Combined NATO-Afghan military headquarters. There is no clear political governance relationship organizing the government of Afghanistan, the United Nations and its many Agencies, NATO and its political and military presence, the 26 Afghan deployed allied nations, the hundreds of NGO's, and private entities and contractors. There is little formal dialog between the government and military of Pakistan and Afghanistan, except that cobbled together by the US Forces in Regional Command East along the Pakistan frontier.

5. THE BOW WAVE OF THE US PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN:

Afghanistan has become the good war and Iraq the war with issues. Neither characterization is relevant. Both candidates to be the US Commander-in-Chief have been placed in awkward stances by the political dynamics of the debate. They have been perhaps unfairly caricatured by sound bites of who will send the most reinforcing US Army combat brigades to Afghanistan. Afghanistan will not be solved by the addition of two or three more US combat brigades from our rapidly unraveling Army.

This is a struggle for the hearts of the people, and good governance, and the creation of Afghan security forces. The war theater is principally for the Afghan-Pakistan frontier regions and the control of the four approaches to Kabul (although 29 of 34 provinces had clashes and bombings.) The combatants are tribes, religious groups, criminals, drug lords, and among ethnic groups (Pashtuns, Tajiks, Hazaras, Uzbeks, and Turkmen). This is an attempt to create a state, not a battle to save one. This is clearly not a war between Pakistan and Afghanistan. It is more a war of extremists against a population desperate for peace.

The battle will be won in Afghanistan when there is an operational Afghan police presence in the nation's 34 provinces and 398 Districts. The battle will be won when the current Afghan National Army expands from 80,000 troops to 200,000 troops with appropriate equipment, training, and leadership and embedded NATO LNO teams. (Afghanistan is 50% larger than Iraq and has a larger population.) The battle will be won when we deploy a five battalion US Army engineer brigade with attached Stryker security elements to lead a five year road building effort employing Afghan contractors and training and mentoring Afghan engineers. The war will be won when we fix the Afghan agricultural system which employs 82% of the population. The war will be won when the international community demands the eradication of the opium and cannabis crops and robustly supports the development of alternative economic activity.

6. NATO:

Without NATO we are lost in Afghanistan. The next Administration must have a major diplomatic commitment to strengthen the capabilities and commitment of our 26 NATO allies.

NATO has 70,000 soldiers on three continents with eleven standing NATO military headquarters. The NATO-Russia Council, the NATO-Ukrainian Council, the 24 member nations of the NATO Partnership for Peace, the Mediterranean Dialog, and the Istanbul Cooperation Initiative--- are all examples of the enormously effective integrative political and military role of NATO.

Current non-US NATO forces deployed in Afghanistan are in many cases woefully inadequate for the task they face. They have serious restrictive caveats to their military employment. They are casualty adverse in a very dangerous and brutal environment. They are in many cases lacking the force enablers that are a prerequisite to effective COIN operations. (Helicopter and UAV support, intelligence, logistics, engineers, civil affairs and special operations units, precision artillery munitions, trauma medical support, cash for nation-building economic activity, etc.) Some are badly trained and equipped. The Germans as an example have an enormously professional military with superb officers but make a marginal contribution in Afghanistan because of the crippling political restrictions on their employment.

The US has until recently sadly neglected to adequately nurture, shape, and sustain the capabilities of NATO to deal with the new realities of the post-Cold War security environment. This is a challenge to the NATO political leadership of all 26 nations. NATO is a political alliance not a military headquarters.

7. PAKISTAN:

Pakistan is a state of four separate nations under a weak federal government. The Pakistani military is the central load-bearing institution of the state. It is the most respected institution in Pakistan. The Army has severe military limitations in its ability to control the FATA and Baluchistan frontier areas.

A major US intervention across the Pakistan border to conduct spoiling attacks on Pashtun and criminal syndicate base areas would be a political disaster. We will imperil the Pakistani government's ability to support our campaign. They may well stop our air and ground logistics access across Pakistan and place our entire NATO presence in severe jeopardy.

This is a 25 year campaign. We must be patient in our expectations. We must do no harm dealing with Pakistan. We clearly can strike directly and covertly across the border in self-defense. We must never publicly put the Pakistani military in political peril with their own people.

8. AFGHANISTAN: A NARCO-STATE.

The Taliban, Al Qaeda, war lords, and Afghan criminal enterprises are principally funded by what some estimate as \$800 million dollars a year derived from the huge \$4 billion annual illegal production and export of opium/heroin and cannabis. Some 40 principal figures (20+ in Kandahar Province) control this criminal activity which widely corrupts and weakens the governance of the nation.

Production of both opium and cannabis has surged throughout the country. (Opium up from 198,000 acres in 2003 to 476,900 by 2007.) This criminal enterprise employs 3.3 million workers, addicts the population (perhaps 900,000 drug users), distorts the economy, and corrupts justice and government.

The international community to include the United States has provided small sums to develop alternative economic livelihood aid. (\$111 million in 2007 and only \$655 million since 2002). The US has a handful of courageous DEA agents in Afghanistan joining a symbolic and largely ineffective international counter-drug program.

The international community has been fearful of confronting this issue. Unless we deal head-on with this enormous cancer, we should have little expectation that our efforts in Afghanistan will not eventually come to ruin.

9. BUILDING THE AFGHAN SECURITY FORCES:

MG Bob Cone (US Army) is a brilliant and effective officer charged with building the Afghan Security Forces to include both the Army (ANA) and the Police (ANP). He commands a trainer force of 8000 people (3000 civilians, 5000 military and 800 Coalition forces from 15 nations.) We desperately need an additional 2300 police trainers. This is the central effort to win the war in Afghanistan.

The Afghan National Security Forces now have twice the ground combat power of the ISAF forces. There are 63,000 effective soldiers and 79,000 poorly equipped and trained police. The planned force structure is completely inadequate if our goal is US and NATO withdrawal in the coming decade. The ANA is a splendid instrument of national unity with ethnically mixed units and extremely motivated fighters. Of all friendly forces killed-in-action from January 2007 thru July 2008: 59% are ANP, 21% are ANA, and 20% are Coalition.

The ANA has led over 68% of the operations they have participated in from May thru July. All five planned Corps Headquarters are now fielded and 12 of 14 planned brigade headquarters. All ANA and ANP personnel are rapidly being identified thru biometric data and will be paid thru electronic funds transfer to Afghan banks to attempt to minimize corruption and extortion of the troops.

The creation of the Afghan Security Forces is still poorly supported by NATO. Most of this is a US effort. Second-hand donated military equipment sits in Europe because NATO cannot find \$7 million to pay for transportation. Many allied trainers are forbidden by national caveat from accompanying their Afghan units in the field as liaison elements.

The US is going to have to step up to this challenge. We must create the Afghan air power, logistics, medical, engineering and administrative infra-structure to allow eventual US military downsizing in the coming five years. The ANA needs 3000+ light armored vehicles to include air transportable artillery. The current Afghan Army Air Corps is 26 Soviet era helicopters and 6 fixed wing aircraft. We are off by an order of magnitude. They should build an air arm of a dozen C-130's, a dozen AC-130's, 50 attack helicopters, and 150 US Chinook and Black Hawk lift helicopters. (These are invented numbers to get the debate at the right order of magnitude.) It is immeasurably cheaper to start now to build and equip a realistic Afghan Security Force than to continue a \$2.3 billion per month US DOD effort.

10. THE US ARMED FORCES:

The combat effectiveness, courage, and leadership of our deployed joint military forces are simply inspirational. The leaders are battle-hardened, show enormous initiative, and can organize anything. They understand the inter-agency role of economic, cultural, intelligence, and information operations on counter-insurgency warfare.

We have never fielded more experienced and aggressive air and ground tactical units. As an example, the superb Marine 24th MEU in Helmand Province has killed 400+ Taliban fighters while losing 4 US killed and 9 wounded. This air-ground task force was in continuous battle for 35 days and DID NOT KILL OR INJURE ONE AFGHAN CIVILIAN. (Note there has not been one Afghan Army or Police unit with the Marines at any time during their battle in the south.)

The elite Army parachute infantry units from the 101st Airborne Division and the 173rd Airborne Brigade operating in the north-eastern provinces (RC-East) have done magnificent work at nation-building while fighting aggressive, well-armed and trained foreign fighters and Taliban conducting cross-border attacks out of Pakistan. In June there were 39 Troops-in-Contact battles in Iraq: there were 419 Troops-in-Contact engagements in Afghanistan. This is dangerous work against a cunning and ruthless enemy.

As an example, on 13 July a small, isolated US Army-Afghan platoon sized unit in Konar Province was attacked by surprise at dawn by 200+ Taliban employing massive fires from RPG's, recoilless rifles, and automatic weapons from eight different positions. US losses were 9 killed-in-action and 15 wounded. The position would have been over run and annihilated were it not for the determined leadership of the US infantry company commander--- and the initiative of a paratroop squad that counter-attacked under heavy fire at the point of most vulnerability. US air power rapidly decimated the attacking force.

Many of these troops and their leaders through general officer level are on their 4th or more combat deployments since “911.” We have suffered 36,000 US killed and wounded. Their families are getting tired. The country is not at war. The Armed Forces and the CIA are at war. We are at the point of breaking faith with our troops.

Much of our ground and air equipment is falling apart. The anemic US Air Force and Naval modernization programs will place us in great risk in the Pacific in the coming decades. The Armed Forces are under-resourced and inadequately sized for the national security strategy we have pursued.

There is a serious mismatch between ends and means. We are going to wreck the US Armed Forces unless Congress and the next Administration address this situation of great strategic peril.

11. SUMMARY:

We cannot allow ourselves to fail in Afghanistan.

NATO is central to achieving our purpose.

This is a generational war to build an Afghan state and prevent the creation of a lawless, extremist region which will host and sustain enduring threats to the vital national security interests of the United States and our key allies.

Barry R McCaffrey
General USA (Retired)
Adjunct professor of International Affairs
Department of Social Sciences
West Point, New York