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SPECIAL REPORT

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ABOUT THE REPORT

This report describes the efforts of the NATO-led coalition forces in Afghanistan to create an Afghan constabulary force to control urban violence and serve as a counterinsurgency force. The United States does not have civilian constabulary forces, so the U.S. military and the Italian Carabinieri were asked to provide training. The Afghan National Civil Order Police was from the start a victim of its own success, as constantly changing assignments to dangerous combat zones resulted in high attrition rates that nearly spelled the end of the force.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Afghanistan's Civil Order Police

Victim of Its Own Success

Summary

- In 2006, a day of deadly riots in Kabul dramatized the need for an Afghan constabulary force capable of controlling outbreaks of urban violence. In response, the U.S. military and Afghan authorities created an elite gendarmerie, the Afghanistan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP).
- Although ANCOP was conceived of as a riot control force, it was assigned to the Focused District Development Program to replace district-level Afghan Uniformed Police who were away for training. The high demand and constant transfers required by this duty resulted in rates of attrition among ANCOP units of 75 to 80 percent.
- In 2010, ANCOP's superior training, firepower, and mobility were recognized in its assignment, along with a "surge" of U.S. military forces, to reverse the Taliban's hold on key areas in southern Afghanistan.
- In heavy fighting in Marja, Helmand province, ANCOP was demonstrably unprepared to serve as a counterinsurgency force, particularly in areas that had not been cleared by coalition and Afghan military forces.
- Subsequent improvements in training and partnering with U.S. forces improved ANCOP's performance in Kandahar, where ANCOP was used to hold areas that had been cleared by the military.
- By 2011, ANCOP had firmly established its place as an elite rapid reaction and counterinsurgency force with a positive reputation among coalition troops and Afghan citizens.

On May 29, 2006, during a day of bloody rioting, the Afghan National Police (ANP) was unable to control mobs that rampaged through Kabul, the deadliest street violence since the defeat of the Taliban. At 8 a.m. the brakes of a heavy U.S. military cargo truck failed on a steep incline, sending the vehicle into 12 civilian cars, killing one person and injuring six. An angry crowd quickly surrounded the accident scene and began throwing stones at

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the American soldiers who responded by firing their weapons into the air. Rumors that American troops had shot and killed many demonstrators spread swiftly. Within hours, mobs of men and boys were roaming the streets, looting shops, and torching a foreign aid agency, a new tourist hotel, and government buildings. As the violence spread, armed demonstrators exchanged fire with U.S. soldiers, Afghan police, and local security guards. By sundown, fourteen people were dead and 138 wounded. The violence revealed a deep undercurrent of anti-American and antigovernment sentiment. It highlighted the inability of the Afghan police to control large-scale civil disorder. The chief of police in Kabul said his forces lacked the resources to deal with rioters, including tear gas, water hoses, shields, and other types of protective gear. He denied that the police had fired into crowds and caused the death and injury of the protesters.¹

For U.S. authorities, the riot revealed Kabul's vulnerability to flashes of large-scale civilian unrest and the threat this posed to the U.S. embassy, military headquarters, and other facilities. In the aftermath of the riots, the U.S. military began working to create an elite constabulary (gendarmerie), the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP), with authorized end strength of 5,365 personnel to be achieved by 2010. The force would be divided into four brigades stationed at Kabul, Paktia, Kandahar, and Herat and composed of twenty battalions. ANCOP's mission was to maintain public order in Afghanistan's seven largest cities, provide a mobile police presence in high-threat areas, and serve as a rapid-reaction force to support the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) in an emergency. ANCOP was conceived as a national force with its membership recruited from all ethnic groups and from units throughout the Afghan National Police. ANCOP recruits would receive an initial sixteen weeks of training that emphasized crowd control, urban tactical operations, tribal relations, and ethics. This training was followed by an additional eight weeks of training on special weapons tactics (SWAT), with top students selected for additional SWAT training. ANCOP received better weapons, equipment, and vehicles than the rest of the ANP. ANCOP, which was modeled on the French National Gendarmerie, was seen as a reserve force to be deployed in case of urban violence or used as a rapid-reaction force.²

In order to quickly create a riot-control force to deal with future contingencies in Kabul, U.S. military authorities recruited from among the best officers currently serving in the AUP. The intention was to create a force that could rapidly acquire new skills and that could operate effectively in the relatively sophisticated environment of Afghanistan's major cities, where it would have to interact with foreign troops and relief workers. The critical criterion for selection was a sixth-grade level of literacy, an extremely high standard given the fact that more than 80 percent of the ANP were illiterate. Using literacy as a criterion created an elite force almost by definition. The inclusion of only literate police officers in ANCOP, however, had unintended consequences for the overall police development program. Withdrawal of the few literate members from police units around the country deprived those units of essential personnel. Absent a force-wide literacy training program, there was no way to replace this capacity. Over time, the very high levels of attrition that occurred in ANCOP units would create a brain drain that negatively impacted the ANP overall.³

Police Failures Dictate the Need for a Revised Training Program

Although ANCOP was conceived of as a riot control force, its initial assignment was to backfill AUP personnel that were removed from their districts for collective police training under a new program devised by the U.S. military. In November 2007, CSTC-A sought to correct for deficiencies in the U.S. police assistance program by launching a new initiative called Focused District Development (FDD), which was aimed at enhancing AUP capabilities by vetting, training, and reequipping all uniformed police in a single district at one time as

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a unit. The program was designed to correct the problem of newly trained police returning to their duty stations to serve under untrained and corrupt superiors. Under the FDD program, an advance team of U.S. military and civilian police advisers conducted a pretraining assessment in the district, noting the level of police performance, relationship with the population, infrastructure, and the threat level from criminals and insurgents. The entire district force of officers and men were brought to a Regional Training Center where they received basic training for all untrained recruits, advanced training for police with previous experience and management, and leadership training for senior officers. The unit was then redeployed to its district under the supervision of a U.S. police mentoring team.⁴

Under the FDD program, ANCOP replaced the district-level Afghan police who were away at a Regional Training Center. As an elite unit, ANCOP was supposed to provide a model for local citizens of effective police performance, raising popular expectations of what to expect when the AUP returned. As replacements, ANCOP's better-trained, better-equipped, and more disciplined personnel compared favorably with the AUP, who were mostly untrained, poorly equipped, thinly spread, and often abusive in their dealings with the public. ANCOP's training in community policing and counterinsurgency tactics, plus its integrated command structure, made it more effective in conducting operations. Its higher level of literacy set it apart from the general public and contrasted favorably with the largely illiterate AUP. The fact that ANCOP officers were recruited nationally and moved frequently meant the force was not subject to the influence of local power brokers like the AUP, whose personnel were locally recruited and served in their home areas.⁵

ANCOP's involvement in a district's FDD program began with the participation of an ANCOP liaison officer in the District Assessment and Reform Team (DART), which conducted a six-to-eight-week predeployment evaluation of local conditions, including the level of security and the status of the local AUP. This assessment was followed by a two-week "relief in place," during which ANCOP would overlap with the AUP and join it in performing its duties. During this period, ANCOP would be briefed by the AUP, meet U.S. forces operating in the area, and be introduced to local Afghan officials and tribal elders. This two-week process of relief in place was replicated when the district AUP returned. ANCOP units arrived in the district with a full complement of personnel, smart uniforms, and all their weapons and equipment. ANCOP's appearance made a positive impression on the understaffed and poorly equipped AUP, whose members were promised that they would receive new uniforms and equipment during FDD training.⁶

For the American military, the arrival of ANCOP personnel was a plus since they were trained to use their weapons, operate radios, and maintain vehicles. ANCOP officers knew how to conduct patrols, search buildings, and run checkpoints. In clashes with the Taliban, they were more confident under fire, knew how to maneuver, and aggressively engaged the enemy. As outsiders, ANCOP officers did experience some tensions with local residents since they were often from different ethnic groups and might not speak the local language. More aggressive patrolling and the conduct of counterinsurgency operations also brought protests in areas where the Taliban were active and people had mixed loyalties. ANCOP personnel were often reluctant to establish relationships with local residents or their U.S. counterparts because they knew they would leave in a short time. Some ANCOP personnel failed to perform their duties up to the standard of the rest of their units, were lazy, or abused residents. On balance, however, ANCOP proved a net benefit for the districts where it served.⁷

For ANCOP, participation in the FDD program provided an opportunity to practice its newly acquired skills, develop the leadership potential of officers and noncommissioned officers, and improve unit cohesion. During a NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan (NTM-A) review of the FDD program, ANCOP brigade commanders agreed that conducting operations during FDD deployments enabled them to grow in their positions and establish relationships

As an elite unit, ANCOP was supposed to provide a model for local citizens of effective police performance.

with their personnel. Participation in the FFD program provided ANCOP with experience in working with American, Afghan, and coalition military forces, which improved its ability to conduct mission planning and coordinate its movements. ANCOP members were also able to work on establishing relations with local residents and improving their community-relations skills. The brigade commanders noted that when an ANCOP unit was identified for an FDD mission it received a full complement of personnel and equipment from coalition sources. They also noted that once ANCOP left, security within the district often deteriorated, as the returning AUP was not able to maintain a comparable level of operations.⁸

A Resurgent Taliban Targets the Afghan Police

Among the many reasons that ANCOP was chosen for the FDD program was its capacity as a counterinsurgency force. Advanced tactical training, mobility, military weaponry, and superior police skills made ANCOP the most capable police force available to counter a resurgent Taliban. By 2007, the Taliban had regrouped and returned to Afghanistan in force, engaging in ambushes, small-unit attacks, and acts of terrorism, including more than 140 suicide bombings, some in Kabul. The Taliban were most active in their traditional strongholds in the south, where central government authority was weak and unable to provide basic public services.⁹ In 2008, public opinion polls showed that Afghans considered the absence of public security, including insurgent attacks, criminal robberies, abductions, murders, and tribal violence, as the primary problem facing the country.¹⁰ AUP personnel who worked and lived in their communities formed the frontline defense against terrorism and the insurgency and bore the brunt of the violence. Beyond their inadequate police training, they were ill equipped, poorly led, and used inappropriately as a kind of ultralight infantry force against heavily armed insurgents.¹¹

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The cost of using civil police in a combat role for which they were poorly prepared was extremely high. According to the U.S. Defense Department, some 3,400 Afghan police were killed or wounded between January 2007 and March 2009. Police combat losses during 2008 were three times larger than those of the Afghan Army, with the police suffering an average of fifty-six officers killed per month.¹² A Canadian officer characterized the Afghan police as “cannon fodder” in the fight against the Taliban since they were placed in vulnerable positions without proper training, equipment, or force protection.¹³ The ANP fared poorly in the distribution of resources, access to training, level of pay, provision of equipment, and quality of leadership when compared with the Afghan National Army. In March 2009, U.S. special envoy Richard Holbrooke characterized the ANP as “inadequate,” “riddled with corruption,” and the “weak link in the security chain.”¹⁴ At that time, the ANP had an annual attrition rate of 20 percent from combat losses, desertion, disease, and other causes. If that rate continued, the equivalent of the entire police force would have to be replaced in five years, raising questions about the possibility of building a competent and stable police organization.¹⁵

The United States Announces a New Policy for Afghanistan

When President Barack Obama took office in January 2009, it was evident to U.S. officials in Kabul and Washington that the Taliban were resurgent and that U.S. and coalition forces were understrength, inadequately supported, and in danger of losing the war. Following an initial policy review, President Obama announced a new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan on March 27, 2009. Speaking from the White House, the president stated that the core goal of U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan was to defeat al Qaeda and eradicate its safe havens. The president said this goal would be achieved through military efforts to disrupt

the terrorist networks that threatened the United States by promoting a more capable and accountable Afghan government and by developing Afghan security forces that could lead the fight with reduced U.S. assistance. The president announced he was sending more civilian development experts and 4,000 additional troops. The U.S. would also support a rapid increase in the size of the Afghan Army and police to 134,000 and 82,000, respectively, in the next two years. Noting that international terrorism also threatened the United States' European allies, the president stressed that the United States would request increased contributions of combat forces, trainers, mentors, and equipment from its NATO partners.¹⁶

One week later, on April 4, 2009, President Obama and his NATO counterparts at a summit meeting in Strasbourg-Kehl, France, agreed to a major expansion of the mandate of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to include training of the Afghan security forces. NATO leaders voted to create the NTM-A, which would upgrade and professionalize the Afghan Army and police. The new commander of the U.S. Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan (CSTC-A), Lt. Gen. William Caldwell, would lead both organizations by forming a single command. In its first year, NTM-A would focus on increasing the size and improving the quality of Afghan forces, while building the facilities and providing the specialized equipment and training necessary to professionalize the force. NTM-A would collaborate with the EU Police Mission in Afghanistan and the European Gendarmerie Force to bring together all the major parts of the international police assistance effort.¹⁷

This increased emphasis on improving the Afghan security forces occurred at a time of growing awareness that the U.S. security assistance program had failed to produce a viable Afghan police force and that the situation was deteriorating. The U.S. police assistance program was plagued by a lack of funding, a shortage of professional police instructors, and a poor record of coordination with the other foreign police assistance programs. Many training facilities were operating below capacity because of a lack of instructors and trainer-to-trainee ratios as poor as 1:466 in some locations. Recruitment dropped to near record lows. In September 2009, there was actually negative growth in the ANP, which was troubled by failing leadership, endemic corruption, drug use, Taliban infiltration, and high levels of attrition in the face of a deteriorating security situation. Most Afghan police were recruited and deployed without basic training and were paid a nonliving wage that was far below wages received by the ANA or offered by the Taliban. When NTM-A became operational in November 21, 2009, the United States faced a worsening situation that required an immediate infusion of personnel and resources.¹⁸

The seriousness of the situation in Afghanistan was reflected in President Obama's landmark, December 1, 2009, speech to the cadet corps of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. The president recalled that when he took office there were only 32,000 American troops serving in Afghanistan compared with 160,000 in Iraq and that U.S. commanders had repeatedly asked for additional resources and that those reinforcements had failed to arrive. The president noted that the new U.S. military commander in Afghanistan, Lt. Gen. Stanley McChrystal, had reported in September 2009 that the deterioration in the security situation was more serious than he had anticipated and that the status quo was not sustainable. The president told his audience that after concluding a careful strategic review he was ordering an additional 30,000 American troops into Afghanistan and would provide the resources necessary to build Afghan capability to defeat al Qaeda and the Taliban and take responsibility for protecting the country. The president promised to increase U.S. capacity to train competent Afghan security forces, to get more Afghans into the fight, and to accelerate the transfer of U.S. forces out of Afghanistan beginning in July of 2011.¹⁹

Among the first manifestations of this enhanced international effort was the January 10, 2010 decision of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, the formal governing body for allied security assistance, to increase the growth targets for the ANP from 82,000

to 109,000 in October 2010, and 134,000 in October 2011.²⁰ Subsequently, an agreement was reached by NTM-A and the Afghan Interior Ministry (MOI) to end the practice of recruiting and deploying untrained personnel in favor of a new model that made predeployment training mandatory for all police recruits. The MOI agreed to establish new Recruiting and Training Commands to institutionalize these functions. NTM-A began work on raising police salaries and improving conditions of service for police officers to reduce the high levels of attrition that were undermining the security assistance effort. NTM-A upgraded the number and seniority of international advisers assigned to the MOI and began to work on improving leadership development and identifying ways to control corruption. It was recognized that MOI required greater assistance to improve policy development, management practices, procurement, human resources, and logistical support. All of these efforts were directed at improving the quality of oversight and support provided to the Afghan police.²¹

A major beneficiary of NTM-A's effort to improve the Afghan police and the increased U.S. focus on the Taliban was ANCOP. Lt. General Caldwell had visited Iraq en route to Kabul and had seen the Iraq Federal Police (IFP) in action.²² Caldwell was impressed with IFP's story of redemption from a rogue force and its capacity to assist the U.S. military in the "hold" and "build" phases of counterinsurgency operations. Caldwell withstood efforts by other U.S. commanders to disband ANCOP because of its high attrition rates. He argued that ANCOP should increase in size and receive improved training. Caldwell recognized that the FDD program's requirement for continual deployment and the frequent transfer of ANCOP units were primarily responsible for attrition levels that had reached 70 to 80 percent. As the United States was surging troops to roll back the insurgency, Caldwell saw ANCOP as a bridge between conventional NATO and Afghan military forces and the AUP. ANCOP was trained as a mobile quick-reaction force and could conduct antiterrorist operations. It had experience in community policing from its work in the FDD program and could serve as the lead element in the consolidation phase of counterinsurgency (COIN) operations after the military had secured an area. Although ANCOP had limited numbers, it was generally viewed as an elite force that could gain the respect of local populations, an essential element in U.S. COIN strategy.²³

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ANCOP Has an Expanded Role as a Counterinsurgency Force

The first important test of ANCOP as a counterinsurgency force came in the February 13, 2010 U.S.-led assault on Marjah, the insurgent bastion in the Taliban's heartland of Helmand province. In the largest ISAF offensive of the war, more than 15,000 troops led by the U.S. Marines and including British, Canadian, Estonian, and Afghan forces sealed off an area with 85,000 residents. Capturing Marjah was the focal point of President Obama's strategy of surging 60,000 additional American troops and thousands of civilian diplomats and development experts into Afghanistan to reverse the tide of battle. Success in Marjah and the rest of Helmand province was seen as essential to providing the Karzai government with the time and resources required to rebuild war-damaged communities and bolster public confidence in the provincial and national government.²⁴

On the ground, ISAF troops faced a hundred-square-mile area of farmland dotted with small, mud-walled villages and crisscrossed by a spider web-like network of streams, canals, and roads that the Taliban had seeded with thousands of hidden land mines and roadside explosive devices. Coalition forces also faced a population of Pashtuns with tribal links to the Taliban and little affinity for the Afghan government in Kabul. Families that managed to flee in advance of the attack told journalists that the Taliban had tried to force people to stay in place so they could provide human shields. While the fighting was

expected to be intense, Marjah was seen as a critical test for the new U.S. commander's counterinsurgency strategy of placing the protection and welfare of the Afghan people above the killing of insurgents. The centerpiece of the Marjah operation was the plan to insert an Afghan "government in a box" to begin providing services and assistance to the local population. Under Lt. General McChrystal's strategy of "clear, hold, and build," coalition military forces were to remove the main force Taliban units. ANCOP was to join the military in the "hold" phase and stay to protect the Afghan civilian government personnel in rebuilding the region.²⁵

At the outset of the operation, U.S. Marine commanders expected to spend months clearing Marjah of Taliban fighters, but the operation succeeded more quickly than expected. Within two weeks, U.S. officials declared that the "hold" and "build" phases of the operation were under way. By mid-March, however, there was clear evidence that the Taliban had returned and were conducting an intimidation campaign among the villagers. In April, there were reports that the Taliban shadow governor was holding meetings with local elders and that Taliban fighters were taking part in the annual poppy harvest. From mid-May to mid-June, the Marines suffered more deaths in combat than in the first month of the operation. Despite U.S. efforts to open markets, build clinics, and refurbish schools, residents remained wary of contacts with U.S. forces and were reluctant to cooperate and to provide information on Taliban presence. The Taliban stepped up their intimidation campaign, brutally murdering tribal elders who were accused of cooperating with the Americans in order to demonstrate that the thinly stretched Marines could not protect local residents.²⁶

The U.S. misperception that Marjah had been cleared of insurgents led to a premature decision to deploy ANCOP to begin the "hold" stage of the operation. In mid-February, the commander of the Marine Second Expeditionary Brigade, Brig. Gen. Larry Nicholson, urged ANCOP's deployment in northern Marjah so that coalition forces would not be pinned down holding areas they had already cleared.²⁷ The Americans viewed ANCOP as the most professional and best trained element in the ANP and recognized that establishing an effective Afghan police presence was essential to gaining popular support. The brutal and corrupt behavior of the AUP had been a major grievance of Marjah residents, who told the Marines that if the old police returned the people would fight them and the Marines to the death.²⁸ On February 20, 2010, an ANCOP battalion with two hundred personnel arrived in Marjah to begin the task of exerting Afghan government control by flushing out the remaining insurgents and maintaining public order. By April, it was apparent that the early commitment of ANCOP in Marjah had been a mistake.

In the face of the Taliban resurgence, ANCOP lacked the numbers, training, and equipment needed to provide security over a large area in northern Marjah. High levels of attrition in ANCOP units around the country meant that the battalion sent to Marjah was composed of new personnel and understrength units that were thrown together at the last moment. ANCOP personnel were mostly Dari-speaking ethnic Tajiks who could not converse with the Pashto-speaking residents. U.S. Marines complained that the Afghan police seemed unaware of the rules of engagement and were not trained to conduct operations. ANCOP members refused to conduct night patrols, stand guard duty at midday, or clean their living areas. ANCOP personnel abandoned checkpoints or, worse, shook down motorists for cash and cell phones. Many policemen openly smoked hashish. During the first month, an entire ANCOP unit was withdrawn from duty after a quarter of its personnel tested positive for drug use. In armed confrontations with the Taliban, it was obvious that the lightly armed ANCOP was overmatched. The Marines and their U.S. civilian police advisers felt that ANCOP had promise but that additional preparation was required to make it an effective counterinsurgency force.²⁹

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NTM-A Initiates a Program to Improve ANCOP's Performance

ANCOP's poor performance in the early stages of the Marjah campaign provided added incentive for NTM-A to increase its size and improve the quality of its training. ANCOP's authorized strength of 5,365 was never realized, and its actual staffing was normally around 3,500. Attrition rates from desertion and combat losses surged to as high as 70 percent, the highest level in the ANP, which experienced a general loss of a quarter of its force each year.³⁰ Alarmed by the high attrition rate, NTM-A and the MOI instituted a program to overcome ANCOP's systemic problems and create the basis for expanding the force to 10,890 personnel by March 2011. Attrition was high because ANCOP's movement from district to district under the FDD program and its expanding involvement in COIN operations created a situation where units were deployed 95 percent of the time by 2010. Nearly continual deployments meant that ANCOP personnel were in constant motion with the expectation that they would be away from their families for extended periods. Afghanistan's lack of modern communication facilities made it difficult for ANCOP personnel to maintain contacts with home. Afghan and U.S. authorities provided little information regarding the length of deployments and few assurances that police serving continually on the front line would be given leave to rest and recover. For ANCOP officers, service conditions were harsh and the risks of injury or death ever present. As the intensity of the U.S.-led counterinsurgency effort increased, Afghan police continued to take casualties at far higher rates than the Afghan Army or coalition partners.

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Beyond the hardships and the danger, there were also positive incentives to leave the force and seek alternative employment. ANCOP's extensive training and relatively higher rates of literacy made its members a target for recruiting by the private security companies (PSC) that provided protection for foreign embassies, international organizations, NGOs, and businesses. Afghan and foreign PSCs offered higher salaries, better working conditions, and shorter hours, all in a single location. Afghan police and soldiers were not punished for desertion. Under a policy designed by President Hamid Karzai to encourage recruitment and allow security personnel to return home to help with the harvest, there were no penalties for leaving duty stations without permission, nor for taking alternative employment. Thus, ANCOP members could leave the force with impunity.

NTM-A's program for stabilizing the force and improving ANCOP's performance focused on three issues: partnership, pay, and predictability. The so-called Three P Program called for the partnering of ANCOP units with U.S. military counterparts; increased pay and improved procedures to ensure police received their salaries; and, predictability, or scheduling unit rotations so personnel knew what to expect. In June 2010, U.S. Special Forces A-Teams and U.S. Marine Special Operations teams were ordered to establish long-term partnerships with six ANCOP battalions prior to their participation in a major offense in Kandahar province. This program mirrored one that had been successful in countering attrition and improving operations of Afghan Army commando units. The unit-to-unit relationship began with a seven-day training program. ANCOP personnel were given refresher training on small-unit tactics, rifle marksmanship, battlefield communication, and operating traffic checkpoints. The goal was to boost unit effectiveness and improve morale. American partnering units were responsible for ensuring that their ANCOP counterparts had the equipment and logistical support they required. Establishing unit-to-unit relationships in combination with the other parts of the Three P Program was seen as an effective way of providing assurances that would help stabilize ANCOP units facing deployment into a combat environment.³¹

When the NATO training command was activated in 2009, it was widely recognized that low police salaries, the difficulty police encountered in receiving their pay in areas without banking facilities, and the almost routine practice of senior officers skimming police salaries

were major contributors to high attrition. In November 2009, a new pay scale was instituted that raised the basic police salary to \$165 per month, with an additional \$75 available in hazardous duty and longevity bonuses. The new \$240 basic salary was a 75 percent increase but still less than the financial incentives reportedly offered by the Taliban. To reduce corruption and ensure that policemen received their pay on time, a program was instituted to pay police officers through mobile telephone transfers rather than have senior officers pay their subordinates in cash. Initially, many policemen believed they had received up to a 30 percent raise when they received their full salary for the first time. The pay raise produced a positive response. Several hundred ANCOP returned to the ranks when the new salary levels were announced.³²

To improve predictability, NTM-A developed an Operational Deployment Cycle that was broken down into three phases: refit, train, and deploy. During the refit phase, the ANCOP unit would return to its home base for five to six weeks of personal leave, repair and replacement of equipment, and general rest and recovery. This period provided policemen with an opportunity to reunite with their families and take care of personal obligations. This period of leave was followed by a six-week training program that reviewed basic skills, provided more advanced training, and specifically prepared the unit for its next assignment in either an FDD program or a COIN operation. When the ANCOP unit reached the third phase and was deployed, it did so with its full complement of personnel and its standard issue of vehicles and equipment. The ANCOP unit was, at least in theory, fully prepared for its assignment, unlike in the past when exhausted units were thrown into the fight with little preparation and inadequate resources.

In addition to U.S. efforts to improve performance, ANCOP benefited from the addition of professional Italian Carabinieri trainers to the NTM-A program. The first group of thirty-five Carabinieri arrived in January 2010 to supplement the efforts of American contractors who had been providing specialized training to ANCOP. The Italians brought the experience gained in training the Iraq Federal Police and in earlier participation in peace operations in Bosnia and Kosovo. The Italians also brought a disciplined chain of command and a coherent training program that replaced the ad hoc and inconsistent approaches of the American police trainers. According to NTM-A commander Lt. Gen. William Caldwell, U.S. contractors were a mix of city cops, highway patrolmen, and deputy sheriffs who brought a range of experiences and a variety of standards. None had ever served in a constabulary force, a type of police organization that does not exist in U.S. police departments. The Italians introduced a professional approach to training that had been missing before their arrival. According to *Newsweek* magazine, the Carabinieri markedly improved the marksmanship of the ANCOP trainees simply by zeroing in the sites on their rifles, a basic step that had somehow eluded the American contractors. As serving members of a constabulary force responsible for policing in Italy, the Carabinieri understood the importance of treating the population with respect and establishing good relations with those they were sworn to protect. As they had done in Iraq, the Italians spent time discussing the role of police in a democratic society, stressing the importance of values over skills in their interactions with the Afghan trainees.³³

ANCOP also benefited from NTM-A's decision to make literacy training mandatory for all Afghan police and military recruits. The initial requirement that all ANCOP members have at least a sixth-grade level of literacy was abandoned as attrition drained away the original members of the force and the need to quickly recruit large numbers to expand ANCOP necessitated lowering standards. By mid-2011, NTM-A was educating nearly 30,000 ANSF members at any given time. The immediate goal was to raise the entire ANSF to a first-grade level of literacy in the short term with a longer-term goal of third-grade literacy by 2015. The decision to emphasize literacy was based upon the realization—long in coming—that police officers required a basic level of literacy to perform simple functions like identifying license

plate numbers, reading suspects' identity documents, accounting for their equipment, and ensuring they received the right amount of pay. Literacy was also required for police officers for specialized skills training, understanding regulations and procedures, and enforcing the law. Higher ANCOP literacy levels contributed to the respect that ANCOP units received from the public and their status as an elite unit with the ANP.

Kandahar Provides a Battlefield Test for ANCOP

The test of U.S. efforts to improve ANCOP's performance came in the summer of 2010 during the ISAF offensive in Kandahar province. Beginning in late July, Operation Hamkari was conducted by the 101st Airborne and other U.S. forces that were part of President Obama's Afghanistan surge. The operation also included two Afghan Army brigades, Afghan Army commandos, and units from the AUP, the Border Police, and ANCOP, the largest ANSF deployment in the history of the conflict. Historically, Kandahar province had played a critical role in the Afghan war. The province was the home of President Karzai and the Karzai family. The president's half-brother, Ahmed Wali Karzai, was chairman of the Kandahar Provincial Council and the principal powerbroker in the province. Kandahar was also the birthplace of the Taliban movement, the base of operations for Taliban leader Mullah Mohammed Omar, and the effective capital of Afghanistan under Taliban rule. Previous efforts to evict the Taliban had failed because of the predatory nature of local government and ISAF's failure to commit adequate military forces. Operation Hamkari was intended to provide both the military resources and the political will required to establish Afghan government control.

In recognition of Kandahar's importance, Lieutenant General McChrystal designated Kandahar and neighboring Helmand province as the main operational theater of the ISAF Joint Command's campaign plan. The operation was designed to clear strategic terrain that had long provided the Taliban with a network of strong points, safe havens, IED manufacturing facilities, and bases from which to attack ISAF and Afghan forces and control the population. Operation Hamkari or "Cooperation" was a comprehensive military and political effort to secure Kandahar province, provide development assistance, and establish Afghan government authority. In a three-phase operation, ISAF first attempted to improve security in the provincial capital, Kandahar City, and then extend its control into adjoining areas, first into Arghandab and later into Zhari and Panjwai districts. The operation began with the construction of a ring of sixteen security checkpoints along the primary roads entering Kandahar City. Each checkpoint was manned by a squad from the U.S. 504 Military Police Battalion that was partnered with ANCOP and ANP personnel. By August, more than 1,200 ANCOP personnel were manning checkpoints that created a security perimeter around the city. Outside of Kandahar City, the Afghan security forces that took part in the operation included some of the best ANSF units, including the Third Battalion of the 3rd ANCOP Brigade, which deployed with its U.S. Special Forces mentors. Kandahar marked the first time U.S. units partnered with ANCOP on a full-time basis, which increased police professionalism and prevented predatory behavior toward local citizens. The presence of ANCOP in Kandahar City enabled five hundred members of the locally based AUP to deploy to a regional center for six weeks of training in the FDD program.³⁴

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Creation of the ring of checkpoints increased local security but failed to stop infiltration of the city as long as the Taliban occupied the surrounding countryside. In the second phase of the operation, ISAF moved into Arghandab district, which was the location of major Taliban strongholds to the north and west of Kandahar City. The district had been a center of resistance against the Soviets. The Taliban took control of the old bunker and tunnel system and took advantage of a network of canals and thick orchards that hindered ISAF operations and provided cover for insurgent activity. It was not until September, after constant raids

and a major bombing campaign, that ISAF and Afghan forces were able to launch an assault that gained control of the area. Afghan Army, ANCOP, and Afghan Border Police participated in the operation alongside U.S. Special Forces and regular U.S. infantry and artillery units.³⁵

The third phase of Operation Hamkari involved a major military operation led by the U.S. 101st Airborne to clear entrenched Taliban positions in the Zhari and Panjwai districts. In this area of abandoned villages, dry streambeds, high walls, and thick tree cover, the Taliban had built a network of fortifications, trenches, tunnels, and bunkers, prepared weapons caches, and planted IEDs. On September 15, 2010, ISAF moved into Zhari with adequate forces to take and hold the terrain. On September 26, ISAF forces seized the town of Sangesar, the site of Mullah Omar's madrassa and the place where the Taliban became organized in 1994. By November, Taliban fighters had been cleared from the district after heavy fighting. The ANP and ANCOP presence increased as the clearing operations succeeded in removing main-force Taliban units, including large numbers of foreign fighters. An ANCOP battalion with embedded U.S. Special Forces advisers arrived in Zhari to operate checkpoints and conduct patrols. ANCOP worked with the ANP to establish stations in areas cleared of Taliban, playing their assigned role in the "hold" phase of the counterinsurgency operation. Partnering with U.S. forces improved ANCOP's performance and virtually stopped the attrition, which had reached 70 percent in Marjah earlier in the year. In Arghandad district, the 3rd ANCOP Brigade reported only one desertion between July and August, 2010.³⁶

After a Difficult Start, ANCOP Finally Hits Its Stride

By early 2011, ANCOP had solidified its position as the most respected organization among the multiple police forces that composed the Afghanistan National Police. ANCOP was described as an elite force that bridged the gap between the AUP and the Afghan Army. This positive evaluation must be understood in relative terms given the troubled state of the ANP overall. According to the UN Development Program's *Police Perception Survey of 2011*, only 20 percent of those interviewed believed the ANP was ready to take over responsibility for internal security from international forces. Many Afghans reported concerns with police corruption, impunity, drug use, abusive behavior, ethnic bias, and other forms of misconduct. Improvements were noted in police presence, training and equipment, and success in reducing crime, but only 37 percent of those interviewed felt it would improve matters if they brought a complaint against a police officer.³⁷ At the same time, ANP officers continued to be killed in the line of duty at rates far higher than Afghan soldiers or NATO and coalition military personnel. During the year October 2010–2011, the *Washington Post* reported that 1,555 Afghan police officers died, which was twice the number of Afghan soldiers, although the Afghan military had 35,000 fewer members. U.S. losses during the same period totaled 474. The higher number of ANP casualties resulted from a lack of body armor and armored vehicles, inadequate arms and equipment, and the practice of stationing police in small numbers in exposed checkpoints and other vulnerable locations.³⁸ During 2010–11, NTM-A achieved significant progress in the size, training, literacy, and performance of the ANP, but the challenges facing the ANP were too great to be overcome in such a short period. A bright spot in the overall police landscape was ANCOP.

The April 2011 National Police Plan described ANCOP as a regionally based and nationally deployable force responsible, along with the Afghan Army, for achieving stability and maintaining civil order. According to the plan, ANCOP was responsible for providing tactical support to the ANA during the "clear" phase and for taking the lead among police organizations for the "hold" phase of counterinsurgency operations. It was to remain responsible for replacing the AUP during FDD training and in high-threat and unstable areas. In urban areas, ANCOP was to serve as a rapid reaction force to restore public order during civil disturbances

and conduct counterterrorism and hostage rescue operations. It was also tasked with supporting counternarcotics and poppy eradication operations when required.³⁹

By September 2011, ANCOP was headquartered in Kabul and had five brigades located in Kabul, Kandahar, Herat, Gardez, and Helmand (see appendix for an organizational chart). ANCOP was commanded by Maj. Gen. Gul Zamarai, an ethnic Tajik and former Afghan Army officer who had fought against the Taliban in the Afghan civil war as a tank division commander in the Northern Alliance. ANCOP's total strength was 14,400 personnel, including those in training. At any given time, at least ten ANCOP battalions were deployed in support of coalition and MOI counterinsurgency operations, primarily in southern and eastern Afghanistan. ANCOP had the highest density of coalition partnering during deployment of any ANP element, which improved effectiveness, reduced corruption, and stemmed the high levels of attrition that previously had characterized the force.⁴⁰

Conclusion and Recommendations

Mob violence in the streets of Kabul demonstrated the immediate need for an Afghan police unit that could control civil disturbances and bridge the gap between lightly armed street cops and Afghan military forces. In response, the decision was made to take the best and brightest members from throughout the AUP to form an elite constabulary unit that could police the capital. The task of training this force, the Afghan National Civil Order Police, fell to the U.S. military, which initially relied on American contractors to provide police expertise. Once ANCOP was available for service, it was rarely, if ever, used for riot control. Instead, it was initially assigned the peripatetic role of backfilling district-level AUP officers who were taken for two months of collective training at a regional center. Taking the best police and placing them in constant motion led to high levels of attrition that drained the ANP of its most competent and relatively small number of literate personnel. A similarly negative result was achieved when poorly prepared and outnumbered units were used in the battle for Marjah in Helmand province, ANCOP's first major test as a counterinsurgency force.

To stem high levels of attrition and improve ANCOP's performance, NTM-A adopted a three-point program that stressed the partnering of U.S. Special Forces with ANCOP units, increased pay, and predictable assignments. The role of providing professional training was taken over by the Italian Carabinieri with a discernible improvement in skills and attitude. In a subsequent counterinsurgency operation in Kandahar province, ANCOP units that were partnered with U.S. troops played their assigned role in the "hold" phase of a successful coalition effort to evict the Taliban from a traditional stronghold. By 2011, ANCOP had overcome its initial shortcomings and established itself as the most professional and respected element in the Afghanistan National Police. With its headquarters in Kabul and brigades in Kandahar, Herat, Gardez, and Helmand provinces, ANCOP had become the regionally based and nationally deployable force that its creators had envisioned.

In creating ANCOP, the following lessons emerged that could be applied to future stability operations.

- **There is a security gap between street cops and military forces.** As in previous peace and stability operations, events in Afghanistan demonstrated the need for constabulary (gendarme) police forces to fill the security gap between street cops and military forces. Faced with large-scale civil disturbance, lightly armed civil police are inadequate, and heavily armed military forces are inappropriate for dealing with unarmed civilians engaged in mob violence. The May 2006 Kabul riots overwhelmed the AUP and embarrassed the U.S. military, demonstrating the need to create the Afghanistan National Civil Order Police.

NTM-A adopted a three-point program that stressed the partnering of U.S. Special Forces with ANCOP units, increased pay, and predictable assignments.

- **Failure to look ahead creates unintended consequences.** In the rush to create an elite police unit that could deal with an immediate crisis, U.S. military authorities withdrew the relatively few literate police officers from units throughout the ANP. This withdrawal affected the viability of the overall force. When these individuals left ANCOP because of constant deployments and the attraction of higher salaries and better working conditions in private security firms, these departures had an additional negative impact on the ANP. It was not until 2011 that a general program to improve literacy in the ANP began to correct the problem created from a hurried decision in 2006. Thinking through decisions with an eye toward avoiding unintended consequences is critical in all efforts to build institutions in postconflict environments.
- **Creating competent police forces requires adequate resources, professional trainers, and time.** U.S. attempts to take shortcuts in standing up ANCOP demonstrated the truism that institutional development takes a commitment of resources, professionalism, and time. Using contractors and rushing deployments of unprepared units produced negative consequences. In counterinsurgency operations, there is a need to resist the inevitable pressure to achieve quick results. The failures and successes of ANCOP prove the argument that police development is a resource-intensive and time-consuming enterprise, especially in a combat environment.
- **ANCOP must return to its original function.** In a postconflict Afghanistan, ANCOP will need to return to its original role as an emergency reaction force to control civil disorder. After years of conducting counterinsurgency operations, this return will require reorientation and retraining. ANCOP will also have to be reoriented to police rural areas, the role which constabulary forces traditionally played in Afghanistan. In many parts of Afghanistan, communities are mostly self-policing, relying on traditional forms of dispute resolution to resolve problems. ANCOP will have to be retrained to operate in this environment. As with the rest of the ANP, there will be a need for continued attention to improving literacy, management, and leadership skills within ANCOP as it moves into a civilian-policing mode.

Appendix: Organization of the Afghan National Civil Order Police

ANCOP falls under the command of the Ministry of Interior.⁴¹ It is organized as follows:

Afghan National Civil Order Police Headquarters, located in Kabul, is responsible for providing the tactical and operational control of one Civil Order Maintenance and three Constabulary Patrol Brigades.

Urban Headquarters is located in Kabul. It consists of one brigade headquarters unit, five battalion headquarters, and ten urban companies, located as follows:

- Mazar-E-Sharif, one battalion of two companies
- Konduz, one battalion of two companies
- Kabul, two battalions of two companies each
- Jalalabad, one battalion of two companies.

Patrol Headquarters West is located in Adraskan. It consists of one brigade headquarters unit, four battalion headquarters, and ten companies located as follows:

- Herat, one patrol battalion of three companies.
- Adraskan, one patrol battalion of two companies.
- Camp Shouz, one patrol battalion of three companies.
- Herat, one urban battalion of two companies.

Patrol Headquarters East/Central is located in Zurmat. It consists of one brigade headquarters unit, five battalion headquarters, and eleven companies located as follows:

- Sharana, one patrol battalion of two companies
- Zurmat, one patrol battalion of two companies
- Ghazni, one patrol battalion of three companies, urban
- Gardez, one urban battalion of two companies, patrol

Patrol Headquarters South is located in Kandahar. It consists of one headquarters unit, five battalion headquarters, and thirteen companies located as follows:

- Lashkar Gah, one patrol battalion of three companies
- Garm Seir, one patrol battalion of three companies
- Kandahar, one patrol battalion of three companies
- Panjway, one patrol battalion of two companies
- Kandahar, one urban battalion of two companies

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