

DIIS REPORT

PRTs IN AFGHANISTAN:
SUCCESSFUL BUT NOT SUFFICIENT

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Abstract

The report analyses the contributions made by the provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs) on the ground in Afghanistan. It concludes that the PRTs are successful because they have helped to extend the authority of the Afghan government beyond Kabul, facilitated reconstruction and dampened violence. At the same time, it is equally clear that they cannot address the underlying causes of insecurity in Afghanistan. The PRTs only make sense as part of an overall strategy in which they serve to buy time while other instruments are employed to tackle the military threat posed by the Taliban and Al Qaida; the infighting between the warlords; the increased lawlessness and banditry; and the booming opium poppy cultivation and the drug trade. A comprehensive strategy that couples the deployment of more PRTs by NATO with determined action against these causes of instability is therefore required. Future PRTs should be based on the UK PRT model, which is generally considered the most successful. To heighten its profile in Afghanistan, Denmark should consider establishing a PRT of its own or contributing to the establishment of a joint Nordic PRT.

Denne rapport analyserer de resultater, som brugen af "provinsielle rekonstruktions teams" (PRTs) har opnået i Afghanistan. Konklusionen er, at PRTerne har været en succes, fordi de har bidraget til at øge regeringens autoritet udenfor Kabul, fremmet genopbygningsarbejdet og mindsket brugen af vold. Det står samtidig klart, at PRTerne ikke er i stand til at bekæmpe de underliggende årsager ustabiliteten Afghanistan. PRTerne giver kun mening som del af en overordnet strategi, hvor de vinder tid, mens andre instrumenter tages i anvendelse for at imødegå den militære trussel fra Taliban og Al Qaeda; de indbyrdes kampe mellem lokale krigsherrer; den voksende lovløshed og kriminalitet; og den hastigt voksende opiumproduktion og narkohandel. En flerstrengt strategi, der kombinerer en deployering af flere NATO PRTer med en besluttsom indsats mod de underliggende årsager til ustabiliteten, er derfor påkrævet. Fremtidige PRTer bør baseres på den britiske model, som generelt bliver anset for den mest succesfulde. For at opnå en højere profil i Afghanistan bør Danmark overveje at etablere sin egen PRT eller bidrage til oprettelse af en fælles nordisk PRT.

Abbreviations

ACBAR	Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANCB	Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau
ANP	Afghan National Police
BAAG	British Agencies Afghanistan Group
CA	Civil Affairs
CIMIC	Civil-Military Cooperation
CJCMOTF	Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force
CFC-A	Combined Forces Command Afghanistan
CMOC	Civil-Military Operation Center
DACAAR	Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DDR	Demobilisation, Disarmament and Reintegration
DFID	UK Department for International Development
DOD	US Department of Defence
EOD	Explosive Ordnance Disposal
FCO	UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
HMAK	Danish Army Material Command
HQ	Headquarters
IRIN	Integrated Regional Information Networks
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JRT	Joint Regional Team
KFOR	Kosovo Force
MFA	Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MOI	Ministry of the Interior (Afghanistan)
MOT	Mobile Observation Team
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OEF	Operation Enduring Freedom
OHDACA	Overseas Humanitarian Disaster and Civic Aid
PDC	Provincial Development Committee
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
PSYOPS	Psychological Operations
SSR	Security Sector Reform

SWABAC	Southern Western Afghanistan & Balochistan Association for Coordination
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
US	United States
USAID	United States Agency for International Development

Introduction

The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) operating in Afghanistan have received very mixed reviews. The humanitarian organisations generally regard the PRTs as a second-best solution, preferring a robust peace operation covering the entire country.¹ According to the harshest critics in the humanitarian community the PRTs have done more harm than good,² constituting little more than *Public Relations Teams* intended to demonstrate that “something is being done.” In contrast, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the governments fielding the PRTs view them as a success story. In their view the PRTs are an effective, flexible, low-cost instrument that can easily be adapted to other conflicts.³ The PRT debate has to some extent become a dialogue of the deaf because the two sides have been driven by considerations which have nothing to do with the situation on the ground in Afghanistan. The humanitarian organisations want to get rid of the PRTs for ideological and principled reasons, whereas the PRT contributors and NATO are forced to make the PRTs work for lack of a politically viable alternative. As Jonathan Goodhand and Paul Bergne note in their evaluation of the British-led PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif: “It is viewed as a flag ship project and there is a high level of political will to see that it works.”⁴

The ambition of this report is to provide a balanced assessment of the PRTs’ impact on the ground in Afghanistan. The report approaches the PRTs from what Robert Cox has termed the *problem-solving* perspective.⁵ In this perspective

¹ Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Humanitarian Military Relations in Afghanistan* (London, Save the Children), p. 47; Stapleton, Barbara J. (2003) “The Provincial Reconstruction Team Plan in Afghanistan. A New Direction?”, Bonn, May 2003, p. 4.

² Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*, p. 3.

³ The British, German and New Zealand governments all portray their PRTs as flagships and models of the future. See Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung (2004) *Rede von Bundesministerin Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul anlässlich der Ersten Beratung des von der Bundesregierung eingebrachten Entwurfs eines Gesetzes über die Feststellung des Bundeshaushaltsplans für das Haushaltsjahr 2005 (Haushaltsgesetz 2005)*; Goodhand, Jonathan with Paul Bergne (2004) *Evaluation of the Conflict Prevention Pools. Country Study 2 Afghanistan Study* (Bradford University, Channel Research Ltd, PARC), p. 34; *New Zealand Defence Update*, No. 25/August 2004 (Defence Public Relations Unit), p. 5. See also Borders, Robert (2004) “Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: A Model for Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Development”, *Journal of Development and Social Transformation*, Vol. 1 (November), pp. 5-12.

⁴ Goodhand with Bergne (2004) *Evaluation of the Conflict Prevention Pools*, p. 34.

⁵ Cox, Robert W. (1981) “Social forces, states, and world orders: Beyond international relations theory”, *Millennium*, Vol. 10, No. 2 (Summer), pp. 126-155.

political reality is accepted as it is. The PRTs are consequently accepted as the international community's instrument of choice for Afghanistan. The alternative would have been to adopt his *critical* perspective, which questions political reality in order to change it. This is essentially the approach taken by the humanitarian organisations that reject the use of PRTs in the hope that it will lead governments to make more funds and more troops available for Afghanistan.

The critical perspective is not deemed fruitful for the simple reason that it is completely out of touch with the political reality: the massive increases in funds and troops demanded by the critics will never arrive. International political will to make major troop deployments to Afghanistan has been lacking from the start. The initial United States (US) military involvement in Afghanistan was designed to avoid the need for such a deployment. This was partly due to fear of a Soviet-style quagmire, partly due to the need to husband military resources for engagements elsewhere.⁶ Acutely aware of what "the traffic could bear," the United Nations (UN) was equally cautious in its approach. Lakhdar Brahimi, then the UN Secretary-General's Special Representative to Afghanistan, rejected a proposal from US Secretary of State Colin Powell to put the UN in charge of running a transitional administration in Afghanistan as it had previously done in Cambodia and East Timor. On Brahimi's advice the UN Security Council adopted a "light footprint" approach instead.⁷ Most recently, the international reluctance to become too deeply involved in Afghanistan has been demonstrated by the difficulty NATO has had in finding a mere 8,000 personnel for its International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) operation.⁸ Even more telling, it took the alliance seven months of haggling to find three helicopters to support it.⁹

The reluctance to commit blood and treasure to manage conflicts in faraway countries is not limited to Afghanistan; most peace operations suffer from severe shortages of funds and personnel. "Second-best" solutions are chosen by the international community in most armed conflicts, and it is this standard operating procedure

⁶ Flavin, William (2004) *Civil Military Operations: Afghanistan* (Carlisle, PA: US Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, draft 3.2., dated 30 November), p. 27.

⁷ House Committee on International Relations (2001) *Testimony of Secretary of State Colin Powell before the Committee on International Relations United States House of Representatives*, 24 October; Rupert, James (2001) "UN Rejects U.S. Postwar Plan", *Newsday*, 18 October, p. A33.

⁸ Deployment figure as of 17 December 2004. NATO website: <<http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/>> (22 December 2004).

⁹ Tarzi, Amin (2004) "NATO's Involvement in Afghanistan from the Prague and Istanbul Summits," *RFE/RL Afghanistan Report*, Vol. 3, No. 22 (18 June).

and the failure to establish basic security that has resulted in the innovation that has become known as PRTs. They are interesting because they are likely to shape future responses to armed conflicts where troops are unavailable in the numbers required to establish the level of security allowing the humanitarian organisations to operate without military protection. As of February 2005, establishing security is a problem in Afghanistan, Iraq, in the Dafur province in the Sudan and in the Democratic Republic Congo, to mention but the most publicised cases. Since the problem is not about to go away, this report is based on the *problem-solving* premise that the PRTs are here to stay. The challenge is therefore to make them as effective as possible and it is with this objective in mind that this report has been written.

Assessing the impact of the PRTs on the ground in Afghanistan is easier said than done, however. Three factors make the performance of the PRTs difficult to evaluate. First, the concept is still evolving and the operational approach and activities of each PRT varies according to the differences in the lead nations' operational styles, the terrain and the security situation. Second, the available information on PRT activities and their impact in the field is limited and impressionistic; systematic monitoring and evaluation of the PRTs appear not to be taking place at the moment. Finally, the lack of generally agreed criteria for success significantly complicates the task of gauging PRT effectiveness.¹⁰ As a consequence, the conclusions drawn in this report are provisional and a reflection of the fact that the PRTs remain very much a work in progress. These difficulties notwithstanding, lessons can be drawn from their first two years of operations.

The evaluation of the PRTs in this report will be based on the strategic objectives that the US, NATO and the lead nations have set out for them. These objectives will be compared to their operational practices on the ground, the ability of the PRTs to achieve their strategic objectives as well as the assessments of their performance made by other actors such as the humanitarian organisations, the UN and the Afghan authorities.

The report concludes that the PRTs are successful because they have helped to extend the authority of the Afghan government beyond Kabul, facilitated reconstruction and dampened violence. At the same time, it is equally clear that they cannot address the underlying causes of insecurity in Afghanistan. The

¹⁰ Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*.

PRTs only make sense as part of an overall strategy in which they serve to buy time while other instruments are employed to tackle the military threat posed by the Taliban and Al Qaida; the infighting between the warlords; the increased lawlessness and banditry; and the booming opium poppy cultivation and the drug trade. A comprehensive strategy that couples the deployment of more PRTs by NATO with determined action against these causes of instability is therefore required. Future PRTs should be based on the UK PRT model, which is generally considered the most successful. To heighten its profile in Afghanistan, Denmark should consider establishing a PRT of its own or contributing to the establishment of a joint Nordic PRT.

The report falls in four main parts. The PRT concept, its rationale and evolution is presented first. The second part assesses the contributions made by British-led PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif, because it is seen as the most successful. The third part offers a number of policy recommendations aimed at enhancing the effectiveness of the PRTs, and the final part discusses the Danish involvement in the PRTs.

Concept and purpose

The PRT concept was launched by the US in November 2002, as coalition commanders began to prepare the transition of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) from its warfighting phases to its stabilization and reconstruction phases. The overall idea was to use small joint civil-military teams to expand the legitimacy of the central government to the regions and enhance security by supporting security sector reform and facilitating the reconstruction process. The first three PRTs were deployed by the US between December 2002 and March 2003,¹¹ and the *PRT Working Principles* issued in February 2003 identified three areas of activity: security, reconstruction, central government support and reconstruction. In addition, they also stated that the PRTs would engage in relief operations in certain circumstances.¹² The United States invited other countries to establish similar teams and by October 2004, a total of 19 PRTs had been established with more being planned by the United States and NATO.¹³ 14 PRTs were managed by the US-led Combined Forces Command Afghanistan (CFC-A) conducting OEF, and the remaining five by ISAF. The PRTs have now become the principal tool employed by NATO to expand ISAF beyond Kabul, and the alliance is planning to establish additional PRTs in Northwest Afghanistan in 2005.

Although the PRTs differ in size, composition and operational style, a number of common features stand out. They are joint teams of civilian and military personnel consisting of 50-300 personnel. They are generally made up by military personnel (90-95 per cent of total), political advisors and development experts. The level of civil-military integration varies and each team has been tailored to ensure that they have the capabilities suited to mission requirements in their respective regions. Typically, a PRT will have a Headquarters (HQ) and Civil-Military Affairs (CA)/Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) sections, a civilian-led reconstruction team, engineers, security and military observer teams, linguists and interpreters, and a medical team.¹⁴

¹¹ UNAMA (2003) *UNAMA fact sheet on the PRTs* (1 August).

¹² Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*, pp. 2, 19.

¹³ For a map of current and planned ISAF PRTs see NATO website: <<http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/graphics/e040628a.jpg>> (23 February 2005). The longer term goal is a PRT for each of Afghanistan's 32 provinces. See Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*, p. 21; Synovitz, Ron (2004) "PRTs go beyond humanitarian issues to security realm", *RFE/RL Afghanistan Report*, Vol. 3, No. 14 (7 April).

¹⁴ House Armed Services Committee (2004) *Testimony of Lieutenant General Walter Sharp before the House Armed Services Committee United States House of Representatives*, 29 April.

The PRTs are equipped for self-defence only and are not intended for enforcement tasks. Like traditional peacekeeping forces they depend on their negotiating skills and the consent of the local parties for success. Although they can call in military backup in the form of rapid reaction forces and OEF air power in emergencies, a fact which enhances their bargaining power and deterrent capacity vis-à-vis the local commanders and warlords considerably, they remain more of a diplomatic than military tool. They are consequently neither equipped nor mandated to stop fighting among the local warlords or take military action against the drug trade. This is the task of combat troops and the PRTs are not in the business of coercion and combat, but “robust military diplomacy” as Colonel Henderson, commander of the British-led PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif, aptly has put it.¹⁵

The PRTs are configured as joint civil-military teams in order to improve civil-military coordination and enhance the quality of the military “hearts and minds” campaigns by drawing on civilian expertise and facilitating the dispersal of government funds for relief and reconstruction projects and security sector reform. The degree of real civil-military integration varies greatly, however. It is consequently important not to overstate the differences between the PRTs and the coordination that has taken place between CA/CIMIC units and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA)/Development officials on the ground in other conflicts. Such coordination was also employed by several countries in the KFOR operation in Kosovo.¹⁶ The key difference between CA/CIMIC units and PRTs is consequently not related to the level of civil-military coordination/integration, but lies in their overall function. Whereas CA/CIMIC units are a military instrument whose primary function is to support the military mission,¹⁷ the PRTs are conceived more broadly as a civil-military tool intended to promote more comprehensive objectives, in casu extending the authority of the Afghan government and supporting reconstruction. In this way the PRTs should, in theory at least, be better configured for comprehensive civil-military peace operations than traditional CA/CIMIC units.

The Afghan government has been involved in the planning and running of the PRTs from the beginning. It was instrumental in changing the name from Joint

¹⁵ Quoted in Stelzenmüller, Constanze (2004) “Hebammen in Uniform”, *Die Zeit*, 16 September, p. 8.

¹⁶ Denmark, Finland and Sweden all employed this model see Jakobsen, Peter Viggo (forthcoming, 2005) *Nordic Approach(es) to Peace Operations: A New Nordic Model in the Making?* (London: Routledge).

¹⁷ AJP-9 (2003) *NATO Civil-Military Co-operation (CIMIC) Doctrine* (NATO), p. 2-1; Joint Pub 3-57 (1995) *Doctrine for Joint Civil Affairs* (Joint Chiefs of Staff), p. I-1.

PRTs operating in Afghanistan (February 2005)

CFC-A/OEF**American PRTs**

1. Gardez (February 2003)*
2. Herat (December 2003)
3. Kandahar (December 2003)
4. Jalalabad (January 2004)
5. Asadabad (February 2004)
6. Ghazni (March 2004)
7. Khowst (March 2004)
8. Qalat (April 2004)
9. Sharana (September 2004)
10. Farah (September 2004)
11. Lashkar Gah (September 2004)
12. Tarin Kowt (September 2004)

Joint US/South Korean PRT

13. Charikar, November 2003)

New Zealand PRT

14. Bamian (established by the US in March 2003 and taken over by New Zealand in September 2003)

NATO/ISAF**British PRTs**

15. Mazar-e-Sharif (July 2003)
Transferred to NATO in July 2004.
Contributions from Denmark, Finland, Lithuania, Norway and Rumania and Sweden.
16. Maimana (July 2004)
Contributions from Finland and Norway.

German PRTs

17. Kunduz (established by the US in March 2003; Germany took over in October 2003 and transferred the PRT to NATO in January 2004) Contributions from Belgium, France, Hungary, the UK, Switzerland, Spain and the Netherlands.
18. Feyzabad (July 2004) Contributions from Croatia, the Czech Republic and Denmark.

Dutch PRT

19. Pul-Khumri (October 2004)
-

*Dates refer to the official opening which often took place after a couple of months of operations.

Sources: EUROCORPS website: <<http://www.hq.eurocorps.org/isaf6/prt.php?prt=kunduz>>; NATO website: <<http://www.nato.int/issues/afghanistan/graphics/e040628a.jpg>>; Wahlberg, Maria and Maria Asplund (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) i Afghanistan: Beskrivning och discussion av PRT-konceptet lägesbild i oktober 2004* (Stockholm: Totalförsvarets Forskningsinstitut, FOI Memo, November), p. 6.

Regional Teams (JRTs) to PRTs, and it also determined the time and place of the first PRT deployment.¹⁸ While the initial level of coordination and cooperation between the Afghan authorities and the PRTs at the regional level is difficult to gauge, the level has grown and representatives from the Afghan Ministry of the Interior are now present at most PRT HQs. In the course of 2005, the establishment of Afghan-run Provincial Development Committees (PDC) is supposed to lead to an integration of PRT operations with the government development programmes (National Priority Programmes),¹⁹ and NATO's ambition is to begin the process of handing over PRT tasks to the Afghan government in 2005 and complete the handover in 2007.²⁰ In view of the current security situation this plan seems overly optimistic.

The PRTs run by the coalition and NATO have different mandates and organisation. The 14 CFC-A PRTs have no international mandate but base their presence on an invitation from the Afghan government. Twelve coalition PRTs are run by the US, one is led jointly by the US and South Korea and the remaining one by New Zealand. These PRTs are led by the Coalition Joint Civil-Military Operations Task Force (CJCMOTF) in Kabul, which was set up to coordinate the coalition's civil-military operations at the strategic level. The CJCMOTF is responsible for logistical and medical support, quick reaction forces for emergency back up and evacuation plans for all the coalition PRTs.²¹ NATO has also established a support structure for the five PRTs under its authority. NATO's presence in Afghanistan is mandated by the UN Security Council, and NATO uses the PRTs to implement UN resolution 1510 of October 13 2003 authorizing the alliance to expand its presence outside of Kabul.²² NATO has established a multinational Forward Support Base in Mazar-e-Sharif to support its five PRTs and more will be established when new PRTs are set up in other parts of Afghanistan.

¹⁸ Center for Humanitarian Cooperation (2003) *Civil-Military Cooperation Conference*, 16 January, p. 5.

¹⁹ *Provincial Development Committees (PDC)*, ISAF unclassified, 2004 no date, distributed to CIMIC@yahoo.com, 29 January 2005.

²⁰ *Appendix A: PRT Executive Steering Committee Strategic Guidance*, working draft, PowerPoint presentation distributed to CivMilAfghanistanElist, 10 January 2005.

²¹ Wahlberg, Maria and Maria Asplund (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) i Afghanistan: Beskrivning och discussion av PRT-konceptet lägesbild i oktober 2004* (Stockholm: Totalförsvarets Forskningsinstitut, FOI Memo, November), p. 8.

²² ISAF's UN mandate was extended to the end of October 2005 in UN Security Council Resolution 1563 of 17 September 2004.

The activities of the NATO PRTs are laid down in ISAF's operational plan of 27 June 2004 which establishes a clear division of labour between the civilian and military components. The military components are tasked with security whereas the civilian components are tasked with supporting the government's National Priority Programmes and UN activities. The plan states specifically that NATO PRTs shall not conduct humanitarian operations on their own but facilitate the activities carried out by international organisations and NGOs.²³

Civil-military coordination at the strategic level in Afghanistan is not just complicated by the presence of two coalitions conducting military operations with different objectives – warfighting and stabilization. The complexity is compounded by the absence of an overall lead agency or lead nation. The UNAMA is in charge of civilian reconstruction and advises the Afghan government on its National Priority Programmes, the US is in charge of rebuilding the Afghan National Army (ANA), Germany is responsible for police training, Italy has taken the lead on judicial reform, the UK is in charge of the counter-narcotics programme, and Japan is in charge of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR). This lack of overall coordination was one of the factors which led the US to launch the PRTs.²⁴

An institutional framework that continues to evolve has been established to ensure that the activities of the PRTs are coordinated with the other relevant actors at the strategic level. A *PRT Executive Steering Committee* provides guidance for and oversight of all PRTs in Afghanistan. The committee, which meets once a month, is made up by the Afghan Minister of the Interior (chair), the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Reconstruction and Rural Development; the commanders of ISAF and the CFC-A (both co-chairs), the Special Representative to the United Nations Secretary General, United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan (UNAMA), NATO's Senior Civilian Representative, ambassadors of PRT contributing countries and potential contributing nations, and representatives of other nations as they become contributors to PRT operations. In addition to coordinating and guiding the activities of the existing PRTs,

²³ NATO (2004) *ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs)* (Backgrounder, 17 December); Udenrigsministeriet og Forsvarsministeriet (2004) *Civil-militær samtænkning i Afghanistan, Fact-finding mission i forbindelse med et dansk bidrag til Provincial Reconstruction Team i Feyzabad, Afghanistan, 20-25. oktober* (5 November).

²⁴ Flavin (2004) *Civil Military Operations: Afghanistan*, p. 9.

the committee is also tasked to guide the establishment of new PRTs, develop verifiable measures of progress, and establish conditions and policies for the transition from PRTs to the establishment of full Afghan government authority throughout Afghanistan.²⁵ As part of these efforts, the committee has formulated joint terms of reference for all PRTs operating in Afghanistan to minimize the differences in operational styles between coalition and ISAF PRTs.²⁶

Two working groups report to the Executive Steering Committee. The *PRT Working Group* meets on a weekly basis and serves as a civil-military discussion and coordination forum on operational issues. It is tasked to recommend solutions to practical problems to the Executive Steering Committee, collect lessons learned and act as a Center of Excellence for civil-military relations. This working group has the following membership: Ministry of Interior (chair), UNAMA's civil-military coordinator, CFC-A Task Force Victory, ISAF HQ, US Embassy and embassies of PRT-supporting nations or prospective PRT-supporting nations.²⁷ The *NGO Civil Military Working Group* meets once a month to facilitate communication among NGOs, international military forces and the Afghan government on operational issues, and address NGO concerns. It is chaired by the UNAMA Civil-Military Coordinator and composed of representatives from NGOs, NGO coordinating bodies (the Agency Coordinating Body for Afghan Relief (ACBAR), the Afghan NGOs Coordination Bureau (ANCB) and the South Western Afghanistan and Balochistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC), ISAF and CFC-A PRTs, other military forces, and representatives from UNAMA and the Afghan government. Its purpose is to share information, prioritize issues of concern for NGOs and the military, resolve and prevent conflicts between military and humanitarian actors, and document and distribute lessons learned on civil-military coordination.²⁸

Finally, the establishment of civil-military focal points in every UN agency to enhance coordination and to advise the PRT Working Group and the Heads of the UN agencies was being considered at the time of writing.

²⁵ *The Charter of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Executive Steering Committee*, 2 December 2004.

²⁶ *Terms of Reference for CFC and ISAF PRTs in Afghanistan*, adopted, 27 January 2005.

²⁷ *PRT Working Group Charter*, no date, file distributed to CivMilAfghanistanEList 2 December 2004.

²⁸ *Draft Charter for NGO Civil-Military Working Group*, distributed to NGOCIVMILWorkingGroupEList, 1 December 2004.

Three different PRT models

The US, the UK and Germany have developed their own distinct PRT models, and this section will provide a short description of their principal features. Each presentation will cover their leadership structure and composition, their civil-military organisation, their operational objectives, the approaches adopted by their military forces, the size and nature of their funding, and finally their relationship to the NGOs operating in their area.

The 104-strong New Zealand-led PRT, which is the only non-US PRT in the coalition, is not discussed separately, as it is based on the American model. The UK and US provide development experts to the PRT as the New Zealanders have deployed military personnel only.²⁹ The same is true for the 150-strong Dutch-led PRT in Pul-Khumri. The principal task of the Dutch PRT is to act as the eyes and ears of the local authorities. It is lightly armed and travels in vehicles with a “civilian look.” The Dutch contingent does not engage in reconstruction efforts but has a small budget for humanitarian projects.³⁰

The US PRT

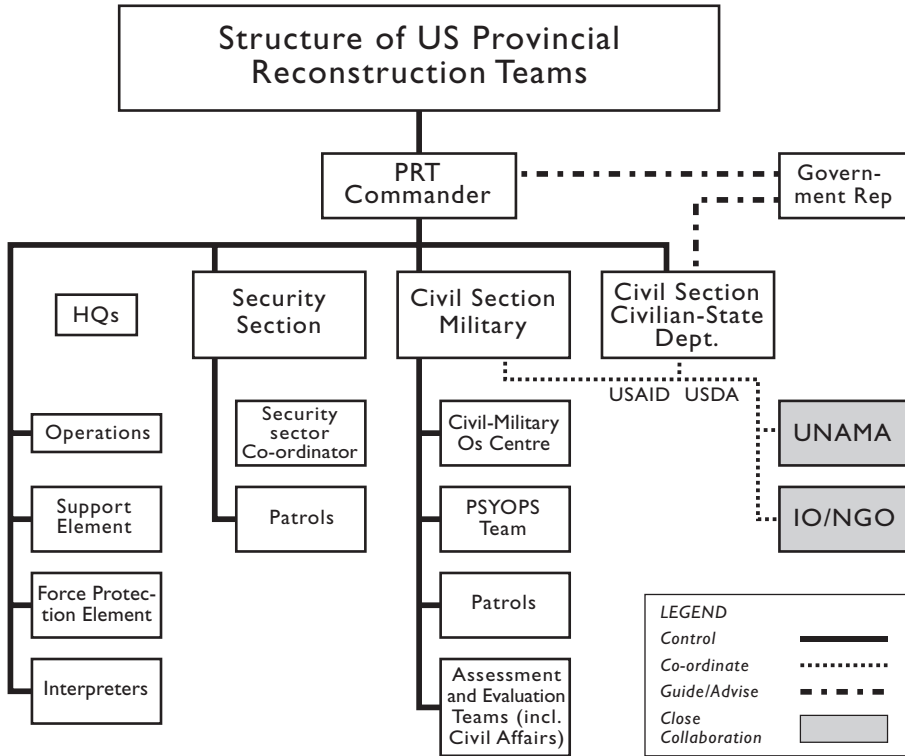
The PRTs evolved from the small six-person CA teams, which the US initially scattered throughout Afghanistan to identify, fund and carry out quick-impact humanitarian and reconstruction projects in order to win “hearts and minds.”³¹ The PRTs consist of 50-100 personnel and have three personnel components all operating under military command: military, political advisors (U.S. Department of State) and development/reconstruction experts (primarily USAID, but also U.S. Departments of Justice and Agriculture and others). Their actual composition varies depending on local requirements but each team has a security section, including military and security observers; a representative of the Afghan Ministry of Interior; a civilian section, including U.S. State and USAID officers; and a

²⁹ Klingebiel, Stephan and Katja Roehder (2004) “Development-Military Interfaces. New Challenges in Crises and Post-Conflict Situations”, *Reports and Working Papers*, No. 5 (German Development Institute, GDI), pp. 23-24; Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams* (Fact sheet). For information on the New Zealand run PRT see *New Zealand Defence Update*, No. 25/August 2004, pp. 5-6; New Zealand Defence Force (2003) “New Zealand to lead Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan”, *Media Release*, 7 July.

³⁰ de Vreij, Hans (2004) “Dutch boost for ISAF”, *Radio Nederland Wereldomroep*, 25 August.

³¹ Constable, Pamela (2002) “Courting Afghanistan, Brick by Brick”, *The Washington Post*, 8 December, p. A32; Flavin (2004) *Civil Military Operations: Afghanistan*, p. 10.

HQ element, including force protection and support elements, a Psychological Operations (PSYOPS) element and a number of interpreters.³²



Source: Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*, p. 18.

The operational activities of the American PRTs have evolved considerably since early 2003 as a result of lessons learned, demands and suggestions from the NGO community, the UN and the Afghan authorities, as well as the evolving security situation on the ground. The US thus responded to early criticism and suggestions by changing the name from JRT to PRT, by abandoning the idea that the PRTs should play a major role in coordinating humanitarian assistance and reconstruction, and by partially shifting the emphasis from quick impact projects designed to win hearts and minds to the rehabilitation of vital

³² House Committee on International Relations (2004) *Statement by State Department Coordinator for Afghanistan William B. Taylor, Jr. to the House International Relations Committee*, 2 June.

infrastructure. In addition, certain practices employed by the US CA teams have been abandoned following protests from the UN and the humanitarian organisations. The American CA teams have thus stopped wearing civilian clothes, carrying hidden weapons and using unmarked vehicles, and their use of mobile medical clinics to win hearts and minds and obtain intelligence has also been halted.³³

The US PRTs have adopted a robust approach with a strong emphasis on force protection. This is in line with the general US approach to peace operations where the US has a record for being more focused on force protection than most of its European partners. However, it has to be pointed out that the American PRTs are operating in the southern part of Afghanistan where the level of threat is much higher than in the North where the NATO PRTs are based.

The principal focus of the US PRT teams has been quick impact projects designed to win the trust of the local population and persuade them to support the American presence and the new central government. As part of these efforts the US PRTs helped to construct over 400 schools, 600 wells and 170 health clinics. While military personnel have been involved directly in reconstruction efforts, many projects have involved local labour and over 30,000 Afghans had been employed by US PRTs in various reconstruction projects by April 2004.³⁴ These projects have primarily been funded by the U.S. Department of Defence (DoD) from within its Overseas Humanitarian Disaster and Civic Aid (OH-DACA) budget, but USAID has also funded some projects. The DoD granted 20 million US dollars for 451 PRT quick impact projects in 2002-2003. On average a project costs 45,000 US dollars.³⁵

In the course of 2004, the US PRTs claim to have shifted their focus to security sector reform and larger infrastructure projects, but this has been disputed by humanitarian organisations,³⁶ and their critique is supported by the fact that

³³ Flavin (2004) *Civil Military Operations: Afghanistan*, p. 49; UNAMA (2003) "Discussion Paper. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams", no date, p. 6.

³⁴ House Armed Services Committee (2004) *Testimony of Lieutenant General Walter Sharp*.

³⁵ United States General Accounting Office (2004) *Afghanistan Reconstruction: Deteriorating Security and Limited Resources Have Impeded Progress; Improvements in U.S. Strategy Needed* (Washington, DC, GAO-04-403), p. 20.

³⁶ See House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (2004) *Foreign Policy Aspects of the War against Terrorism, Seventh Report of Session 2003-04, Vol. I* (London: The Stationery Office Ltd.), p. 67; Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*.

the American PRTs had a 52 million dollar budget for quick impact projects in 2004.³⁷ This amount represents an increase compared to the 38 million dollars spent by the DoD and USAID on quick impact projects 2002-2003.³⁸ At the same time, the funds spent on quick impact projects represent only a tiny fraction of the more than two billion dollars that USAID has provided for humanitarian and reconstruction assistance in Afghanistan from October 2001 through 2004.³⁹

Although the relationship between the humanitarian organisations and the US PRTs has improved markedly since the concept was launched in late 2002, it remains strained.⁴¹ While the UN has been actively involved in the development of the PRT concept, many NGOs have avoided direct cooperation with the coalition due to its combatant status.⁴¹ In addition, the direct involvement of the American PRT teams in reconstruction projects and their focus on quick impact projects have also served to sour relations with the humanitarian organisations. The humanitarian organisations object to this practice, arguing that it overlaps with their own activities creating unnecessary duplication; blurs the lines between the military forces and the humanitarian organisations exposing the latter to increased risks; and that the PRTs pay too little attention to long-term sustainability. Finally, the NGOs complain that Americans are less responsive to criticism and less willing to coordinate and consult with the UN and the NGOs than the British.⁴²

UK PRTs

The British are leading two multinational PRTs, one in Mazar-e-Sharif established in July 2003 and a second deployed to Maimana in June the following year. The Mazar PRT has approximately 100 personnel and the one in Maimana

³⁷ House Committee on International Relations (2004) *United States Policy in Afghanistan. Testimony by James Kunder, Deputy Assistant Administrator for Asia and the Near East U.S. Agency for International Development before the Committee on International Relations, Congress of the United States*, 2 June; Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*.

³⁸ United States General Accounting Office (2004) *Afghanistan Reconstruction*, pp. 18-19.

³⁹ USAID Fact Sheet (2004) *USAID Assistance to Afghanistan*, 4 June.

⁴⁰ For an in-depth analysis of the problems characterizing relations between the US military and the humanitarian community prior to the launch of the PRTs see Olikier, Olga et al. (2004) *Aid During Conflict: Interaction Between the U.S. Military and Civilian Assistance Providers in Afghanistan from September 2001-June 2002* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation).

⁴¹ Wahlberg and Asplund (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in Afghanistan*, p. 9.

⁴² Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*, pp. 25, 27, 43.

70 personnel.⁴³ As is the case with the American, the British PRTs are made up of military, political and development components, but they differ in that the three components lead the PRT jointly and that the concept of operations is clearer. The military has thus been tasked with the promotion of security and security sector reform, the political Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) advisor is tasked with institution building, and the Department for International Development (DFID) personnel with the promotion of economic development and reconstruction. While the military commander takes all the decisions related to security issues, the civilian components run their programmes with minimal military involvement and report back to their respective organisations. Denmark and the US have also provided civilian development advisors for the Mazar PRT, and Finland and Norway have provided civilian personnel, including a police advisor, to the PRT in Maimana.⁴⁴

The UK PRTs employ mobile observation teams (MOT) consisting of lightly armed 5-6 personnel, which undertake long-range patrols operating independently of their home bases for up to two weeks at a time. They monitor the local political and security situation and act as mediators when required. A main task is to establish contact and build up trust with local commanders and warlords as well as population, and the British seek to accomplish this by appearing as “non-threatening” as possible. Therefore, MOT personnel do not wear helmets and flak jackets unless it is absolutely necessary and live in small villages in their respective districts to improve relations to the locals. This approach is partly a reflection of the UK peace support operations doctrine, partly a reflection of the relatively permissive environment in which their MOTs are operating. Still, it should be pointed out that Mazar-e-Sharif is considered a difficult location because of infighting between two local warlords.⁴⁵ The MOTs are supported by an airborne quick reaction force in emergencies, logistics elements and intelligence personnel.

The UK places greater emphasis on security than reconstruction and has focused on disarming and demobilising militias, supervising the cantonment and

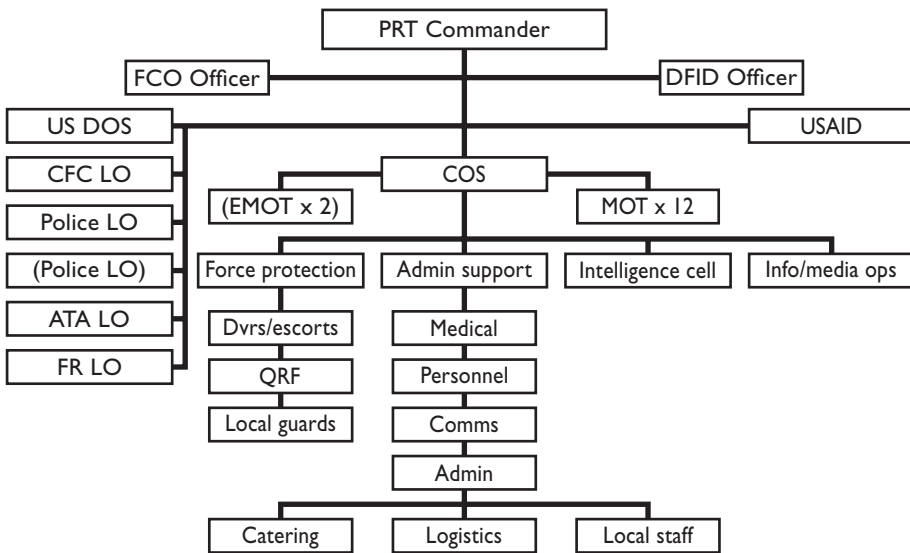
⁴³ Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2005) *UK Paper on PRT experience in Afghanistan*, Afghanistan Group, 20 January, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*, p. 25; Wahlberg and Asplund (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) i Afghanistan*, p. 11.

⁴⁵ Fitzpatrick, Catherine A. (2003) “In Focus: Despite ISAF expansion, aid workers in Afghanistan worry about security”, *RFE/RL (Un)Civil Societies Report*, Vol. 4, No. 29 (24 October); House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (2004) *Foreign Policy Aspects of the War against Terrorism, Volume I*, p. 68.

monitoring of heavy weapons; building a national army and national police force, stamping out the drug trade, and building a legal system. These efforts have been undertaken in close coordination with the Afghan government and the UN. The UK has sought to avoid areas covered by the civilian actors and organisations operating in their areas. Development and reconstruction projects are chosen in consultation with the Afghan government and local actors to avoid

Mazar-e-Sharif PRT structure



Source: NATO/ISAF briefing

duplication and the priority has been to provide support for local authorities and courts. Although the British PRTs have also conducted quick impact projects and used mobile health clinics to win hearts and minds and obtain intelligence, the British military has been less directly involved in reconstruction efforts than their American colleagues. The use of mobile health clinics appears to have been stopped after the establishment of a three-day health camp in the city of Saripul in December 2003 by the Mazar PRT triggered a collective protest from NGOs and the EU Commission Humanitarian Office.⁴⁶

⁴⁶ Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*, p. 27.

DFID is making an annual one million pounds available for both British-led PRTs in 2003-2006.⁴⁷ It is DFID policy to aim for a clear separation between PRT and NGO activities. Funding has consequently not been given to projects which are better carried out by NGOs such as water provisioning, education and health services. DFID projects tend to be located in cities, be small of the quick impact type and focus on infrastructural work relating to security sector reform such as renovation of police stations, training and literacy courses for police personnel, purchasing of communications equipment and uniforms for law enforcement systems, renovation of office buildings and equipment of judiciary systems, and provision of office equipment and training for various government ministries. Other projects aimed at enhancing security involve the distribution of agricultural equipment to local families, construction of roads, culverts and small bridges, as well as support to nurseries' growing vegetables, nuts and fruit.

Close consultation with the NGOs operating in their area and the attempt to establish a division of labour between the NGOs and the UK PRTs have enabled the British to establish a better relationship to the NGOs than the Americans. At the same time, their limited ability to ensure that the warlords abide by the law and their use of unmarked white vehicles for PRT patrols constituted sources of both friction and concern in mid-2004.⁴⁸

The German PRTs

Like Britain, Germany leads two PRTs, one in Kunduz, which it took over from the Americans in October 2003 and one in Feyzabad, which was officially opened in July the following year. The Kunduz PRT is the largest in existence, consisting of some 300 personnel of which 30 are civilian. The Feyzabad PRT has some 150 personnel and it is supported logistically and organizationally by the Kunduz PRT. Germany only provides military personnel to this PRT as its civilian personnel are provided by Croatia (one diplomat and two police advisors) and Denmark (one development advisor).⁴⁹ For the purpose of this report, the Kunduz PRT is the most interesting as it is organised in a different way than the American and British PRTs. The basic components are the same,

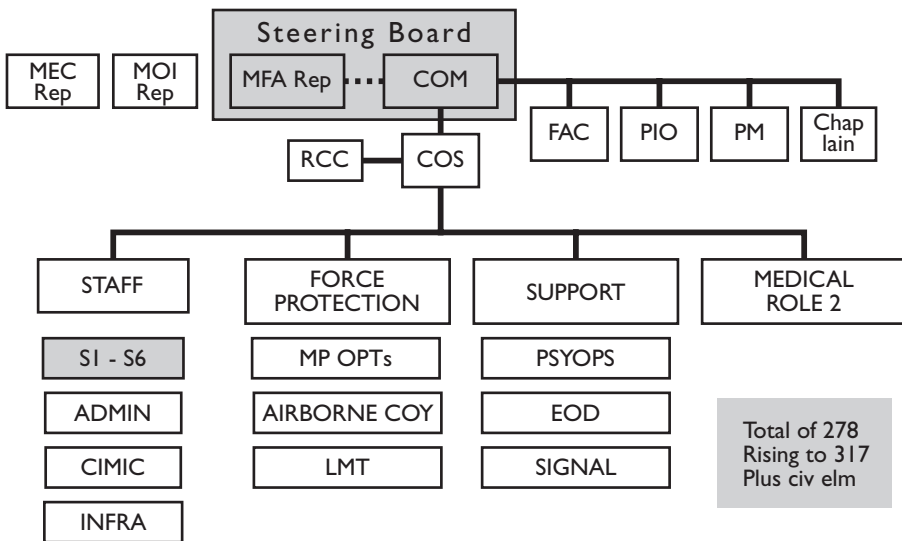
⁴⁷ DFID has allocated a total of 300 million pounds for Afghanistan for the July 2003-2006 period.

⁴⁸ Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*, p. 28.

⁴⁹ Permanent Mission of Germany to the United Nations (2004) "Croatian-German Co-operation in Feyzabad", *Press Release*, 20 September.

consisting of military personnel, political advisors from the Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Auswärtiges Amt) and experts from the Federal Ministries of the Interior and for Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium des Innern and Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung). Compared to the American and British models, the German model includes a higher number of civilian personnel and a higher degree of separation as the civilian personnel is not under military command. The civilian personnel are led by a senior civil servant from the MFA who holds weekly coordination meetings with the military commander. The civilian personnel, who are not formally part of ISAF, have separate accommodation and offices outside the military camp.⁵⁰ The German PRT in Feyzabad is organised differently as it does not have civilian German personnel. Here the German-funded development activities are led by a German CIMIC officer.

Kunduz PRT Structure



Source: NATO/ISAF briefing

⁵⁰ Klingebiel and Roehder (2004) "Development-Military Interfaces", pp. 25, 27.

The military contingent is organised as a HQ with the usual functions: a HQ support company, a protection company and a medical company. It also has specific capabilities such as PSYOPS, intelligence, military police, an Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) element, an infrastructure and planning element, a country information advisor, and a press and information centre.⁵¹ The German military contingent has been given the task of providing protection for the civilian PRT personnel and contributing to the creation of a secure environment by establishing contact with local authorities, providing medical and logistic support, supporting ANA training, liaising with NGOs, and by conducting minor reconstruction projects such as renovation of police stations and digging of wells in order to win the hearts and minds of the locals.⁵²

The military contingent's operational guidelines emphasise force protection to such an extent that it limits its ability to patrol the countryside. Even though the German PRTs are situated in what is generally considered one of the safest parts of Afghanistan,⁵³ the German troops are prohibited from staying overnight outside their camp, and all patrols in the countryside have to include an armoured ambulance and force protection elements. Their patrols are consequently large, comprising up to 30 soldiers travelling in armoured vehicles.⁵⁴ Moreover, the Germans are reportedly very cautious and avoiding local unrest. According to a local NGO, the German PRT reacted to its first major security test, the murder of 11 Chinese road workers in June 2004, by "locking the door from the inside," and it is under orders from Berlin not to engage in any counter-drugs operations, even though Kunduz is one of Afghanistan's biggest opium-producing areas.⁵⁵

The civilian activities do not have a specific focus like the British but cover a

⁵¹ EUROCORPS (2004) "The German PRT Group. PRT Pilot Project in Northern Afghanistan", 12 December.

⁵² Auswärtiges Amt (2004) *German Engagement in Kunduz* (Fact sheet, January); Klingebiel and Roehder (2004) "Development-Military Interfaces", p. 25.

⁵³ This does not mean that it is without risk, however. Five soldiers, three of them Germans, were injured in a grenade attack on the PRT camp in Kunduz on 29 September 2004. See Graupner, Hardy (2004) "Germany Extends Afghan Mission", *DW-World.de Deutsch Welle*, 30 September.

⁵⁴ Hansen, Marianne (2004) "Soldater klar til genopbygning", *Forsvarsfokus*, No. 17 (25 November), p. 7; Stelzenmüller (2004) "Hebammen in Uniform," and off-the-record conversations with ISAF personnel from a variety of contributing nations.

⁵⁵ Burnett, Victoria (2004) "NATO Teams struggle to tame anarchic Afghan provinces", *The Financial Times*, 14 July, p. 3.

broad spectrum of programmes such as DDR, security sector reform and infrastructural support. Funding for these activities come from the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Development.⁵⁶

The establishment of the German PRT in Kunduz was highly controversial domestically. German NGOs questioned the usefulness of a PRT in what they considered one of the safest places in Afghanistan,⁵⁷ and they continue to question its ability to protect NGO personnel and complain that the military's support for reconstruction is driven more by security than developmental considerations. This concern has also been voiced by the Ministry of Development which remains uneasy about its involvement in the PRTs.⁵⁸ The domestic critique and the many restrictions placed upon the German contingent by Berlin has led one German journalist to comment that the principal enemy facing the German soldiers are neither the Taliban nor warlords, but "the politicians back home."⁵⁹

On the ground in Afghanistan, the situation looks brighter as the Germans appear to have won the confidence of several NGOs. Dozens of NGOs have thus relocated to the area since the German PRT was established.⁶⁰ While the relationship to the humanitarian community thus appears to be good, the Germans are generally seen as less effective than the British with respect to promoting security and winning hearts and minds because of their caution and preoccupation with force protection.⁶¹

Summing up, major differences exist between American, British and German PRT models. In the American model the military remains in charge as the civilian components are placed under military command. The civilian components appear to have less autonomy in the US model than the other two and most PRT projects are financed by defence money. The principal focus

⁵⁶ Auswärtiges Amt (2004) *German Engagement in Kunduz*; Klingebiel and Roehder (2004) "Development-Military Interfaces", p. 25.

⁵⁷ Ehrenstein, Claudia (2003) "In Kundus brauchen wir die Bundeswehr nicht", *Die Welt*, 29 August.

⁵⁸ Elliesen, Tillmann (2004) "Islands of stability in a sea of poppies", *Magazine for Development and Cooperation*, No. 10.

⁵⁹ Stelzenmüller (2004) "Hebammen in Uniform".

⁶⁰ Stelzenmüller (2004) "Hebammen in Uniform".

⁶¹ Hansen (2004) "Soldater klar til genopbygning", p. 7; Wahlberg and Asplund (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) i Afghanistan*, p. 15.

of the American PRTs is reconstruction and hearts and minds operations and the American PRT teams appear to be the only ones to engage directly in reconstruction efforts. The military focus is strong and Americans are perceived as less responsive to UN and NGO demands than the British and the Germans. A hostile environment and US military doctrine dictate a focus on force protection and US PRT teams are consequently heavily armed. The PRT teams wear baseball caps instead of helmets to distinguish themselves from combat soldiers.

The British model is characterized by joint civil-military leadership and more civilian autonomy than the US model. The civilian components have their own objectives and programmes which are run with minimal military interference. The military focus is primarily on security and the direct military involvement in reconstruction activities is limited. The UK attitude to force protection is by far the most relaxed. The MOTs are lightly armed and operate with a high degree of independence from the PRT HQ.

The German model is based on the traditional principle of civil-military separation. The military and civilian personnel have separate leaders, accommodation and offices. The military role is limited to security, liaison and coordination with humanitarian organisations and local actors, and support for quick impact projects. The military PRT personnel are essentially carrying out CIMIC functions and the civilian components have a higher degree of freedom in the German model than the other two.⁶² The German PRT model is thus the one that comes closest to meeting the demands from the humanitarian organisations for independence and minimal military involvement in reconstruction and humanitarian activities. Even so, German NGOs and the German Ministry and Development complain that it is driven by a military logic.

Finally, the German PRTs are even more concerned about force protection than the Americans, even though they operate in a more permissive environment, and this limits the effectiveness of their patrol teams

⁶² On CIMIC see NATO (2003) AJP-9 NATO Civil-Military Co-Operation (CIMIC) Doctrine, July.

The three models compared

	Principal focus	Military involvement in reconstruction	Degree of civil-military integration	Degree of civil-military integration Responsiveness to UN and NGO suggestions
US-led PRTs	Quick impact reconstruction, winning hearts and minds	Considerable involvement	Integration, civilian personnel embedded in military teams	Limited
UK-led PRTs	Security sector reform, active patrolling	Limited involvement	Joint leadership, operational autonomy, separate reporting mechanisms	High
German-led PRTs	Force protection, enabling civilian reconstruction	Limited involvement	Separate leaderships; weekly coordination meetings	High

Although local variations go some way towards explaining the differences found among the three models, these differences stem primarily from the different approaches to peace operations and force protection that the three lead nations employ. The operational approaches adopted by the Americans, the British and the Germans are thus very similar to the ones they have employed on previous operations. Similarly, the nature of civil-military cooperation is more a reflection of domestic structures and intergovernmental habits of cooperation than local variations in the field in Afghanistan.

Assessing the PRTs: More than public relations, not a solution in their own right

The choice of measuring rod is important as it determines the answer you get. The assessment conducted below is informed by two general considerations. First, the problem-solving approach adopted by this study implies a focus on whether the PRTs are making a positive contribution, and if so, how they can be improved; not whether they should be replaced by a robust ISAF peacekeeping force. The problem with this proposal is not that it is unsound. On the contrary, it is almost universally agreed that NATO ought to expand its ISAF force significantly. The problem is that PRTs are as far as the alliance members have been willing to go – and that with great reluctance. Anyone hoping for more than the 32 PRTs that have been set as the goal to aim for is likely to be disappointed, and it remains an open question whether NATO will ever reach this objective.

Second, the assessment focuses on the ability of the PRTs to achieve limited objectives that are within their limited capacities and mandate, not absolute ones that are not. It is unreasonable to regard the PRT concept as a failure because the PRTs have been unable to prevent a general deterioration in security since 2003,⁶³ prevent the warlords from fighting among themselves or prevent the opium production from increasing exponentially. The PRTs can realistically only be expected to buy time and dampen the level of violence while efforts are made to strengthen the central government and co-opt/marginalise the warlords at the local and regional levels.⁶⁴ An assessment must start from the realisation that the PRTs like traditional peacekeepers and military observers rely on consent and cooperation from the local parties (commanders and warlords) in the short term, and that their success in the longer term depends on the ability of the central government to establish itself as credible and legitimate in the eyes of the Afghan population. While the calls on the PRTs to adopt a more aggressive approach vis-à-vis the warlords and the drug trade are understand-

⁶³ Bhatia, Michael, Kevin Lanigan and Philip Wilkinson (2004) "Minimal Investments, Minimal Results: The Failure of Security Policy in Afghanistan", *AREU Briefing Paper*, June (Kabul: Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit), pp. 4-6.

⁶⁴ This expectation is identical to the one that is (or should be) employed for traditional peacekeeping forces. See James, Alan (1990) *Peacekeeping in International Politics* (London: Macmillan Publishers), pp. 1, 4.

able,⁶⁵ it is simply not an option as long as the warlords and the drug traffickers enjoy escalation dominance. The PRTs are too vulnerable to hostage taking and retaliation, which is why a more aggressive approach is likely to be counter-productive, resulting in greater casualties among military personnel and civilian aid workers and a withdrawal of the consent, the PRTs depend on at present. The strategic predicament facing ISAF and the PRTs is thus similar to the one that UNPROFOR was faced with in Bosnia, where Bosnian Serb threats of retaliation effectively denied the use of NATO air power for anything but cosmetic purposes until the summer of 1995.⁶⁶

Finally, the assessment must focus on the three principal objectives that the *PRT Executive Steering Committee* has formulated for all the PRTs in Afghanistan and on factors that they can control or influence significantly. The three principal objectives are:

1. Strengthen and extend the authority of the Central Government throughout the country.
2. Assist in establishing stability and security.
3. Enable reconstruction and facilitate the coordination and division of labour between civilian and military actors, including by delivering projects, providing professional expertise, and facilitating the work of NGOs and other actors by improving the security situation.⁶⁷

It is impossible on the basis of the information available for this study to assess to what extent the existing PRTs have met these three objectives. This would require detailed information about their operational environments and activities. At the moment this information does not exist, as no systematic monitoring of the PRTs appears to be taking place. In addition, the different lead nations appear to be employing their own measures of success. Therefore, the assessment will be based on the lessons learned which are reflected in the public available studies and reports on the PRTs.

⁶⁵ See for instance Ricks, Mark (2004) "Afghan Reconstruction Minister Criticizes Reconstruction Teams", *RFE/RL Afghanistan Report*, Vol. 3, No. 33 (17 September).

⁶⁶ Jakobsen, Peter Viggo, *Western Use of Coercive Diplomacy After the Cold War: A Challenge for Theory and Practice* (Houndmills: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1998), pp. 70-109.

⁶⁷ *The Charter of the Provincial Reconstruction Team Executive Steering Committee*, 2 December 2004. See also *Terms of Reference for CFC and ISAF PRTs in Afghanistan*, adopted, 27 January 2005.

As the introduction to this report demonstrates, two radically different assessments of the PRTs exist. At the one end of the spectrum the harshest critics claim that the PRTs have done more harm than good. This extreme position is not generally shared by the humanitarian community, and the evidence does not support it. There is no direct correlation between PRT deployments and increases (or decreases) in risk levels, and the assertion is also difficult to square with the broad consensus even among the NGOs that the British-led PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif has had a positive impact on the local security situation, or that dozens of NGOs have relocated to Kunduz after the establishment of the German-led PRT here.

At the other end of the spectrum, we have the PRT contributors, who all regard their PRTs as unqualified success stories doing sterling work. The problem with these assessments is that they are based on impressions rather than hard evidence. The US DoD is for instance convinced that its quick impact projects have increased security and local support for the American presence in Afghanistan and the central Afghan government, but it has not conducted a formal evaluation of these projects.⁶⁸ When USAID assessed the effectiveness of their quick impact projects in November 2003, it found that they had done little to enhance the popularity of the Americans and the central government for the simple reason that few of the Afghans interviewed were aware that the Americans and the government had funded these projects.⁶⁹ This finding is likely to hold for all the quick impact projects conducted by international forces and NGOs, given the tendency of ordinary Afghans to regard them all as “foreigners.”

A survey of the literature suggests (unsurprisingly) that the truth lies somewhere between these two extremes. Most studies conclude that some, if not all, the PRTs have a positive but limited impact on the three strategic goals they are trying to achieve, and there is also general agreement that the British-led PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif has been more successful than the German- and US-led PRTs. A closer analysis of the Mazar PRT can therefore determine what the PRTs can realistically achieve and yield useful lessons learned that may help to enhance the effectiveness of other PRTs.

⁶⁸ United States General Accounting Office (2004) *Afghanistan Reconstruction*, p. 20.

⁶⁹ United States General Accounting Office (2004) *Afghanistan Reconstruction*, p. 18.

Seven different reasons are given to explain the relative success of the Mazar PRT:

1. The UK government engaged in extensive pre-deployment consultation with NGOs, the UN and the local community in the planning stage and continued this practice after the deployment was initiated.⁷⁰
2. It chose a difficult location for their PRT and has succeeded in reducing the fighting between the two local warlords constituting the principal sources of local unrest, Uzbek General Abdul Rashid Dostum and Tajik commander Atta Mohammad. The British have negotiated cease-fires stopping fighting between the two on a number of occasions and persuaded them to engage in partial disarmament.⁷¹
3. The UK, heeding NGO and UN recommendations, has formulated a clear concept of operations and focused on security rather than reconstruction and quick impact projects.⁷²
4. Effective cooperation on the ground between the civilian and military components in the PRTs and smooth funding procedures, which in part can be attributed to the Conflict Prevention Pools (CCPs). The CCPs is a joint mechanism, pooling funds and expertise from DFID, FCO and the Ministry of Defence (MOD) to make UK efforts to prevent and manage armed conflicts more effective.⁷³
5. The Mazar PRT has built up an “impressive” understanding of local conflict dynamics and how to influence them most effectively.⁷⁴
6. That the British troops are less concerned about force protection and better at establishing trust and winning hearts and minds through a combination of extensive soft patrolling and firmness in their dealings with the warlords and potential spoilers.⁷⁵ The UK has also provided active support to the

⁷⁰ Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2005) *UK Paper on PRT experience in Afghanistan*, p. 2; House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (2004) *Foreign policy aspects of the war against terrorism, Seventh Report of Session, Vol. II*, Q88; Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*, p. 30.

⁷¹ Fitzpatrick (2003) “In Focus: Despite ISAF expansion, aid workers in Afghanistan worry about security”: House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (2004) *Foreign Policy Aspects of the War against Terrorism, Vol. I*, p. 68. Synovitz (2004) “PRTs go beyond humanitarian issues to security realm”.

⁷² House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (2004) *Foreign Policy Aspects of the War against Terrorism, Vol. II*, Qs 87-89; Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*, p. 20.

⁷³ Goodhand with Bergne (2004) *Evaluation of the Conflict Prevention Pools*. For an introduction to the CPPs see: Foreign & Commonwealth Office (2003) *The Global Conflict Prevention Pool. A joint UK Government approach to reducing conflict* (London: FCO Creative Services).

⁷⁴ Goodhand with Bergne (2004) *Evaluation of the Conflict Prevention Pools*, p. 24.

⁷⁵ Flavin (2004) *Civil Military Operations: Afghanistan*, Hansen (2004) “Soldater klar til genopbygning”: Stelzenmüller (2004) “Hebammen in Uniform”.

local police by engaging in joint patrolling and serving as backup when the police was carrying out arrests.⁷⁶ Likewise, they have demonstrated a capability and willingness to intervene quickly to stop unrest and low-level violence from escalating.

7. The Mazar PRT has sought to reduce opium poppy production by providing farmers with alternative means of livelihood than cultivating opium poppies.⁷⁷

The UK formula for success has, in short, consisted of extensive consultation and cooperation with all the relevant actors in the area, a willingness to heed NGO and UN advice, a strong focus on security, effective intergovernmental cooperation, in-depth understanding of local security dynamics, and a robust approach towards spoilers coupled with extensive long-range soft patrolling aimed at winning hearts and minds. With the exception of the long-range patrolling with minimal force protection, which would be difficult to carry out in the regions to the South with a high level of Al-Qaeda and Taliban activity, these features of the Mazar PRT can travel and serve as an inspiration to other PRTs. It does, however, require PRT lead nations with a similar approach to peace operations and force protection as the UK.

The Mazar PRT is equally instructive with respect to highlighting the limits of the PRT concept. Its efforts to reduce poppy production by providing alternative livelihoods to local farmers have failed miserably as the production has continued to grow at an alarming rate.⁷⁸ Their efforts to rein in the local warlords have also had limited success. Although the PRT has succeeded in dampening the fighting between Atta and Dostum, they continue to clash, contest central government authority and break the law. In the latest major incident in early July 2004, Mohammad's forces thus surrounded General Mohammad Akram Khakrizwal's (Balkh provincial chief of police) private residence and took control over all the police stations and checkpoints in Mazar-e-Sharif. The crisis erupted because Akram publicly accused Atta of being involved in drugs trafficking after his police force had seized a large quantity of drugs from Atta's

⁷⁶ Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*, p. 28.

⁷⁷ Peace Operations Working Group of the Canadian Peacebuilding Coordinating Committee (2003) *NGO/Government Dialogue on Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan and the Militarization of Humanitarian Assistance, final report*, 4 December, p. 10.

⁷⁸ Daniels, Alfonso (2004) "Scot battles to beat drug trade in Afghan hills", *The Scotsman*, 1 October.

men. Atta kept the police chief under house arrest for 18 days and the incident only ended when Atta was moved from his post as commander of the Northern garrison of the ANA and named new governor of the Balkh province. All the newly trained policemen who were not loyal to Atta either fled or were kicked out of the force during the incident, so the Mazar police will not be stopping more of Atta's drug transports in the near future.⁷⁹

This short analysis of the Mazar PRT shows that both the supporters of the PRT concept and its critics have a point. On the one hand, the UK PRT must be deemed a success because it has reduced the fighting between the warlords, facilitated reconstruction and helped to extend the authority of the central government. The Mazar PRT has done more good than harm. On the other hand, the Mazar PRT is clearly incapable of laying down the law to the warlords. It can cajole but not compel them to refrain from using force and abide by the law, and it is incapable of taking coercive action against the drug trade as it would trigger a direct confrontation with the warlords. The July 2004 incident clearly demonstrates that. The decision to refrain from taking direct action against the drug trade and focus on limiting poppy production by offering farmers alternative livelihoods was thus sound, even if it failed to bring about the desired result. The British-led PRT appears to have done everything within its power to put pressure on the warlords without falling out with them. This is all that it is reasonable to expect of 100 personnel trying to promote security in an area the size of Scotland.

The PRTs in other words need help. The PRTs only make sense in an overall international strategy in which they serve to buy time while other instruments are employed to tackle the four principal threats to security and stability in Afghanistan:

1. Military opposition to the central government and the political process (Taliban and Al-Qaeda);
2. Infighting between local commanders and warlords;
3. Increased lawlessness and banditry;
4. Opium poppy cultivation and the drug trade.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ Chipaux, Françoise (2004) "Guns still call the shots in Afghanistan", *Guardian Weekly*, 1 October.

⁸⁰ Bhatia, Lanigan and Wilkinson (2004) "Minimal Investments, Minimal Results"; Save the Children (2004) *Provincial Reconstruction Teams*, p. 12; Goodhand with Bergne (2004) *Evaluation of the Conflict Prevention Pools*, p. 6; Report of the UN Secretary-General (2004) *The security situation in Afghanistan and its implications for international peace and security*, A/59/581-S/2004/925, 26 November, para. 14.

In theory the coalition and ISAF in Kabul are supposed to provide overall security until the ANA and the Afghan National Police (ANP) are in a position to do the job themselves. While the US-led coalition has been reasonably successful with respect to addressing the military threat posed by Al-Qaeda and the Taliban, the situation looks less encouraging with respect to the other three, which are closely interconnected. Little progress has been made with respect to reining in the warlords, which remain a major, and in some regions the principal, security threat due to infighting, involvement in drug trafficking and other forms of criminal activities, human rights abuses and interference with the activities of the humanitarian organisations and the central government. Lawlessness and banditry are on the rise: the number of attacks on civilian personnel has increased, the number of aid workers murdered has almost doubled from 13 in 2003 to 24 in 2004, and the number of areas designated as medium- and high-risk areas by the UN has grown.⁸¹ Finally, the efforts to control the opium production and drug trade have failed miserably. Afghanistan produced a record opium poppy crop in 2004 that supplied 87 per cent of the world's illicit opium,⁸² and there is now concern that the rise in drug-related corruption and crime may overwhelm the efforts to secure and stabilize Afghanistan.⁸³

The deterioration in security is a cause for deep concern as it may create a vicious circle where deteriorating security harms reconstruction and the efforts to strengthen the authority of the central government.⁸⁴ The latter is not yet in a position to do much to affect the security situation as the efforts to build up the ANA and ANP are progressing slowly. The ANA numbered 15,000 personnel by the end of 2004 and the number of trained police some 30,500. Although ANA units have done well in operations against Al-Qaeda and warlord militias

⁸¹ Humanitarian organisations are advised only to enter medium-risk areas with armed escorts or specific security arrangements and to stay out of high-risk areas. See Bhatia, Lanigan and Wilkinson (2004) "Minimal Investments, Minimal Results", pp. 4-5; IRIN (2005) *NGOs victims of growing criminality* (UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 5 January); USAID (2004) "Security Incidents Directly Affecting USAID Reconstruction Programs", *Rebuilding Afghanistan, Weekly Activity Update*, No. 70 (7-14 December), p. 2.

⁸² Blanchard, Christopher (2004) *Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy* (Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, RL 32686, 7 December), p. 1.

⁸³ Bhatia, Lanigan and Wilkinson (2004) "Minimal Investments, Minimal Results"; Blanchard (2004) *Afghanistan: Narcotics and U.S. Policy*, p. 29; House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (2004) *Foreign Policy Aspects of the War against Terrorism, Vol. I*, p. 71; Rubin, Barnett R. (2004) *Road to Ruin: Afghanistan's booming opium industry* (New York: Center for American Progress and Center on International Cooperation, 7 October).

⁸⁴ Report of the UN Secretary-General (2004) *The security situation in Afghanistan*, para. 15.

on a number of occasions, and the ANP proved itself in connection with the elections held on 9 October 2004,⁸⁵ both forces are suffering from high rates of desertion and their overall quality and loyalty to the central government is questionable.⁸⁶ The July 2004 incident in Mazar-e-Sharif referred to above is a case in point.

⁸⁵ Katzman, Kenneth (2004) *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security and U.S. Policy* Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service Report for Congress, RL 30588, 28 December), pp. 27-28; Report of the UN Secretary-General (2004) *The security situation in Afghanistan*, para 20-25.

⁸⁶ See also Bhatia, Lanigan and Wilkinson (2004) "Minimal Investments, Minimal Results", pp. 9, 15-17.

Recommendations for the future use of PRTs

Two set of recommendations follow from this analysis: one set related to the use of PRTs, another to the overall international strategy for Afghanistan. As for PRTs, four specific recommendations suggest themselves:

1. *The number of PRTs should be increased and the pace of deployment stepped up.* The sooner the target of 32 PRTs is reached the better. Skilful use of the PRT concept may not only generate positive effects, but the PRTs can also serve as a mechanism to facilitate a much needed expansion of ISAF.
2. *All PRTs should adopt a security-first approach similar to the one employed by the British-led Mazar PRT.* The establishment of a clearer concept of operations may go some way towards achieving this objective. Since the principal determinant of the approach adopted by the PRTs is the lead nation's approach to peace operations and its sensitivity to casualties in particular, the key is to find troop contributors with a more relaxed approach to force protection than Germany and the US.
3. *More must be done to win the hearts and minds of the humanitarian organisations.* An improvement in civil-military relations would greatly enhance the ability of the PRTs to act as a catalyst for security and reconstruction – practices that continue to alienate the humanitarian organisations should therefore be abandoned. The use of white vehicles should be dropped altogether. The main rationale for using these vehicles – that they make the PRT patrol teams less threatening in the eyes of the local population – is flawed. It is the behaviour of the PRTs, not the colour of their vehicles, which will determine local perceptions and maintaining a practice that yield questionable benefits but greatly complicates civil-military relations does not make sense. The net effect may well be less, not more, goodwill from the local population because the level of reconstruction is likely to increase if the PRTs can attract NGOs in greater numbers to their areas of responsibility. All things equal, a higher number of NGOs should produce a higher level of reconstruction which in turn should produce more security. The same logic applies to the American use of leaflets threatening to cut-off aid

unless the locals give the coalition information about Al-Qaeda and the Taliban.⁸⁷ It is unlikely to yield much information which could not have been obtained by other means, but it poisons the relationship to the humanitarian organisations. The net effect is also likely to be negative for the coalition in this instance.

4. *All coalition PRTs should be transferred to ISAF.* In addition to facilitating the formulation of a clearer concept of operations and the adoption of a security-first concept, it would also help to improve civil-military relations by making it far easier for the humanitarians to cooperate with the PRTs because ISAF does not have status as a combatant.

⁸⁷ The US promised to stop using such leaflets in May 2004, but according to Medecins sans Frontieres it had not done so by late July. MacAskill, Ewen (2004) "Pentagon forced to withdraw leaflet linking aid to information on Taliban", *The Guardian*, 6 May, p. 14; Meo, Nick (2004) "A Frontier too Far," *The Independent*, 29 July, pp. 1, 8.

Recommendations for the overall international Afghanistan strategy

The PRTs will not be able to make a positive difference if the security situation continues to deteriorate. To turn the situation around and help the PRTs to succeed, effective action must be taken against the three inter-connected security threats that are chiefly responsible for the deterioration. The following recommendations not only follow logically from the analysis conducted here; all other recent analyses that have analysed these threats concur with them.⁸⁸

1. *The efforts undertaken to build up the ANA and the ANP and strengthen the judicial system must be accelerated.* Given the reluctance of the international community to deploy troops in greater numbers to Afghanistan, it is imperative that the capacity of the central government be enhanced.
2. *The DDR process must be accelerated and expanded to include the militias that are currently not part of the programme.* These militias pose a greater risk to security than the soldiers in the programme.
3. *More resources must be devoted to the fight against drugs.* Since this fight is currently being lost, it is welcome news that UK has given its military personnel wider rules of engagement as part of an effort to step up the eradication efforts, and that it plans to deploy up to 5,000 additional personnel to Afghanistan to support these efforts in 2006 when it takes over responsibility for the US-run PRTs in the two southern provinces of Kandahar and Helmand.⁸⁹
4. *A coherent carrot and stick strategy must be devised to increase the incentive of the warlords to cooperate with the central government.* The warlords cannot be coerced to comply as long as they enjoy escalation dominance vis-à-vis the coalition, ISAF and the Afghan government. In the foreseeable future use of positive inducements have to be part of the strategy as well.

⁸⁸ Bhatia, Lanigan and Wilkinson (2004) "Minimal Investments, Minimal Results", pp. 19-21; House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee (2004) *Foreign Policy Aspects of the War against Terrorism, Vol. I*, pp. 61-80; Lellouche, Pierre (2004) *Operations in Afghanistan and the expanding NATO role* (NATO Parliamentary Assembly Report, 158 DSC 04 E rev. 2, 13 November), para. 64-71; Report of the UN Secretary-General (2004) *The security situation in Afghanistan*, para. 12-37; Rubin (2004) *Road to Ruin*, pp. 18-20.

⁸⁹ Burke, Jason (2004) "British to destroy Afghan heroin", *The Observer*, 5 December, p. 2; Meo, Nick (2004) "Up to 5,000 British troops sought for Afghanistan drugs crackdown", *The Independent on Sunday*, 5 December, p. 18.

5. *More regular ISAF troops tasked with providing military backup and airlift to the PRTs and conducting joint operations with the ANA and ANP should be dispatched to Afghanistan.* Additional troops are key to protect the PRTs from the increased risk of attacks and hostage-taking that a more aggressive approach to counter-drug operations is likely to result in.

The Danish PRT involvement to date

Denmark made its first contribution to the PRTs in December 2003 when a six-man strong patrol team was deployed to the British-led PRT in Mazar-e-Sharif and given responsibility for the Samangan province in Northern Afghanistan.⁹⁰ A Danish development advisor from the Foreign Ministry's Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA) was co-deployed to the PRT HQ in Mazar, when the Danish MOT team was rotated in August 2004, and the Danish involvement was expanded further in January 2005 with the deployment of 38 personnel (four patrol teams made up of six persons and support staff) to the German-led PRT in Feyzabad in the Badakhshan province in the North Eastern Afghanistan.⁹¹ A DANIDA advisor will also be deployed to Feyzabad to support the Danish contingent.

The Danish PRT contributions are explicitly modelled on the British approach. The Danish patrol teams employ the same techniques as the British, i.e. long-range patrols, light arms, flack jackets and helmets are only worn in emergencies, and accommodation in the villages to build up trust with the locals. The tasks are also identical as the Danish patrol teams have been told to focus on security, monitor the local security situation and the efforts at reconstruction, facilitate negotiations between the local warlords and assist the local Afghan authorities in security sector reform. Like the British, the Danish patrol teams also fund quick impact projects to win heart and minds. These projects are funded from an annual pool of DKK 15 million (EUR 2 mil.),⁹² which are administered by the MOD as part of a March 2004 initiative aimed at enhancing joint planning and coordination among Danish governmental and non-governmental actors involved in international crisis management operations.⁹³ The initiative resembles the British CPP initiative but it is not as comprehensive and does not involve joint funding mechanisms.

The DANIDA advisors have the same degree of independence as the development advisors in the British and German PRTs. They use the PRT patrol teams as eyes and ears but base their funding decisions on guidelines for humanitar-

⁹⁰ Reinholdt, Christian (2004) "Seks mand og en talk", *Forsvaret*, No. 1, pp. 24-25.

⁹¹ Hansen (2004) "Soldater klar til genopbygning" pp. 7-8.

⁹² 1 EUR = 7,44 DKK.

ian assistance established by the MFA and the priorities established by the Afghan government. The DANIDA advisors have been given an initial pool of DKK 1-2 million, but more may be granted if necessary. These funds are not earmarked for projects identified by the Danish patrol teams but may be used for all projects in the PRT's area of responsibility. The funds channelled through the PRTs constitute a very small part of the DKK 785 million which has been allocated by Denmark to reconstruction and humanitarian assistance in Afghanistan for 2002-06.⁹⁴

The Danish NGOs operating in Afghanistan have been consulted in the Humanitarian Contact Group before and during the deployment of the Danish PRT contributions.⁹⁵ Their reactions to the Danish involvement in the PRTs have been mixed. They have opposed the PRT concept on grounds of principle and been critical of the use of white unmarked vehicles by the Danish patrol team deployed to the Mazar PRT during the spring of 2004.⁹⁶ This problem has now been solved as the Danish patrol teams were equipped with newly procured green armoured landcruisers in March 2005.⁹⁷

On the question of cooperation with the Danish PRT personnel, the reactions have been more positive. The Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees (DACAAR) has expressed interest in initiating projects in the Feyzabad area in the future and other organisations are expected to do the same in order to get a share of the funds that the Danish personnel are administering.

Recommendations for the future Danish involvement

The adoption of the UK PRT model means that the Danish involvement is in line with the recommendations made above. The only outstanding issue is the potential problem that may result from the deployment to a German-led PRT which has a far more restrictive approach to force protection than Denmark. In view of the analysis carried out here, the Danish patrol teams in Feyzabad should employ the same relaxed approach to force protection as the Danish team deployed to the Mazar PRT. Ideally, this might cause the Germans to reconsider their approach.

In terms of developing the Danish involvement further two options could be considered:

1. *The establishment of a Danish-lead PRT.* This would not only be in keeping with doctrine of active internationalism, which has guided the formulation of Danish foreign and security policy since the end of the Cold War. It would also enable Denmark to maintain its high profile on international peace operations with far less troops than would normally be required for a lead-nation role. As mentioned, the Netherlands and New Zealand are leading PRTs with approximately 100 personnel. A lead-nation role would require logistical support from NATO but it should be possible provided that a Danish-led PRT was located in the vicinity of a NATO Forward Supply Base. The establishment of a Danish-led PRT would be a golden opportunity for getting the recent joint planning initiative off to a good start.
2. *The establishment of a Nordic PRT.* This would be an obvious alternative to a Danish-led PRT. Finland, Norway and Sweden have a similar approach to peace operations and force protection as Denmark, and they all make contributions to the existing PRTs and have established a joint air supply service to support its personnel. The Nordic countries would get a much higher profile by pooling their resources than by spreading them thinly across Afghanistan. A Nordic PRT could draw on The Nordic Co-ordinated Arrangement for Military Peace (NORDCAPS) and the Baltic Battalion (BALTBAT) for support and personnel. NORDCAPS consists of a force register and a planning element and BALTBAT is a multinational 674-strong battalion consisting of multi-national units and national infantry companies

from each of the three Baltic States, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, which is earmarked for peace operations. It is relevant in this context because it has been set up with Nordic assistance, and because its officers and units have been co-deployed with Nordic contingents on a more or less continuous basis since 1994 in various peace operations.⁹⁸

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