

A Press Dinner with SACEUR General John Craddock

# Applying Lessons from Afghanistan: Actions and Outcomes



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## Executive summary

### Afghanistan: We cannot fail

Supreme Allied Commander for Europe (SACEUR) General Craddock sees Afghanistan as a “very complex situation” in which the international community “cannot fail”<sup>1</sup> and that NATO’s aim is to create the conditions to allow Afghans to rebuild their country. For him, the situation is improving but it is still a race against time to get the Afghan army and police trained and in a position to take over from NATO. The government needs to put in place domestic institutions and good governance that Afghans have confidence in.

He is optimistic that the Afghan security forces will be able to take over responsibilities in the next few years.

### Afghan army and police

Craddock says that NATO would like to have greater involvement of Muslim nations and hopes that North African and Middle Eastern countries will provide teams of military experts as part of a growing programme to train Afghan military units. “They are interested,” he said. “We’re going to send a team down to Egypt very shortly, so I think there’s some possibilities here.” He noted that NATO regional headquarters will be establishing coordination centres to ensure that there is coordination between the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the Afghan army once the latter start carrying out autonomous operations. As far as equipping the Afghan army is

concerned, he feels that this is slow in coming but says NATO is coming up with hand-me-down weapons and gear even if there are sometimes delays in finding money to ship the equipment. As regards to the police force, the reduction in the pay gap between soldiers and the police is one measure that has been taken. In addition, a US police training mission which is to start immediately, will focus on equipment and training opportunities to develop Afghan forces rather like a gendarmerie.

### Making the Taliban irrelevant

Craddock feels that it is not so much about defeating the Taliban as making them irrelevant and that they would become so if people trust the government to deliver social and welfare services to the people. Positive developments including more and more children in schools rather than Madrasahs where they are taught about extremism, and practical projects such as road construction or hydroelectric power systems, are carried out by NATO provincial reconstruction teams. In terms of reconstruction, he believes that the tendency to lead with the military operation and then consider the reconstruction only afterwards needs to be inverted.

### Counter-narcotics support

Although NATO does support Afghanistan counter-narcotics forces with logistical support, it does not have a mandate for drug eradication and would need more resources to carry out such a task. Progress has been made on re-

ducing the amount of poppy cultivation in Afghanistan but there is still a long way to go. In his view, counter-narcotics action must include some eradication, action against the leadership of the trafficking networks and a ban on the movement of drugs across borders.

### **Role of the international community**

He stressed the important role played by civilian actors from the international community in training government officials, fighting corruption, fighting the narcotics trade and delivering economic infrastructure such as roads. He believes that success in Afghanistan should be judged on the delivery of a safe and secure environment and a better way of life for Afghans. In that sense, Craddock believes that the comprehensive approach is working better in some parts of the country than in others, that the provincial reconstruction teams are working fairly well but that there is room for improvement in the long-term reconstruction side of things, where international actors come into play. David Leakey, the Director General of the European Union Military Staff, agreed with the General that there should be a metric strategy to measure the progress of the international community across the board, that the international community should be engaged from day one and that there should be Afghan ownership alongside the international community's efforts.

### **Capability shortfalls**

In terms of capability shortfalls, he refused to name and shame countries and mentioned that there had been incremental improvements. However, he argued that a clearly resourced NATO sends a message that there is commitment to the success of the operation. His view was that every shortfall each soldier at a greater risk of being killed. As regards ISAF protection for the EU police mission in Afghanistan, Craddock stated that ISAF will always provide support for police outfits *in extremis*.

### **Measuring progress**

Craddock also says that SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe) is developing one set of metrics to measure progress, for example on the extension of the Afghan government's authority across the country. He pointed out that measurements of the effectiveness of actions needed to be continually scrutinised and refined and, for the longer term, that there would inevitably be lessons from Afghanistan for future operations.

### **Deployable special operations**

Overstretch was a problem referred to by Herman Schaper, Ambassador of the Delegation of the Netherlands to NATO. He also asked if, given that we are moving from a world of classical warfare to one where there is greater need for counter-insurgency, there should be more focus on special forces and whether the remit of the military should be expanded, to include the role

of a reconstruction worker. Craddock said that things were moving from a Cold War construct of big armies to one where it is about deployable special operations for different tasks. There was a need to catalogue “what we are doing”.

### **Better long-term planning**

In terms of long-term planning, Craddock described the process of developing capability packages in NATO as “an excruciating process” that needs to improve and that “we need to do more force planning informed what we are doing, not force planning as an end unto itself, its got to be informed by the real world; operations Active Endeavour, Kosovo, Afghanistan, training mission in Iraq. Informed by the reality of operations not informed by the doctrines that we bring to the table in 26 different fashions”.

## **SACEUR General John Craddock – opening remarks**

In his opening remarks, Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) General Craddock likened the roadmap for Afghanistan to the complexity of the rules of cricket for American football fans. Although a humorous comment, his point was clear - Afghanistan is an “extraordinary and very complex situation” in which the international community “cannot fail”. He pointed out that foreign soldiers would not be tolerated indefinitely. In general terms, he pointed to:

- 1) the race against time to meet challenges such as the Afghan security capacity taking over from NATO and the development of domestic institutions and good governance;
- 2) the importance of NATO taking a long-term approach to the campaign;
- 3) the threat from opposition forces, such as the Taliban but including other insurgents – “tribal warlords are for the most part not organised but have a common goal of preventing the democratically elected government of Afghanistan from becoming the dominant governing body”.

### **Security in Afghanistan**

Craddock described the security situa-

tion, especially in the south and east of the country, as “difficult” but said that “NATO has the upper hand right now with more ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) forces than a year ago and better capability”. He referred to statistics from the Asia Foundation, which showed that 90% of Afghans trust the Afghan national army. The army is said to be well on the way to reaching a target of 80,000 soldiers by the end of 2010 and is well over 50% in terms of retention rates. The SACEUR said that the Afghan army is eager to take on responsibility for security in Afghanistan and highlighted the importance of ‘OMLTs’ - NATO operational mentoring and liaison teams training forces embedded in the Afghan army. He described OMLTs as providing “the most important contribution NATO is making in providing security and stability in Afghanistan” and being “our best investment in Afghanistan's successful future”.



**General John Craddock**  
**SHAPE**

### **A comprehensive approach, including the international community**

Craddock also stressed the need for NATO and the international community to continue to provide improvements in terms of the comprehensive approach to Afghanistan. His view is that other players not in military uniform play an important role in the development of democratic institutions that are acceptable to Afghans – training government officials, fighting corruption, fighting the narcotics trade and

delivering economic infrastructure such as roads.

### Measuring progress

He also said that SHAPE (Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe) was developing around 63 metrics to measure progress, for example on the extension of the Afghan government's authority across the country. Currently different countries have autonomous databases of metrics, with General Craddock saying that the idea was to bring them all together. "To date, assessments of progress have been made against anecdotal evidence as opposed to trend analysis. We must change that," he said. With Afghanistan being NATO's largest ground area operation, he noted that there would inevitably be lessons from Afghanistan for future operations.

### Capability shortfalls

NATO has agreed to a statement of requirements but is still short of key capabilities and enablers, especially in terms of surveillance/intelligence, engineers and air support. Each country has issues on these shortfalls but Craddock argued that a clearly resourced NATO sends a message that there is commitment to the success of the operation.

### Long-term commitment

Craddock insisted that success in Afghanistan is not to be judged on the military operation as such but on the delivery of a safe and secure environ-

ment and a better way of life for Afghans. Afghan people, are in great need of electricity, clean water, schools and healthcare, which are of disparate quality throughout the country. National Provincial Teams are carrying out quick-fix projects such as building water wells and providing humanitarian aid but it is important that there is long-term investment from the international community. There needs to be long-term consumer activity so that jobs can be created.

### Time is of the essence

Summing up, General Craddock made the point that measurements of the effectiveness of actions needed to be continually scrutinised and refined. Benchmarks need to be set so that actions that are not producing the intended effect can be changed. Furthermore, there needs to be a comprehensive approach, involving actors such as the EU, the UN and the World Bank from day one, "something which has arguably not been the case". Such actors need to be involved over the long term. "Time is of the essence," concluded General Craddock, "and the most important player in this complex venture is the Afghan government".



## The Q & A session

### Can the insurgents be militarily defeated?

Rob Watson, the BBC World Service's defence correspondent, pointed out that the Taliban cannot be militarily defeated. He also asked if the government led by President Hamid Karzai would ever be able to instil good governance in the country. General Craddock's view was that it is not so much about defeating the Taliban as making them irrelevant. Later on the same evening, he pointed out that the Taliban would become irrelevant if people were to trust the government to deliver social and welfare services to the people.

Craddock wanted a situation in which people believe that government is a positive feature in their lives at national, provincial and local levels. Afghans were yet to feel that, particularly in the south. According to NATO PRT (Provincial Reconstruction Team) reports, there are more and more children in schools today. In Craddock's view, this means that fewer are going to Madrasahs [Islamic religious schools] in tribal areas, where many are being taught about extremism.

Another example he gave where things are going right in Afghanistan was the introduc-



Rob Watson, BBC World Service

tion of hydroelectric power with the help of NATO forces. In some villages, this is said to be producing enough power for one light bulb for every house, "which is pretty good because they did not have anything before". It means that they can have light at night and that during the day the electricity can be used to run the local mill, explained the General. However, there have been problems of jealousy from regions without such advances who yearn for things to move at a faster pace – again highlighting the importance for effective reconstruction teams.

Ongoing problems he referred to included organised crime and drug trafficking in the north, plus criminal gangs and organised crime that are developing in Kabul. Tribal areas also continue to be uncontrolled. Pakistani authorities need to have more control over their border areas as they are being used by Taliban extremists to recruit and find safe havens there. "The border areas largely have been, and continue to be, out of control," he said. "That will not cause us to fail in Afghanistan but without some control by Pakistan in those areas, it will preclude us from prevailing. The insurgents will always have a safe haven, a sanctuary where they can go to regenerate, reconstitute and when the time is right, reappear."



Geoffrey Van Orden, European Parliament

## Can the gaps in NATO shortfalls be plugged?

MEP Geoffrey Van Orden's view was that NATO countries were not coming up with the troops needed to fulfil the mission and that NATO military operations were not being followed up with reconstruction to consolidate military gains. He also pointed out that Members of the Afghan Parliament had recently told him there was a lack of close relations between central government and people, a lack of explanation for the presence of foreign forces (who many see as occupying forces) and a lack of a clear policy regarding Afghan's neighbours.

Craddock refused to name and shame countries but said there were "incremental improvements". One major problem he pointed to remained the cost of equipment. For example, helicopters were using blade rotors at three times their intended usage because of the tempo of operations.

In terms of reconstruction, he believes that the tendency to lead with the military operation and then do the reconstruction afterwards needs to be inverted. His view is that the approach should be to look at where reconstruction – e.g. roads and bridges – is needed, then work out



Fidelius Schmid,  
Financial Times  
Deutschland

what is needed in terms of security and plan the military operation accordingly.

As far as equipment for the Afghan army is concerned, Craddock feels that this is slow in coming. NATO is coming up with hand-me-down weapons and gear for the national Afghan army and ensures that they are safe to fire. He pointed out that it will take some 4 million euros to ship donated gear from the US to Afghanistan however, there is currently no money to ship it.

*Financial Times Deutschland* reporter Fidelius Schmid asked how far shortcomings had hampered NATO's success in Afghanistan. Craddock said that regional commanders had little or no flexibility in their security/stabilisation missions and were continually moving their forces around regional commands to address security threats. This means that they are not able to hold ground where they need Afghan security forces to take over later on. In terms of the statement of requirements, he said that each shortfall put every soldier at a greater risk of being killed. For every country, this would also mean a longer effort and an increased cost.



Jochen Bittner  
Die Zeit

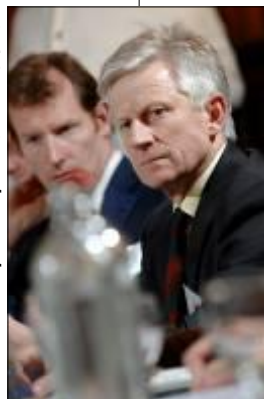
## What can NATO do to tackle the narcotics trade in Afghanistan?



Gianluca Cazzaniga,  
Italian Defence Review

*Die Zeit* European correspondent Jochen Bittner was keen to know what NATO could do about the problem of poppy cultivation and drug trafficking. He conceded that it is not officially ISAF's work but pointed out that warlords are profiting from poppy-growing. Marc Champion, the deputy bureau chief of the *Wall Street Journal Europe* asked if NATO should prioritise destroying poppy crops.

Answering Bittner, Craddock said that NATO has no requirement to eradicate poppy growing but that it does support Afghanistan counter-narcotic forces with logistic support. The majority of the poppy growing is done in Southern Afghanistan with the Helmand province producing 50% of the world's supply<sup>2</sup>. Progress has been made on this issue but he opined there is still a long way to go. In his view, counter-narcotics action must include some eradication, action against the leadership of the trafficking networks and a ban on the movement of drugs across borders. He does not believe that Afghanistan is a 'narcostate' as yet. Indeed, the OMF (Opposing Military Forces) were more focussed on ideology than the



David Leakey,  
European Union  
Military Staff

material aspects of the drug business for now. Responding to Champion, he reiterated that there was no mandate for NATO for drug eradication. If NATO were to carry out that task, he pointed out that it would increase the statement of requirements significantly and generate the need for more forces.

## The role of the international community

Gianluca Cazzaniga, correspondent for *Italian Defence Review*, argued that the comprehensive approach was not working, that the UN was not stepping up to the plate and that a common strategy was lacking from all major actors.

Craddock believes that the comprehensive approach is uneven and is better in some parts of the country than in others. His view is that the PRTs, or 'retail side of the approach', is working fairly well but that the long-term 'wholesale side', where international actors come into play, is "where we need to coalesce".

David Leakey, the Director General of the European Union Military Staff, agreed with Craddock on the critical need to establish an effective Afghan government and on the

<sup>2</sup> A total of 90% of the world's supply comes from Afghanistan.

need to suppress insurgents, warlords and criminals. He also agreed that there should be a metric strategy to measure the progress of the international community across the board, that the international community should be engaged from day one and that there should be Afghan ownership alongside the international community's efforts. Leakey also backed Craddock with regard to the fact that the military plays a key role in setting the conditions to establish the Afghan economy.



Herman Schaper,  
Delegation of the  
Netherlands to  
NATO

Herman Schaper, Ambassador of the Delegation of the Netherlands to NATO, pointed out that NATO is doing well in Afghanistan but that the real problem is the lack of contributions from the international community in terms of reconstruction and development plus the weakness of the Afghan government.

### NATO planning – the longer term

Edgar Buckley, Senior Vice President for European Business Development of Thales, argued that, given the critical importance of success in Afghanistan, those Allies not participating by providing support (helicopters if they have them) were in a sense voting against NATO and saying “I don't need the Alliance any more”. They needed to be reminded of what NATO was



Edgar Buckley,  
Thales

all about and perhaps it was time for a new Transatlantic bargain where NATO would provide defence and security of territory and citizens in return for collective support for essential expeditionary deployments. Craddock agreed, adding that it is difficult to do both (territorial protection and expeditionary operations) with less than 2% of GDP being spent on defence. Craddock asked if [NATO's] Article 5, whereby ‘an attack on one is an attack on all’

should also hold true in Afghanistan when an attack on a soldier, marine or airman of a NATO country occurs. “I think it is a fundamental issue that we have to address and that should be debated.”

The general also welcomed the idea of “dialogue and discussion” over the possibility of France rejoining the integrated military structure of NATO. He also welcomed openness with the EU. “Let's figure how to cooperate not compete. Let's see where we have common interests, where we can gain some efficiencies [...] I think that there's an opportunity we can do that in the near future,” he said.

Ambassador Schaper, asked if there should be more focus on special forces and if the remit of the military should be expanded to include reconstruction workers. Craddock said that things were moving from a Cold War construct of big armies to one where it is

about deployable special operations for different tasks and that there was a need to catalogue “what we are doing”.

Wrapping up the evening’s debate, Craddock turned to long-term planning and described the process of developing capability packages in NATO as “an excruciating process” as regards the need for verification, etc. Referring to some 182 capability packages that are “somewhere in the process” and of which some have been being processed for some five/eight/ten years, he said that “this ain’t gonna work and we’ve got to get into the real world”. He added that “we need to do more force planning informed what we are doing, not force planning as an end unto itself, it’s got to be informed by the real world; operations Active Endeavour, Kosovo, Afghanistan, training mission in Iraq. Informed by the reality of operations not informed by the doctrines that we bring to the table in 26 different fashions”.



Cocktail before dinner



**Eric Bonse,  
Handelsblatt**



**Karel Kovanda  
European Commission**



**Paul Ames  
Associated Press**



**Marc Champion,  
Wall Street Journal  
Europe**



**Markus Russ,  
Hanns Seidel Stiftung**



**Ricardo Martinez De  
Rituerto,  
El Pais**



**Mark John,  
Reuters**



**Stewart Eldon,  
Delegation of the  
United Kingdom to  
NATO**



**Lorne Cook,  
Agence France Presse**

## List of Participants

<b>PAUL AMES</b> <i>Defence Correspondent</i>	Associated Press
<b>OTTMAR BERBALK</b> <i>Bureau Chief</i>	FOCUS
<b>JOCHEN BITTNER</b> <i>European Correspondent</i>	Die Zeit
<b>ERIC BONSE</b> <i>Journalist Foreign Policy</i>	Handelsblatt
<b>EDGAR BUCKLEY</b> <i>Senior Vice President for European Business Development</i>	Thales
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<b>LORNE COOK</b> <i>Defence Correspondent</i>	Agence France Presse (AFP)
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<b>DERIK CROTTS</b> <i>Public Information Chief</i>	Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe (SHAPE)
<b>STEWART ELDON</b> <i>Ambassador</i>	Delegation of the United Kingdom to NATO
<b>JULIAN HALE</b> <i>Rapporteur</i>	



<b>JESSICA HENDERSON</b> <i>Senior Manager</i>	Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)
<b>MARK JOHN</b> <i>Senior Correspondent, EU and NATO</i>	Reuters
<b>KAREL KOVANDA</b> <i>Deputy Director General, CFSP, Multilateral Relations and North America, East Asia, Australia, New Zealand, EEA, EFTA</i>	European Commission: Directorate General for External Relations
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<b>ANGELA OSTLENDER</b> <i>Programme Manager</i>	Hanns-Seidel-Stiftun
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<b>FIDELIUS SCHMID</b> <i>Reporter</i>	Financial Times Deutschland
<b>EMIL VALDELIN</b> <i>Project Manager</i>	Security & Defence Agenda (SDA)
<b>GEOFFREY VAN ORDEN</b> <i>Member</i>	European Parliament
<b>ROB WATSON</b> <i>Defence Correspondent</i>	BBC World Service

## About the Security & Defence Agenda



The Security & Defence Agenda (SDA) is the only specialist Brussels-based think-tank where EU institutions, NATO, national governments, industry, specialised and international media, think tanks, academia and NGOs gather to discuss the future of European and transatlantic security and defence policies in Europe and worldwide.

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Building on the combined expertise and authority of those involved in our meetings, the SDA gives greater prominence to the complex questions of how EU and NATO policies can complement one another, and how transatlantic challenges such as terrorism and Weapons of Mass Destruction can be met.

By offering a high-level and neutral platform for debate, the SDA sets out to clarify policy positions, stimulate discussion and ensure a wider understanding of defence and security issues by the press and public opinion.

### SDA Activities:

- Monthly Roundtables and Evening debates
- Press Dinners and Lunches
- International Conferences
- Reporting Groups and special events



## Mission and Scope of Activities

Former German Federal President Roman Herzog once said that "education towards democracy" was the "permanent and real responsibility of political foundations". He stated that this education helped "citizens of an open society to participate in the developmental process of a democracy with as much knowledge as possible".

The Hanns-Seidel-Stiftung (HSS) is an independent German political institution, yet espouses ideals close to those of the Christian Social Union (CSU) and currently fulfils its mission in a true Christian spirit in no less than 57 countries the world over. In all, 255 employees (plus 350 local project staff) work for the Foundation in Germany and abroad. They are spread out among the Headquarters in Munich, about 90 development projects, the Banz Monastery and Wildbad Kreuth Training Centers, the Munich Conference Centre, and the Liaison Bureaus in Berlin, Brussels, Moscow, and Washington.

The HSS has been committed to the fundamental philosophy of "Serving Democracy, Peace and Development" since 1967. The various activities of the Foundation are split up into four Departments.

Focusing on international relations, the **Liaison Bureau** with its offices in **Washington, Brussels and Moscow** hold international conferences, bilateral expert meetings, lectures and discussion events. The three Liaison Offices held a total of 54 events in 2006 both in Germany and abroad, with 4,775 participants from 87 countries.

**The Academy for Politics and Contemporary History conducts** and offers practice-oriented political advisory services. Fundamental data and information for political decisions are compiled on a scientific basis, just as the Academy organizes conferences and publishes various studies, reports and other publications.

**The Institute for Adult Civic Education** promotes democratic and civic education among broad groups of the population. The primary objective is to increase and promote the political involvement of citizens.

**The Scholarship Organization** promotes the development of scholars. Further activities pursued by this Department are media politics and the promotion of young journalists. The primary mission is to offer young, up-and-coming university and college graduates specific support and promotion.

The **Institute for International Contact and Cooperation** promotes international cooperation in development projects, concentrating on vocational training, the promotion of administrative systems, consultation and advice for parties and governments, activities for the improvement of the infrastructure, etc.

The Hanns-Seidel-Foundation is a registered association dedicated exclusively and directly to public interests. The mission and commitment of the Association is

- to promote the democratic and civic education of the German population on the basis of Christian values,
- to promote education, popular and vocational training including the support of students, in particular by giving individuals with appropriate talents and character values access to scientific and research training,
- to promote science, in particular by conducting scientific studies and research,
- to promote an international spirit and communication among nations as well as the unification of Europe, in particular by inviting foreign groups and supporting travel abroad,
- to promote cultural causes, in particular by supporting the upkeep and maintenance of works of culture and supporting the care and preservation of monuments,
- to promote foreign aid and development.

The Hanns-Seidel-Foundation was founded in 1967 and is named after Dr. Hanns Seidel (October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1901– August 5<sup>th</sup>, 1961), Minister President of Bavaria from 1957 to 1960.

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