

Afghan National Police Security Forces Assistance understanding and reporting the truth to commanders

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Introduction

This Case Study was presented at ISMOR 2015 by Richard Devonshire from Dstl who deployed as a Reserve Officer in Regional Command (Southwest) and filled the role of Security Forces Assistance for the capability development for Afghan National Police logistics.

Abstract

Afghan National Police Security Forces Assistance understanding and reporting the truth to commanders

A key Line of Operation for the NATO led coalition in Afghanistan was Security Force Assistance (SFA), the objective to develop capable and enduring indigenous security force institutions. The Police as a key pillar of the Afghan Security Forces were a major recipient SFA. The aim of this Afghan Police logistics system Case Study is to demonstrate:

- How analysis was conducted in order to understand 'ground truth' relating to the level of development of the logistics system during a 'live' conflict and at a time when it was increasingly difficult for the coalition to gain accurate data at local level.
- The challenges of reporting logistic system capability development progress to superior NATO Commanders in a meaningful way in a context where the NATO Regional Commands managed the SFA in different ways.
- The dilemma of equipping the police forces with weapons, vehicles and equipment while at the same time creating an enduring and functioning logistics system.
- The impact of local culture in an underdeveloped country on the ability to understand the precise level of development of the logistics system, particularly institutionalising a norm of report progress through the Afghan Police Chain of Command.
- What lessons can be learned for future campaigns from the SFA provided to Afghan Police logistic system, what was lacking, what went badly wrong and what was good.

Short Paper

Aim

The aim of this short case study was to provide insights into the reporting of 'ground truth' with respect to the effectiveness of Security Forces Assistance (SFA) in support of the Afghan National Police (ANP) Logistics¹ capability development in Afghanistan during 2013.

Objective

The objective was to demonstrate some of the challenges faced in measuring the performance and effectiveness of International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in delivering an institutionalised logistic capability for the ANP.

Benefit of this case study for ISMOR

The benefit of this case study for ISMOR is that it captures lessons learned relating to the challenges of measuring SFA performance and effectiveness in the context of logistics capability development for the ANP, a key element of the ANSF.

Background

The Police are a key pillar of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and a major recipient SFA support and logistic resources. The development of the ANP logistics system was a key ISAF line of operation (LOO). Successful delivery of this LOO was fundamental to creating an enduring and institutionalized ANP logistic capability and understanding the progress against capability targets was a high priority for commanders.

Afghanistan:

- Land locked country the size of France, with poor communications infrastructure
- Divided into North Eastern mountains and South Western Plains
- Population with low literacy levels
- Culture:
 - Family / clan based Helmand and Nimroz provinces are a 'long' way from the 'National' Government in Kabul not one of 'reporting performance'
 - At the time focussed on the 'post ISAF future'

Phase of the ISAF campaign and challenges:

- Measurement of SFA performance and effectiveness:
 - Up until 2009 ISAF was focussed on the counter insurgency campaign
 - Real focus on SFA started during the later phase of the campaign
- Ability to gain 'ground truth' became more difficult as the ANP became more independent of ISAF and ISAF 'lifted-off' from ANP districts (i.e. no ISAF mentors to report to the ISAF chain of command)
- When to start measuring SFA performance and effectiveness?

¹ Provision of Materiel, Combat Supplies and Equipment Support/Engineering.

- What to measure in terms SFA performance and effectiveness?
- Building an enduring ANP logistics system while at the same time fight a counter insurgency campaign.

Slide 8 – Building enduring Logistics - Weapon Repair and Maintenance (Repairing an AK 47)

Weapons maintenance was largely carried out by foreign contractors through a NATO Training Mission (Afghanistan) (NTM(A)) arrangement. This included contractors managing a dedicated and separate supply chain for largely former 'Warsaw Pact' sourced weapon variants. Spares for AK47 rifles sourced from different countries are not compatible (i.e. Hungarian AK47 spare are not fully compatible with those of a Chinese sourced AK47).

Slide 9 – Building enduring Logistics – Vehicle Maintenance Meeting in Helmand

Vehicle maintenance relied on contractors, limited facilities and the real challenge of ANP district units to recover vehicles to a central provincial facility. The ANP districts were also dependent on 'Agents', literate staff who would interact with contractors. Most activity conducted in Lashkar Gah due to significant security burden of going out to ANP districts and often ANP agents were resident in Lashkar Gah.

Slide 10 – Building enduring Logistics – Bulk Fuel Storage in Helmand

Limited capacity at province level and real challenges with onward bulk distribution to remote police districts in terms of; bulk fuel delivery systems, ordering lead-times and security. This resulted in often novel and by Western standards unorthodox solutions (e.g. sell to a market trader in the provincial capital and buy back after the trader has delivered it).

Slide 11 – Building enduring Logistics – 'Green-field site' in Afghanistan in June 2013

An ambitious plan to building purpose built provincial logistics facilities and infrastructure plan but late in the campaign. How will it's capability performance be measured?

Slide 12 - Understand

How could SFA 'ground truth' be established with respect to the level of development of the ANP's logistics system? This during a 'live' conflict and at a time when it was increasingly difficult for ISAF to gain an ANP district view (i.e. access to data, information and local knowledge). Approaches available:

- Scope to understand?
- Visiting the ground? But significant security and force protection burden to achieve this.
- Available reporting?
- ISAF – limited with respect to nature of an enduring system
- NTM(A) – ANSF Capability Development – training
- NATO Regional Commands (RCs) – Conducting a counter insurgency campaign – Challenges of separate RC and NTM(A) chains of command and differing missions until late in the campaign.
- ANP logistician – Challenges of literacy and lack of a 'reporting' culture

Slide 13 – Worldviews ('Weltanschauung')

Soft Systems Methodology (SSM)² and differing 'worldviews' in the context of a complex and challenging counter insurgency human activity system. These 'worldviews' included:

- ISAF:
 - Combat
 - Developing an enduring institutional logistics capability
 - RCs
 - NTM(A)
 - Security Forces Assistance Advisory Teams:
 - British Army
 - US Army
 - US National Guard
 - US Marine Corps
 - US Air force
- Contractors:
 - US
 - European
 - Third Countries
- ANP Logistics personnel – literacy levels, local or from Kabul
- ANP units on the ground – 'Agents' based outside the ANP districts

² Checkland PB, 1982 Soft Systems Methodology.

Slide 14 – Challenges of Reporting

The challenges of reporting logistic system capability development progress to superior NATO Commanders in a meaningful way in a context where the NATO Regional Commands managed the SFA in different ways. There are limitations in briefing commanders using 'PowerPoint – traffic light slides'.

Slide 15 – Worldviews ('Weltanschauung')

The challenges of the different types of Afghan Police Forces; Uniformed, Local, Border and Civil Order.

Slide 16 – Rapid Fielding v Enduring System

- Fielding equipment to ANP units versus ensuring they can sustain themselves in the long-term
- What equipment was issued?
- Where is the equipment located?
- What is the condition of the equipment on a specific date in order to understand trends and progress against a capability plan?

Slide 17 – Rapid Fielding v Enduring System

The dilemma of equipping the police forces with weapons, vehicles and equipment while at the same time fighting a counter insurgency campaign and creating an enduring and functioning logistics system. No replacement vehicles in the Supply Chain as all were being fielded to equip ANP units. As a result ANP units cannot demand replacements from the Supply Chain to replace battle / Road Traffic Accident destroyed vehicles. The ANP logistic process for demanding replacement vehicles is time consuming, requires 20+ signatures, does not deliver a new vehicle and therefore local confidence in the system is low. A system designed on a 'Western' model but not fit-for-purpose in the Afghan counter insurgency context?

Slide 18 – Rapid Fielding v Enduring System

The ANP have a requirement Class IV – (Barrier / Construction Material / Defense Stores) but no Supply Chain established. Photograph shows an ANP stockpile of HESCO barrier material.

Slide 19 – Rapid Fielding v Enduring System

The ANP have a requirement for Class III (Fuel) distribution. They have bulk distribution tankers but the tractor units have not been fielded and await deliver from the USA.

Slide 20 – Rapid Fielding v Enduring System

The ANP have a requirement to recover vehicles to the 'central' repair facility but there are no recovery vehicles in the ANP districts. Recovering ANP vehicles requires time, effort and physical protection due to threat of ambush. Slide shows ANP patrol vehicle carried on the back of an ANP flat-bed truck, over hanging and secured by a rope.

Slide 21 - Impact of Culture

The impact of culture is a significant issue in a campaign of this nature.

Slide 22 – Lessons / Conclusion

The need to:

- Consider SFA capability development reporting requirements earlier in the campaign
- Set performance measures that are realistic in scope and that can actually be measured during the campaign as it endures
- Set realistic performance measures
- Set performance measures early
- Measure from the start or you will not have a 'baseline'
- Correctly balance priorities of equipping units and establishing a capable and institutionalised logistics system
- Advise Commanders to consider the need for and value of Operational Analysis earlier in the campaign life-cycle