

Making it count: Australia's involvement in Afghanistan

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The Australian Government faces a policy conundrum over its involvement in Afghanistan as part of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO)-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). It remains committed to the state-building project and wants to increase assistance in reconstruction and capacity building. However, the government is concerned at the deepening conflict and what it perceives as lack of progress in Afghanistan. It argues the strategy in Afghanistan lacks coherence and questions

whether otherwise capable NATO alliance members are really committed to the ISAF mission—although the government has itself ruled out deploying more military forces to the region, claiming the Australian Defence Force (ADF) is overstretched.

This paper examines Australia's involvement in Afghanistan and advances three recommendations on how to increase the effectiveness of our commitment. First, we must focus on security sector reform by training competent Afghan



Forward Operating Base Ripley outside Tarin Kowt, with the Baluchi Pass in the distance, Oruzgan. Photo courtesy of Raspal Khosa.

security forces. Second, we must improve reconstruction and development efforts through better coordination of civil and military resources. Third, we must engage with Pakistan more closely to contain cross-border insurgent activity.

This makes Australia the largest non-NATO contributor of military forces to the forty member ISAF coalition and the eighth largest overall.

Since 2001, Australia has spent \$2.3 billion on the Afghanistan intervention. Australia is making a significant military contribution to international efforts to stabilise the country. The authorised ADF commitment for the current deployment is 1,080 personnel.¹ This makes Australia the largest non-NATO contributor of military forces to the forty member ISAF coalition and the eighth largest overall.²

The majority of ADF personnel in Afghanistan are supporting a Netherlands task force in

Oruzgan Province. Last year, law-makers in The Hague extended their military deployment to July 2010. This is a critical juncture for Australia, after which the Netherlands may draw down its forces and shift the emphasis to civilian development. If this does happen, the Australian Government must decide what to do. Depending on the circumstances, options might include: withdrawal from Afghanistan, redeployment to another province, working with a new lead-nation in Oruzgan and, possibly, becoming the lead-nation in Oruzgan—though this would require a fundamental reappraisal of the scale and character of our commitment.

But is Australia's commitment in vain? Does the West retain the initiative in Afghanistan, and has it the resolve to succeed in a protracted intervention that will be required for at least another decade?

Western forces are spread thinly over a 650,000 km² area of operations and lack the critical mass to prevail militarily. ISAF has 47,000 personnel in Afghanistan. A further 13,000 US soldiers are in the country as part of Operation Enduring Freedom: the

The enemy

The Taliban-led insurgency is not an amorphous movement, but comprises a variety of actors on either side of the Durand Line that separates Afghanistan and Pakistan. Insurgents range from peasant farmers fighting out of financial necessity, to a hard core of radical Islamist extremists. Some insurgents are tribesmen opposed to counter-narcotics activity.

The Taliban itself is an ethnic Pushtun militia that follows a simplistic version of the Islamist Darul Uloom Deoband Madrasah's teachings. Jihad is one of the main principles of Deobandi thought.

The Taliban leadership shura (council), now based in Baluchistan, were schooled in Deobandi madrasahs originally established for Afghan refugees by Pakistan's Jamiat Ulema-e-Islami Islamist party.

'Tier one' Taliban are well-armed veteran fighters with a sophisticated knowledge of guerrilla warfare. Some of these insurgents are al-Qaeda terrorists from Pakistan, Central Asia and the Arab states. 'Tier two' Taliban are locally-hired, less capable insurgents who often provide their own weapons. They can be employed on a part-time basis and return to their usual occupations following an operation.

ongoing US campaign against transnational jihadist extremism.

The last year was the costliest of the seven year conflict for Western forces with 232 soldiers killed.³ Four ADF personnel lost their lives in Afghanistan since October 2007. Insurgents operating in Afghanistan and from sanctuaries in Pakistan's tribal belt have adopted asymmetric tactics from the Iraq conflict. There is widespread use of improvised explosive devices against security forces, an increasing incidence of suicide bombing of civilian targets, and kidnapping of foreigners and locals.

Opium profits now constitute 42% of Afghanistan's total income and provide the Taliban and other insurgents with a major source of their revenue.

Disturbingly, opium production reached a record high of 8,200 metric tonnes in 2007. Afghanistan now accounts for 93% of the world's supply of opium. The opium trade and the Taliban insurgency are closely related. Poppy cultivation and processing is correlated geographically with insurgent violence in Afghanistan's insecure southern provinces. Opium profits now constitute 42% of Afghanistan's total income and provide the Taliban and other insurgents with a major source of their revenue. Worse still, opium production and trafficking leads to massive corruption of state institutions in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan also threatens to turn NATO into a 'two tier alliance', with only the United States, United Kingdom, Netherlands, Denmark and Canada prepared to fight the insurgency that has enveloped the south and east of the country. Major continental European NATO members have wavered in the face of rising levels of violence over the past two years, and are reluctant to remove

national caveats that keep their forces in the country but out of the fight.

Bucharest Summit

The much-heralded NATO Summit in Bucharest, Romania, on 2–4 April 2008, addressed the growing unease over the ISAF mission in Afghanistan which it elevated to the alliance's key priority. The Summit produced a medium-term integrated military and civilian plan for Afghanistan. The ISAF Strategic Vision, as the plan is known, is guided by four principles:

- a firm and shared long term commitment
- support for enhanced Afghan leadership and responsibility
- a comprehensive approach by the international community, bringing together civilian and military efforts
- increased cooperation and engagement with Afghanistan's neighbours, especially Pakistan.

The new plan is for ISAF military action to be backed up by political and economic progress through coordinated civil–military activity, eventually allowing Afghan security forces to be at the forefront of counter-insurgency efforts.

The Summit also welcomed the appointment of Norwegian Ambassador, Kai Eide, as the United Nations (UN) Secretary General's Special Representative for Afghanistan and Head of the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan, who will coordinate the combined efforts of the international community.

While these developments are encouraging, they hardly represent a turning point—especially in terms of troop numbers. Exhortations by the United States and Australia for additional military forces from other committed states have elicited only modest pledges of support: well short of the extra 10,000 personnel requested by ISAF commanders.

Does Afghanistan matter?

Afghanistan thus far has been an intractable security problem with complex internal and external dimensions; the consequences of which extend far beyond its borders. Australia is engaged in Afghanistan because our security interests are tied to the success of the ISAF mission. Australia has five main strategic interests in Afghanistan.

1. Supporting the Alliance

Australia's military involvement in Afghanistan began with our participation in Operation Enduring Freedom following the September 11, al-Qaeda terrorist attacks on the United States—our most important ally. The US launched combat operations in Afghanistan, supported by the ADF, to destroy

the al-Qaeda jihadist network and drive from power the Taliban militia which hosted it.

The ANZUS Alliance is fundamental to our national security. We share with the US a normative attachment to democracy and human rights, an interest in a secure and prosperous global order, and an opposition to violent jihadist terrorism. The current ADF deployment to Afghanistan as part of ISAF demonstrates our ongoing commitment to the Alliance.

2. Strengthening multilateralism

For Australia, multilateralism represents a means to influence events that directly affect our interests, but over which we have little unilateral control due to geography or resource constraints. Outside of Australia's



area of paramount defence interest, we must act in concert with friends and allies where our security interests are engaged by making contributions to coalition operations. This includes ADF war-fighting and reconstruction activity in Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is not an insoluble problem. The international community is now faced with a historic opportunity to build an enduring, stable state through the ISAF mission. Although ISAF has a UN Security Council mandate, it is not a UN-led operation and is neither organised, staffed, nor funded by the UN.⁴ Instead, it is a 'coalition of the willing' operating under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter.

Significantly, ISAF is in Afghanistan at the request of the democratically-elected Karzai Government that is supported by the majority of its population and across ethnic lines. Moreover, the presence of coalition forces in Afghanistan has the approval of 67% of Afghans.⁵ Few actively support the Taliban insurgency. A failure by the West in Afghanistan in these favourable circumstances would be a setback for collective approaches to security.

3. Counter-terrorism

Afghanistan has been plagued by war, political instability and humanitarian crises since the decade-long occupation by the Soviet Union in 1979. Because of its troubled history Afghanistan has a uniquely symbolic place in the international jihadist discourse. It is where a loose alliance of religiously-inspired mujahideen groups defeated a Cold War communist superpower. Similarly, Afghanistan is the base from where al-Qaeda launched terrorist attacks against the United States—the world's remaining superpower.

Afghanistan also gave birth to modern day transnational violent jihadism through a phenomenon known as the 'Islamic blowback'. The international 'jihadi brigades' that fought on the battlefields of Afghanistan returned to their home states in the Islamic

World, endeavouring to destabilise regimes they regard as un-Islamic Western satraps: ranging from North Africa and the Middle East, through to Indonesia and the Philippines in our own region. A strategic concern for Australia is that violent jihadist organisations such as Jemaah Islamiyah and Abu Sayyaf are prepared to take up the al-Qaeda cause in Southeast Asia.

Afghanistan would become a badlands exploited by transnational violent jihadists and organised crime networks

A premature withdrawal by the West in Afghanistan would lead to an erosion of the post-Taliban political order and a return to the internecine conflict and warlordism of the past. Afghanistan would become a badlands exploited by transnational violent jihadists and organised crime networks, who would export its instability into other regions. The Taliban and al-Qaeda might even regain control of the country and once again use it as a base for terror that threatens the international community.

Western failure in Afghanistan and the attendant loss of prestige would give enormous impetus to radical Islamists throughout the world. Domestic counter-terrorism is now a top priority for Western governments, which would suffer a severe setback in their efforts to challenge the radicalisation of Muslim communities within their jurisdictions.

4. Border security

In a globalised world, Australia is not immune from the fallout from state failure in Afghanistan. Insecurity and ensuing humanitarian disasters would cause large numbers of refugees to flee Afghanistan for the safety of surrounding states, which would struggle to cope with the flood of new arrivals. Ultimately, Australia would face

strong pressure to resettle much greater numbers of Afghan refugees through its refugee and humanitarian migration programs. We could also see the return of unauthorised boat arrivals assisted by people smugglers, which led the Howard Government to adopt policies such as the so-called 'Pacific solution' to deal with the refugee problem.

5. Counter-narcotics

If the situation does not improve, we may witness an increase in the production of opiates from Afghanistan's already burgeoning poppy fields. Authorities are now warning of an increase in Afghan 'brown' heroin in Australian cities. The growing availability of opium from the 'Golden Crescent' could result in even more highly refined Afghan heroin being imported into Australia by drug syndicates. More heroin will likely increase addictions, drug-related deaths, and possibly the spread of infectious blood-borne diseases. There may be an accompanying rise in crime to pay for narcotics.

Recent progress

The international community has made significant progress in helping Afghanistan build a more stable and secure future. ISAF has expanded to cover the whole of Afghanistan, allowing reconstruction activity and development work to proceed in even the most insecure provinces. In addition, Afghan security forces play an increasing role in ISAF security operations against the Taliban.

In 2007, 70% of security incidents were restricted to 10% of Afghanistan's 398 districts.

Many areas of the country are now free from insurgent violence or experience relatively few security incidents. In 2007, 70% of security incidents were restricted to 10% of Afghanistan's 398 districts. These districts are mainly in the troubled south and east of the country, and contain less than 6% of the population.⁶ However, the Taliban are



Australian infantry on patrol in Tarin Kowt, Oruzgan. Photo courtesy of Raspal Khosa.

attempting to extend their reach into other areas with the commencement of this year's 'fighting season'.

The international community works in tandem with the Afghan Government to build the capacity of state institutions to provide services to the Afghan population. In the last five years, some 2,000 schools have been refurbished or built. Around 6.4 million children now attend school, including 1.5 million girls. More than 80% of the Afghan population has access to basic healthcare. The infant mortality rate has declined by 26% since 2001.

Economic activity also continues to make progress. The non-opium economy in Afghanistan has grown at an average rate of 12% over the past four years, albeit from a very low base.⁷

Operation Slipper

The ADF has 1,025 personnel in Afghanistan as part of Operation Slipper: Australia's contribution to the War on Terror and, more specifically, the ISAF armed state-building mission. Since 2001, Defence has spent \$1.7 billion on Operation Slipper. The figure for 2007–08 is \$623.2 million.⁸

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The ADF is deployed in two of the five ISAF regional commands—Regional Command (RC) South and RC Capital in Kabul. The majority of ADF personnel are in RC South: at Kandahar Air Field and Forward Operating Base (FOB) Ripley outside Tarin Kowt in Oruzgan Province. An Australian National Headquarters—Middle East Area of Operations (MEAO), located in Baghdad, exercises command and control over Australian forces in Afghanistan.⁹ ADF operations in Afghanistan are supported and sustained by logistics assets at several

locations in the Persian Gulf.¹⁰ Three Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) C-130 Hercules aircraft provide intra-theatre lift in the MEAO.

Oruzgan is the main focus of the Australian commitment in Afghanistan. It is a complex and extremely challenging operating environment. It is one of the most conservative of Afghanistan's Pushtun-dominated areas. Along with the neighbouring provinces of Helmand and

The strategy

The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) concept emerged from a need to extend the authority of the Afghan national government into the provinces and to facilitate development in a secure environment. A PRT is basically an Army civil affairs unit that combines engineers with force protection elements. The aim of ISAF is to 'civilianise' PRTs by embedding personnel from aid agencies.

PRTs are a primary means of implementing the 'ink spot' counter-insurgency strategy in Afghanistan. This strategy attempts to subdue a large hostile territory with a relatively small military force. The process begins by dispersing a number of small safe areas—Afghan Development Zones—across each province where reconstruction projects can be undertaken by PRTs. Once established, ISAF units can then push outwards, extending their control and making each safe area larger until eventually they are all linked together.

The PRTs operate according to the national caveats and rules of engagement of each ISAF member running them. This has led to an uncoordinated approach to security and development. Many PRTs are too light to have a marked socio-economic impact within their assigned provinces. The emphasis is on rapid stabilisation projects rather than long-term sustainable development.

Kandahar, Oruzgan is Taliban heartland. It is also the native province of Taliban spiritual leader, Mullah Mohammed Omar.

Oruzgan is among the poorest and most backward provinces in Afghanistan, and is well down the list of priorities for the central government. The population of Oruzgan numbers less than 400,000; more than 80% of whom are illiterate. Key needs are security, health, education and roads.

The mainstay of Australia's contribution in Afghanistan is the Army Reconstruction Task Force (RTF), now into its fourth rotation. However, the RTF is too small to be a stand-alone effort and is supporting a Netherlands-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Oruzgan. The ADF and Dutch forces have a good working relationship, although both armies bring different approaches to operations.

ADF force elements in Afghanistan

Kabul

- National Command Element: 30 personnel in Kabul including command, support and security staff.
- Liaison: 20 ADF personnel are serving with ISAF headquarters and units located elsewhere in Afghanistan.
- UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan: 1 ADF officer is attached to UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan.

Oruzgan

- Reconstruction Task Force 4 (RTF4): 400 personnel mainly comprising combat engineers, infantry and cavalry. The RTF is broken down into a headquarters, a works section, 2 combat teams for force protection, supporting elements and a mission reserve.
- Special Operations Task Group: 300 personnel drawn from the Special Air Service Regiment, 4th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (Commando), Incident Response Regiment and communications and combat service support elements.
- Medical Task Force 1: 10 ADF medical professionals are attached to the Netherlands Role 2 Hospital at FOB Ripley.
- Unmanned Aerial Vehicle detachment: personnel from the 20th Surveillance and Target Acquisition Regiment operate Skylark miniature unmanned aerial vehicles that provide perimeter

surveillance at FOB Ripley and reconnaissance for ADF personnel on operations.

Kandahar

- Control and Reporting Centre: 75 RAAF personnel man the Control and Reporting Centre at Kandahar Air Field, equipped with the TPS-177 tactical radar unit. The Control and Reporting Centre has primacy for battlespace management of the whole Afghanistan theatre, and is responsible for the de-confliction of some 12,000 aircraft movements a month, including unmanned aerial vehicles and tanker aircraft.
- Force Level Logistics Asset: 60 logistics personnel sustain and supply ADF operations in Afghanistan.
- Rotary Wing Group: 75 personnel from 5th Aviation Regiment operate 2 armed CH-47D Chinook helicopters with full in-theatre support facilities. The Rotary Wing Group Chinooks support all coalition assets in RC South and engage in the full spectrum of battlefield operations.

Helmand

- Artillery: 15 personnel from 8th/12th Medium Regiment are deployed with the UK Task Force Helmand. The Australian artillerymen employ the 105mm Hamel light field gun.

The RTF mission is protected reconstruction operations in Oruzgan Province. Its work is an essential element of the ink spot strategy in the RC South. The RTF focuses on building security, health, education and road infrastructure.

The Australian Army Special Operations Task Group provides deep outer ring security for reconstruction activity in Oruzgan by maintaining pressure on the Taliban in order to disrupt their coordination and plans.

There are two principal models for reconstruction and development being implemented by the RTF: delivered works and managed works. Delivered works are undertaken by RTF engineers. Projects include a network of patrol bases and checkpoints in the Baluchi and Chora Valleys northeast of FOB Ripley. This activity is critical to holding and securing districts that have been cleared of insurgents.

RTF personnel worked through the coldest winter in thirty years to build security infrastructure in the Chora Valley following Operation Spin Ghar (White Mountain) in late 2007. Meetings known locally as shuras, were held with community leaders to ascertain their needs, including where to best site facilities for maximum effect.

There has reportedly been a significant improvement in the Chora Valley, with locals no longer fearing intimidation by the Taliban in an area that was once an insurgent stronghold. Locals now assist ISAF by pointing out the locations of improvised explosive devices and provide intelligence on insurgent activity. The Taliban, nevertheless, will continue to try and impede and frustrate reconstruction and development activity, whether through direct and indirect attacks, or in the information battlespace.

The RTF undertakes an extensive range of managed works in the provincial capital, Tarin Kowt, and surrounding districts.¹¹ Managed works deliver reconstruction effects through

the engagement of contractors. To create employment and economic activity, ADF managed contracts stipulate that 80% of unskilled labour on building sites must be sourced from the region. Managed works are an important feature of indigenous capacity building which delivers alternative futures to locals who otherwise may be lured into insurgent activity and the opium economy.

Another important element of indigenous capacity building is the RTF Trade Training School at FOB Ripley. Locals are given short courses in trade training, construction work and generator maintenance. The school also allows the RTF to grow a pool of local trainers through continued development of their skills.

Additional military resources

The ADF is being employed to good effect in Afghanistan. If the Australian Government were to consider deploying additional ADF capabilities, it would want options that can manifestly enhance the prospects for success of the ISAF mission: the RAAF Control and Reporting Centre in Kandahar is a good example of just such a high-yield contribution.

There is currently a shortage of helicopters in RC South that limits the operational effectiveness of ISAF manoeuvre forces. Australia could provide a detachment of four to six Blackhawk helicopters for an initial six month deployment. This principal battlefield mobility helicopter would provide ISAF with flexible rotary lift capability. There would be some economies with the CH-47 Rotary Wing Group support personnel already in Kandahar.

In the longer term the ADF could provide a range of new fire support and surveillance and reconnaissance assets that would have great utility in Afghanistan. These include the Tiger Armed Reconnaissance Helicopter and I-View 250 tactical unmanned aerial vehicle once these capabilities have matured.

But there are limits to what a small military like the ADF can achieve through direct combat and combat support capabilities.

Arguably the biggest impact the ADF could have is by helping the development of effective Afghan security forces, a point expanded upon below.

Ultimately, however, the Afghan people must make a rational choice to back their government and recognise that their lives will not improve through passive or active support of the insurgency.

The way forward

State-building is the only sustainable approach to ensuring long-term stability in Afghanistan. Ultimately, however, the Afghan people must make a rational choice to back their government and recognise that their lives will not improve through passive or active support of the insurgency. But this will not happen without strengthening the Afghan state. The Karzai Government has

delivered little in the way of development through a lack of capacity. The Australian Government must examine whether more can be done to help Afghanistan by improving the effectiveness of our commitment. This involves security sector reform, better coordination of resources and engaging Pakistan.

Security sector reform

Australia can assist the Afghan Government in developing Afghan security forces that will, in time, be able to independently provide for their country's security. Prior to the Bucharest Summit, the Minister for Defence, Joel Fitzgibbon, stated there is no argument for Australia to increase its military deployment to Afghanistan. He doubted whether an extra 10% Australian troop commitment would make a difference to the long-term result in Afghanistan. However, an additional 100 ADF personnel serving in a training capacity would act as a substantial force multiplier.

Security is a key condition for development to proceed. Only when the Afghan Government



Coalition vehicles returning from Operation Pathan Ghar, Oruzgan. Photo courtesy of Raspal Khosa.

can demonstrate empirical sovereignty by providing security and justice, will it be able to defeat the insurgency and assert its juridical sovereignty over the entire country. Until then, people in the affected areas will seek these essential public goods from alternative sources of power, thereby perpetuating warlordism and insecurity.

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The long-term 'exit strategy' for Western forces is to give Afghans ownership of the security sector through well-functioning security forces. Unfortunately, it will take years for the Afghan Government to secure the entire national territory and Western forces will need to remain in Afghanistan as force enablers for some time yet.

Strengthen ADF training role

The Afghan National Army (ANA) is regarded as a professional, well-trained and equipped force. The US took the lead for the wholesale reformation of the ANA and invested billions of dollars in its establishment. It built a national institution that has widespread respect among ordinary Afghans. However, the ANA lacks the critical mass to hold the tactical gains made by ISAF. The ANA currently stands at around 50,000 personnel, building up to an endorsed strength of 80,000 troops. At Bucharest, an increase in the target strength of the ANA from 80,000 to 120,000 was agreed in principle, but was postponed until 2010 due to limits in training capacity.

The ADF could assist the expansion of the ANA through its extensive experience of conducting security sector reform in Iraq.¹²

Since 2004, the Australian Army Training Team-Iraq (AATT-I) helped train 16,500 Iraqi Army soldiers at various locations in Iraq. The withdrawal of Overwatch Battlegroup-West and ADF instructors from Dhi Qar province later this year will give the Australian Government a capacity to field a dedicated Australian Army Training Team-Afghanistan (AATTA-A). This training element could be established along similar lines to the 100 member AATT-I. This would require a modest increase in the number of Australian military personnel in Afghanistan for the ADF to maintain its current operational activity there.

In February 2008, the Australian Government announced its intention to replace seventy RTF engineers with an Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) and associated support elements. OMLTs are the principal method employed by ISAF of bringing the ANA to operational capability. An OMLT, typically consisting of 12–20 personnel, is embedded within a 600 man ANA Kandak (battalion) to provide training support and to deploy on operations in an advisory capacity. OMLTs also play a key coordinating role between ANA and ISAF units on operations.

It would not make sense, nor be practical, to simply re-role part of the RTF to allow an OMLT to be introduced so that the overall force size does not exceed the current authorised deployment. The decision to withdraw some of the engineers may also be due to this capability being overstretched in the ADF. Nevertheless, engineers are a scarce resource in-theatre and have little redundancy. Any reduction in their capacity would have a detrimental effect on the present reconstruction tempo, which is making a tangible difference to the lives of people in Oruzgan. Instead, the ADF could achieve efficiencies by combining a proposed AATTA-A with the training duties of OMLT instructors.

Upgrade AFP capacity building role

In contrast to the ANA, the Afghan National Police (ANP) is a poorly-equipped force that is plagued by problems of coordination and capacity deficits. Responsibility for the reform of the ANP initially lay with Germany under the lead-nation system for security sector reform in Afghanistan. The ANP was not created from the ground-up like the ANA, but incorporated existing militias, partially because of resource constraints and the need to prevent a security vacuum forming. The result is a highly factionalised force with individual police owing their loyalties to corrupt local commanders rather than the national government. Many Afghans now view the ANP as a source of insecurity, with many police engaged in outright crime.

There is clearly enormous scope for the Australian Federal Police (AFP) to enhance the capacity of the ANP in all areas of policing.

There is clearly enormous scope for the Australian Federal Police (AFP) to enhance the capacity of the ANP in all areas of policing. The AFP currently has four sworn officers deployed in Afghanistan. Two officers serve as advisors with the International Police Coordination Board in Kabul. Their role is to help build the policing capacity of the Afghan Government. The other two AFP personnel are armed officers attached to a UK-led counter-narcotics effort based in Jalalabad in eastern Afghanistan.

The Australian Government has indicated that it will send more police to Afghanistan. The exact number of additional AFP personnel to be deployed to Afghanistan is linked to budget allocations to be announced in May 2008. Nevertheless, the AFP has developed a significant deployable capability for capacity building, mentoring and peacekeeping

operations through its International Deployment Group.

The AFP could play a useful role in mentoring elements of the ANP by providing sufficient personnel for a Police OMLT. By basing AFP personnel in Oruzgan, the Australian Government would realise synergies with any proposed ADF training activity, particularly the instruction of police in small arms and other tactical activity.

AusAID can also help to improve the effectiveness of the ANP by providing literacy training for the 70% of Afghan police who are illiterate. It can also participate in judicial reform by funding multilateral capacity building programs.

A comprehensive approach

The Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, has attached considerable importance to the need for coordination and integration of military and civilian resources in Afghanistan. This principle should also apply to Australia's own reconstruction and development activity in Oruzgan. We require comprehensive inter-agency cooperation for the efficient application of Australia's aid effort.

AusAID's activity in Afghanistan is aligned with the Afghanistan Compact—a five year development framework agreed to by international donors following the 2006 London Conference. The Afghanistan Compact sets development priorities through three pillars:

- security
- governance, rule of law and human rights
- economic and social development.

Australia's total aid commitment to Afghanistan since 2001 is \$450 million. Development assistance is provided through multilateral organisations such as the United Nations Development Program and the World Bank, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and the ADF.

Support AusAID coordination role

AusAID is currently scoping its role within a whole-of-government approach to providing development assistance in Oruzgan. Ordinarily development activity undertaken by AusAID would not take place within such an insecure environment. The lack of security in Oruzgan has hindered the aid effort. It restricts the movement of aid workers and discourages the arrival of NGO development partners necessary for implementing projects.

Although the ADF and AusAID have had differing approaches to reconstruction in the past, there has been a positive start to the relationship in Oruzgan. That said, there remains tension between the short-term stabilisation goals of the ADF and the long-term state-building strategies advocated by AusAID. This is partially due to differing operational time frames caused by the six month rotation of RTF contingents.

Multilateral coordinating agencies such as UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan are not present in Oruzgan due to the dire security environment. As a result, reconstruction and development activity in that province is at times haphazard. AusAID should fill this void by playing a greater role in improving the effectiveness of ADF resources beyond managing contractors employed on RTF projects (a function that was initially envisaged to take pressure off the heavily engaged RTF works section).

AusAID can provide a link between the RTF and Afghan Government agencies in order to prevent a costly misdirection of effort. It can also ensure that reconstruction activity in Oruzgan is in accord with the Afghan National Development Strategy and Provincial Development Plan, thus implementing the Afghanistan Compact.

It is therefore essential that AusAID is involved in the early planning stages of RTF operations in Oruzgan by working directly with Headquarters Joint Operations Command. Further to this, embedding an AusAID

development advisor within the RTF is critical to ensure in-country coordination.

In the longer term Australia must develop a civil–military planning culture at the strategic level. The proposed Asia Pacific Centre for Civil–Military Cooperation (APC CIMIC) will train personnel from civil agencies and the military in whole-of-government approaches to complex multi-agency interventions. The CIMIC centre will also draw on the expertise of the NGO community that is essential to post-conflict reconstruction and development.

ISAF commanders are frustrated that the Pakistan tribal belt serves as a safe haven for insurgents operating in Afghanistan.

Engage Pakistan

ISAF commanders are frustrated that the Pakistan tribal belt serves as a safe haven for insurgents operating in Afghanistan. Weak administrative structures, many inherited from the British Raj, have allowed violent jihadist groups to flourish in Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA) that adjoin eastern Afghanistan.

Insurgency in Pakistan, however, is not just confined to the FATA, but has become systemic after security forces stormed Islamabad's extremist Red Mosque in July 2007. Ironically, it was Pakistan that nurtured Islamist militias as proxy forces to attain geo-strategic outcomes in Afghanistan and Kashmir. Pakistan now lacks a coherent strategy on how to deal with these destabilising forces, vacillating between military campaigns and peace deals.

The jihadist endgame in Afghanistan must to some extent be played out in Pakistan. Australia cannot hope to change the course of events in Pakistan by itself. But by working with friends and allies we can realistically

hope to improve the prospects for success by encouraging Pakistan's new civilian coalition government to fight violent jihadist terrorism. Furthermore, the Pakistani military should be encouraged to relinquish any vestigial links to radical Islamist militias.

One initiative that Australia could undertake is to urge China to use its considerable influence with its strategic partner, Pakistan, to encourage it to use coercive mechanisms to constrain jihadists who are using the tribal belt as a staging ground for operations in Afghanistan. War diffusion from Afghanistan also threatens the stability of parts of western China.

Australia can also contribute to international efforts by doing what it can to build the capacity of Pakistan's ailing institutions.

For success in the long term, the international community must assist Pakistan in confronting its radical Islamists through development work and strengthening democratic structures. The US has indicated it will provide Pakistan with a \$7.4 billion non-military aid package over five years, as part of a counter-terrorism strategy negotiated with Islamabad. Australia can also contribute to international efforts by doing what it can to build the capacity of Pakistan's ailing institutions. Australia could begin by increasing its development assistance to Pakistan, which in 2007–08 was only \$25 million.

More can be done to engage Pakistan in counter-terrorism activity through training and inter-agency cooperation. The Afghanistan–United States–Pakistan tripartite commission, for example, has found expression in the development of six joint intelligence centres along the Afghanistan–Pakistan border. The centres, each to be staffed by twenty personnel from the three countries, are a first step

in a coordinated effort toward preventing cross-border infiltration by insurgents.

Pakistan's armed forces are not optimised for counter-insurgency and have had limited success fighting militants in the tribal belt. Australia, through its Defence Cooperation Program with Islamabad, should examine the feasibility of training elements of the Pakistani military to improve their capability for operations against radical Islamist militias.

Australia and Pakistan have signed a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding on Counter-Terrorism which provides a framework for cooperation in areas such as law enforcement, intelligence, security and border controls. The AFP could enhance the capacity of Pakistan's law enforcement agencies to deal with the terrorist threat from radical Islamists. This may involve the AFP International Training Team helping to develop Pakistan's capabilities in intelligence and surveillance, explosives investigation techniques, forensics and other skills essential to defeating terrorism.

Conclusion

Australia is in Afghanistan because our national interests are engaged. But Afghanistan is not a country for quick victories and we must accept that this is a long-term intervention in a dangerous environment. The Australian Government could significantly increase the impact of its efforts at little extra cost if it implemented the following recommendations:

- modestly expand the ADF and AFP effort to support training of Afghan security forces
- better coordinate ADF and AusAID activities in Oruzgan
- work with our allies to more closely engage with Pakistan.

The only way to expedite our withdrawal and protect our interests is to work towards a sustainable, democratic and secure Afghanistan.

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Endnotes

- 1 Department of Defence, *Portfolio Additional Estimates Statements 2007–08*.
- 2 As at 1 April 2008. http://www.nato.int/ISAF/docu/epub/pdf/isa_placemat.pdf
- 3 <http://www.icasualties.org/oef/>
- 4 ISAF is authorised by UN Security Council Resolution 1386 and in accordance with the Bonn Agreement of 5 December 2001 to implement its mandate (initially to provide security for the Afghan Interim Authority in Kabul and its vicinity) under Chapter 7 of the United Nations Charter. The mandate has been renewed in subsequent UN Security Council Resolutions (1413, 1444, 1510, 1563, 1623, 1659, 1707 and 1776), and was most recently extended to October 2008.
- 5 BBC/ABC/ARD Poll, December 2007.
- 6 *Progress in Afghanistan: Bucharest Summit 2–4 April 2008*, p 7, available at http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/epub/pdf/progress_afghanistan.pdf
- 7 *Ibid.*, p 5.
- 8 Department of Defence, *op. cit.*
- 9 Australian Army artillery personnel attached to Task Force Helmand are under UK command as part of a bilateral program to enhance the training and experience of the ADF offensive support capability.
- 10 Australian Government policy is not to name coalition partners in the Gulf which serve as base locations for ADF personnel in the MEAO.
- 11 RTF managed works include the following: Eastern Causeway over the Garmab Mandah River, Tarin Kowt Provincial Hospital, Tarin Kowt Womens Hospital, Afghan Health Development Service training centre, Yaklengah Health Centre, Tarin Kowt waste management system, Tarin Kowt Boys High School, and Tarin Kowt Boys Primary school.
- 12 Security sector reform activity currently undertaken by the ADF in Afghanistan includes two instructors attached to a counter-insurgency academy in Kabul and RTF training of ten ANA engineers in Oruzgan.

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