

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH JACK KEM, DEPUTY TO THE
COMMANDER, NATO TRAINING MISSION-AFGHANISTAN; COMMANDER, COMBINED
SECURITY TRANSITION COMMAND-AFGHANISTAN VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM
AFGHANISTAN SUBJECT: GENDER INITIATIVES WITH THE AFGHAN NATIONAL SECURITY
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PETTY OFFICER WILLIAM SELBY (Office of the Secretary of Defense
for Public Affairs): I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of
Defense's Bloggers Roundtable for Wednesday, February 9th, 2011. My name
is Petty Officer William Selby from the Office of the Secretary of
Defense Public Affairs, and I will be moderating the call today.

A note to the bloggers on the line: Please remember to clearly
state your name or blog or -- name or -- and blog or organization in
advance of your question. Please respect our guest's time, keeping
questions succinct and to the point. And also, if you are not asking a
question, we please ask that you place your phone on mute.

Today our guest is Dr. Jack Kem, deputy to the commander in NATO
Training Mission-Afghanistan, Combined Security Transition Command-
Afghanistan, who will discuss gender initiatives with the Afghan national
security force and how NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan is working with
the Afghan Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense on these
initiatives.

Sir, with that, the floor is yours for your opening statement.

MR. KEM: Thank you, William.

Good morning. As William said, I'm Dr. Jack Kem, the civilian
deputy to the commander of NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, where I've
served for 15 months. NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, or NTM- A, in
coordination with NATO allies, partners and key Afghan stakeholders,
generates the Afghan national security forces, develops capable
ministerial systems and resources the fielded force to build sustainable
capacity and capability in order to enhance the government of the Islamic
Republic of Afghanistan's ability to achieve stability and security in
Afghanistan.

As William said, today I'm here to talk with each of you and answer your questions about gender initiatives within the Afghan national security force and how NTM-A is working with the Afghan Ministry of Interior and Ministry of Defense on these initiatives. I will also discuss the progress Afghanistan has made towards these initiatives.

Our effort to support gender and human rights in Afghanistan is consistent with a number of international and Afghan documents. Most importantly, Article 22 of the Afghan constitution states: "The citizens of Afghanistan -- whether man or woman -- have equal rights and duties before the law."

The Afghan National Development Strategy details the Afghan government's gender-equity strategy to address and reverse women's historical disadvantages. The National Action Plan for Women of Afghanistan, or NAPWA, is the Afghan government's main vehicle to pursue these goals, and emphasizes the importance of gender mainstreaming, with specific objectives to increase the number of women in the Afghan National Police and in post-secondary education, among others.

Afghanistan was also one of the first signatories to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948. Afghanistan has signed and ratified the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, or CEDAW, and supports the implementation of the United Nation's Security Council Resolution 1325.

Recently at the London conference in January 2010, the final communique addressed the issue of gender rights. It stated: "The government of Afghanistan reiterates its commitment to protect and promote the human rights of all Afghan citizens, and to make Afghanistan a place where men and women enjoy security, equal rights and equal opportunities in all spheres of life." The National Consultative Peace Jirga held in Kabul in June 2010 also addressed gender -- the issue of gender rights in the final resolution that was adopted at the end of the conference. It stated: "The people of Afghanistan demand a just peace which can guarantee the rights of all its citizens, including women and children." For the purpose of social justice, the jirga urges that laws be applied equally on all citizens of the country.

And finally, at the Lisbon Summit in November, NATO and the Afghan government signed a formal declaration that addressed an enduring partnership between NATO and Afghanistan. This declaration, which was signed by the NATO secretary-general, Rasmussen, and Afghan President Karzai, stated that: "The government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan reaffirms its commitment to actively carry out its security, governance and development responsibilities in a manner consistent with the commitments made at the London conference of January 2010, in the Kabul conference of July 2010, such as combatting terrorism, strengthening the economy, addressing corruption, regional security and economic cooperation, and respect for human rights, in particular the rights of women."

There is admittedly much work that remains to address issues of gender mainstreaming and human rights. But NTM-A is committed to assist

the government of Afghanistan in achieving results. Our focus is on the Afghan national security force, but our impact is potentially far-reaching for the Afghan society.

And finally, gender mainstreaming does not focus solely on women; it focuses on how institutions and processes may affect both men and women differently, and how each portion of the population makes unique contributions to peace and prosperity in a society.

With that, I'd like to go ahead and begin with some of the questions you may have about gender initiatives.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Thank you very much for your opening statement, sir. We had several others join during your opening statement. Can you give me your name please? Anybody else join?

Okay, well, we'll go ahead with Andrew Lubin. You're first on the line.

Q: Yes. Dr. Kem, Andrew Lubin here, Military Observer. Thanks for taking the time, sir.

Doctor, the initiatives and constitutional rights you read out are obviously significant, but how is this received by the Afghans on the ground? They're a Muslim country. They're not well-educated. How does this actually work in practice?

MR. KEM: Well, Andrew, that's a great question. It is important to note that you have a constitution was adopted by a jirga for the constitution. It was adopted by Afghans. The Afghans are the ones who wrote it. So it is an Afghan document. But admittedly, there are some issues that exist in this society. There are some attitudes that do need to change, but you will find that most people acknowledge and accept the fact that women need to have equal rights.

When you look at the surveys that we've had recently -- there's been a number of surveys, one by the United Nations Development Program, UNDP. There was one by ABC, BBC and ARD, and there was another by the Asia Foundation. Each of those polls consistently showed their support in the Afghan population for girls and women going to school and being able to work. There are some differences in the south where there's a more conservative attitude, but across the board, the majority of the Afghan population support girls and women being able to work and to go to school. And so I think that's very significant.

I hope I answered your question, Andrew. Q: Yes. Yes. Thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And next is Gail Harris.

Q: Gail Harris with the Foreign Policy Association. Sir, thank you for taking the time.

I was wondering -- thinking about our own equal rights, the issues in the United States, in 1920, of course, women got the vote, but it wasn't until the civil rights bill in 1965 that started expanding the rights. And we still have issues with U.S. women in the military being debated.

So I was wondering if you could give us an update on how some of the women that you helped train become part of the Afghan security forces, what are some of the issues they are facing? And how's the mentoring going to allow them to fit into that society and deal with any issues that come up, like sexual harassment things?

MR. KEM: Okay, Gail, good to hear you again. I understand exactly what your question is. It is slow, however, we've seen a couple of major advances. The Afghan National Development Strategy has a goal of having at least 5,000 women police officers in the Afghan National Police by 2014. Today, there's about 1,000 to 1,200 in the total Afghan National Police and it is well accepted in some areas. For example, with the Afghan Border Police, it just makes a lot of sense culturally if you're going to be at a border crossing site or an airport that if women are going to be searched, they should be searched by other women and those women who do the searching should be the ones that are well trained and that, you know, know what they're doing.

So there's a great acceptance for that and particular roles. In both the army and the police we've worked to enhance some of the opportunities that exist for women. There's been some coding, and it's very similar to what happened in the United States Army with the -- (inaudible) -- code that existed several years ago. But we are coding some positions to make sure that positions are both eligible for men and women to operate in. For example, we find particularly in the personnel field and logistics field, which are wide open for women and it's a great place that helps.

And so there is some advancement, particularly in the police and in the army. However, the numbers are small. They are increasing. We now have our second OCS class for the Army, which is, I think, a great success story. We had 29 women who came and went to OCS, graduated in October. Four of those women are going to pilot school. They're now in the preparation to go to pilot school, so there's opportunities opening up for them. The second OCS class for women is now in session. It will graduate next month. And so we're very hopeful that we'll also continue to have women have a larger role. But the idea is you have to start from the ground up. There weren't many women before. We're now taking in more and more recruits in the police and the army. We're also taking in more officers. There are some senior officers who are women that are in the police and the army. We find also in the police and the army, we do have a woman in MOI, a general, General Shafiq was one of last year's international women of courage.

She is responsible for the integration of women in the MOI, and the Ministry of Defense just opened up an office and they're going to put a full colonel in there, and she'll be the one to be responsible for the integration of women throughout the army.

There is good acceptance, but the numbers are small and we're trying to do it in such a way that's irreversible and put women in roles that are important, that are critical and that can last for many years.

So even though it is slow, I think it's significant to see some of the movements that have taken place in the last 15 months.

Thanks, Gail.

Q: Thank you, sir. Very encouraging.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And Chuck, you were next.

Q: Yes. Chuck Simmins from America's North Shore Journal.

Sir, you're talking about uniformed women. What about the civilian side of the MOI and the military? How are you doing in getting women into the bureaucracy?

MR. KEM: Okay, Chuck. I could tell you that we have some problems in terms of the civilian workforce in both MOI and MOD. And it's not really a gender issue; it is an issue of civil and military control and having civilian control. And so you find there are many people that are former generals that have become civilians later.

So what we have done is we've worked very closely with the Afghan Civil Service Institute and we're trying to develop a full bureaucracy that includes civilians, and I'm talking pure civilians, that will work with the military to create a civil-military coordination such as in the army where you have the ministry, which should be primarily civilian, and then you have a general staff, which would be primarily military. However, with the civilians that we're having, the Civil Service Institute is focused very much on the younger recent college graduates from like Kabul University. So those numbers are very encouraging that there is a good gender mix in that. It's not 50-50, but it is probably about 35-65, of women and men.

And one of the things that we encourage working with the local universities here, with the Kabul University -- Kabul Education University and the Kabul University and the American University of Afghanistan, we support pretty actively working with these universities because they have increased the enrollment of women in their courses.

The Afghan national development strategy has a stated goal by 2020 that in all post-secondary institutions in Afghanistan, at least 40 percent of the students should be female. That's an important goal and that's a goal that I think they're well on the way to achieving. They're not there yet, but you see there are some incentives and they're trying to actively recruit and provide opportunities for women to go to schools, which provides the opportunity for women to go to the Civil Service Institute and become part of the bureaucracy and part of the civilian structure in both MOI and MOD.

So I'm encouraged by these numbers, and I think we'll be okay in the next couple of years.

Thank you.

Q: Thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And Dale, you were next on the line.

Q: Good morning, sir, Dale Kissinger, MilitaryAvenue.com.

The women reflect the society. Are they having as many problems with literacy as the men that we've heard from so many other people during the training programs for the military community?

MR. KEM: Well, Dale, you've hit one of my favorite topics, it's about literacy, and the answer is that the literacy rates are an issue, of course, in the whole country. For the recruits that we bring in the army and the police there's only about a 14 percent literacy rate, which means 86 percent can't read and write, and that's primarily for the cohort that we recruit from the 18 to 45 age group. Many of the ones who are much older, because they went to school before 1979, you know, have a higher level of education and the very young, the ones that are below 16 or so, the schools have started opening and the secondary school enrollment has dramatically increased in the last six years.

But that middle group, the 18 to 45, those generations is where there is a shortfall. Across the country, the literacy rate for women is lower than men and that's because there was, particularly with the Taliban, a, you know, decree that did not allow girls to go to school. That is changing. And so we are seeing that there are some changes taking place, but literacy is a challenge, not just for women, but for men as well.

There are, however, some areas of the country where the enrollment of girls in school has been highly encouraged, for example, the province of Bamyan, which is in the center of the country. It has a woman as the governor and they strongly encourage the girls to go to school there because they know that having the girls go to school that they will foster more education. They'll help teach more people in their families and many of them become teachers.

So there's a higher proportion in the center of the country, particularly in Bamyan, Wardak, Ghor province, for women. So with the secondary enrollment picking up, and particularly with this movement in the central part of the country, I think we'll see greater enrollment.

But literacy is a problem across the board. We teach literacy to everyone that comes in through basic training, both the police and the army. And one of the things that I ensure is, every woman that joins the army or the police as a recruit that comes in as a patrol officer or comes in as a -- as a private has to be enrolled in a literacy program. The program's universal for everyone, but I want to make sure that we do

not let some of the women fall through the cracks, we make sure that all of them have the opportunity, even if it's a very small class.

So we work that very hard to make sure we can continue to develop the intellectual capital of the country.

Thanks, Dale.

Q: Oh, thank you very much, sir.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Anand, you were next.

Q: Anand from Registan. At end state, the Afghan Defense University might have about 6-1/2 thousand students at any given time. The officer selection course might have another 3,000 at any given time. So a total of 9-1/2 thousand, perhaps, combined officer, senior NCO training seats and MOD DNA (ph).

What do you expect will be the MOI ANP equivalent number of officers being trained at any given time at end state? Over.

MR. KEM: Okay, Anand. Well, let me talk to you about those numbers. The Afghan -- actually, it's been called the Afghan National Security University, which will have eight different schools in it. It will have a total of 6,500 to 7,000 students at the end state. But that includes 2,400 students at the national military academy. So the total number of Afghan National Security University will be 6,500 to 7,000 total, not the 9,500.

Some of that enrollment will also include some of the MOI, because it's the National Security University, so there will be some cross-enrollment. The numbers in MOI will be smaller. MOI will have -- not in one place, but MOI of course has a police academy, the Afghan National Police Academy. It has a capacity of about 2,400 students. It's a three-year course. And then there are a number of NCO courses that are being developed. But I anticipate the numbers you'll see in MOI will be more on the order of 4,500 to 5,000 that will be in professional development courses.

Now, that's just part of the training base. For example, today, in the total training base, we have about 34,000 in the Afghan National Army and in the Afghan National Police combined; about 20,000 in the army -- I'm sorry, about 24,000 in the army; and about 10,000 in the police. That's the numbers that we have trained right now.

Those numbers will continue to rise, and we anticipate that there'll be about 30,000 at end state. But that will include from basic training all the way up to the war college. And so part of this is to develop a leader development model where there is professional education that starts as you start your service and goes at points of time throughout your career, for both the army and for the police -- very similar to what you see in Pakistan or what you see in the United States or the U.K.

Thank you very much.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And John, you were next on the line.

Q: Thank you very much, Doctor. John Doyle with the 4GWar blog. In previous decades in other countries, including the United States, some of the strongest resistance to integrating women into the military and police and fire services has come from other women, often older women, the mothers and wives of the men who are serving. Is that a problem in Afghanistan?

And additionally, are there certain ethnic groups in the multicultural mix of Afghanistan that are much more resistant to this than others?

Thank you.

MR. KEM: Yeah, okay, John. That's a great question. Actually, we don't see that phenomenon where there's huge resistance. Now, I will tell you that some of the women that have been in the country for a long time, some of the senior officers, have, I think, told us to be cautious -- and then cautious is maybe not the right term, but to be very deliberate and to make sure that the steps that are taken by Afghanistan with our support don't push the envelope too quickly.

You know, it would be nice to build -- just overnight make some huge changes, but we have to be very deliberate. We have to grow the opportunities. And we have to -- you know, women have to prove themselves in those opportunities, that they actually are doing the job, which they can do very well, but there's always resistance. So the women will tell us, be careful, don't go overboard, do the things in a very deliberate manner, make sure that you nest underneath what the constitution and the Afghan national development strategy says. So we're very careful to make sure that our authorities that we have are the authorities that are legal authorities that are Afghan authorities. And of course, we look to the international documents that Afghanistan has signed up on.

So that's, I think, an important issue, that we're very deliberate. And that's why, as you see, we focus on certain areas as we're starting to open up the aperture. The border police, for example, is a place I told you about. It's important to make sure that, well, like the border police, which is culturally acceptable, it makes a lot of sense that women should be searching women, and it's a good way for women to prove themselves, that they are capable, they do a great job, and it's culturally acceptable and nobody has a question with that.

The logistics field is a great place because it is an area that doesn't go (along ?) the field. Normally there are fixed depots and fixed locations. It provides a higher level of security for women. And so it does have a level of acceptability for that.

I do think, in terms of the ethnic mix, that it's not necessarily an ethnic, but there is, of course, some cultural differences

as you go further down in the south of the country, in the Pashtun areas, because it's just a much more conservative area and because there is a greater influence of the Taliban in that area, and so there is some fear, because of the oppression that's existed in the past, that that oppression could return. And so that's one of the reasons why we make sure that we have safe environments for the OCS classes, safe environments for the women that are in different classes. And so that's an important issue for us. I think it's more based upon fear of the oppression that could return than it is really on limiting opportunities.

Hopefully, that answers your question, John.

Q: Yes, it did, Doctor, thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And did anybody else join us that has not asked a question? (No response.) Okay, well back around the horn to Andrew. Q: Great. Doctor, Andrew Lubin again. Let's follow up on education. Do you have women teaching the young ladies? And also, are women teachers? Would that be a job opportunity that could get women in the workforce and get them more accepted right off the bat?

MR. KEM: Well, in the training base, one of the things that we've done is -- you know, of course, with the OCS classes, we have women who are assisting the -- who are teaching the other women. It's not all women, because you'll find -- like in the police, you'll find that there are men that are teaching the women as well as some women. We are putting more women in the instructor courses, more women that are in there not just for teaching but also because they provide a great role model.

Next year at the National Military Academy of Afghanistan -- and their year starts in March for the solar year -- we're going to have a minimum of 10 percent of the new enrollees at the National Military Academy will be female. The commandant of the National Military Academy, he came to me and he said, look, one of the things I want to make sure we do is we need to have some women who are teaching in the courses, so I need you to help me, and working with the minister of women's affairs, find some highly qualified women to teach that can become role models, that can also -- become role models and can also be around the male students so they can get used to seeing women in a leadership position.

And this was -- the commandant, I think, was very enlightened. He's saying, look, not only do we want to have women come in as students; we need to have women in leadership roles because we need to model the behavior and we need to make sure that the men also see that behavior modeled and understand that women can have a leadership role, they should be teachers, that women are quite capable. And so we're working closely next year to make sure that we have some new women who are teaching in those courses who are highly qualified.

When I was speaking with the minister of women's affairs, she was really thrilled about the fact that we're sending women to pilot school, because she saw that as also a great opportunity for women to be pilots, to work in the pilot school, and also to become instructor pilots down the road. So there is an acknowledgement on that.

It's very limited because there's not many women in the middle ranks, in the middle NCO grades, in the middle officer grades. There's just some very senior and there's some of the newer lieutenants and the newer privates who come in. But there is an acknowledgment. There's a desire to continue that, but not just for the teaching aspect, but for the modeling aspect, as well.

Thanks.

Q: Okay. Thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Gail, you're next. Gail, are you there? Okay. Chuck? Q: I don't have any more.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And Dale Kissinger?

Q: Yes, sir. Dale Kissinger again.

Is there a formal mentorship type of program for women in specific locations or training programs?

MR. KEM: Yeah. You may know there's been a program that's been established over some time.

We call it the female engagement teams. The female engagement teams is something the coalition has brought in over time. You may also know it as something called the CSTs, and that's another kind of program that works with civil affairs. But they are teams, they are a coalition who are women who come in. Normally it has a captain that's in charge of this small team. The United States Marine Corps has been very active in this. And they do a number of things. One thing is they help with the regular forces to interact with the women population in areas they go in. And they also provide some mentoring opportunities that exist.

You know, are are providing some mentors also at the senior level. We have two senior personnel coming in next month who will work with these new -- with General Shafiq and the new colonel going into the Ministry of Defense. So we will have mentors or advisers who will work with them and help them as they look at the implementation of UNSCR 1325 and as they look at the policies.

So if there is an advising/mentoring process that is taking place at the lowest levels down with the units, with these female engagement teams up to the full colonel level advisers that we have in the ministry.

So there is acknowledgment that we need to also insist with that, and again, to model some of the behavior and to help the Afghans to provide the capacity -- or to build the capacity and and the capability to continue the evolution of gender mainstreaming.

Q: Thank you very much.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And Anand, did you have another question?

Q: Yes. Anand from Registan.

To follow up to your last response -- and thank you very much for that -- could you break down again the total number -- again, at end state, not today -- of officers that will be trained at MOI in their training -- in the training establishment, as well as can you also break down the number of NCOs that would be?

And actually I've noticed among NCOs, some NCOs get 14 weeks training and some get 14 weeks training plus four weeks literacy, or a total of 18 weeks. Could you also break down the numbers between the two of them that you foresee kind of at end state? Thank you very much. Over.

MR. KEM: Yeah. Anand, I got to give you -- the general numbers that we have right now, I think will be about 40,000, but I'm going to have to push back on you a little bit. You know, I came here to talk about the gender issue, so I don't have all those kind of information in front of me. So I'd like you to feel free to write me or to write them and we can sort of draw that information for you later on.

Nevertheless, we still think that the end state numbers will be about probably 40,000 total that'll be in training in the end state, and those numbers will be a split between the MOD and MOI. It will be a combination of civilian, non-commissioned officer and officer courses.

Thank you.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Okay. And I think we have time for one more question. John, did you have another question?

Q: Yes, I did. Doctor, in your opening remarks, you mentioned that gender integration is not just focused on women, but so much of our conversation today has been about women's training, women's education, acceptance of women. And I'm wondering if women's education or training or women's rights are kind of radioactive terms in that society, and how much tippy-toeing do you have to do in advance just to get things off the ground even before women are actually putting on uniforms and performing some of these functions that traditionally have only been performed by men in Afghanistan. Thank you.

MR. KEM: Okay, John. Hey, that's a great question.

When I first got here 15 months ago, I looked at the police curriculum. And one of the things that we noted in the police curriculum is that there was nothing in there about family issues, about how to handle women's issues such as rape and some of the other issues that police officers unfortunately have to deal with. If this wasn't in the curriculum, wasn't taught. And of course, according to international standards, those things should be taught as part of the basic patrol officers classes.

So working with the European Police, EUPOL, and working with the IPCB, our police coordination board we have, the International Police Coordination Board, we developed some classes to make sure that they were taught, for basic police officers how to handle family, gender and children's rights issues.

I was a bit concerned that it would be not well-received, but it was quite surprising when I went to some of the classes to see them. The police officers -- and many of these, you know, who came in as illiterate -- they understood fully that they needed to have these kinds of classes. There was not the pushback that I expected, but there was an acknowledgment that these are the kind of problems that exist in all societies and the kind of problems that police officers are supposed to address, that police officers are supposed to protect people from.

We have classes that are taught also for the officers, particularly the middle-grade officers, that's on reporting of rapes and how you keep those things. And we've had a -- an Italian lady that's come in, Dr. Badri (sp) from the University of Rome. She teaches -- she's taught a series of seminars. And I've sat in some of those classes, and kind of watched the reactions. And the reactions were really -- it was really shocking to me to see how open they were, the Afghan captains and majors that were police officers, how open they were and how they acknowledge that this is an area that they need to make a stand in and they need to be careful in terms of justice.

A vignette: When I was listening to one of the classes, Dr. Badri (sp) asked them, you know, "If a woman came in and she reported a rape, would you go out and immediately arrest the guy that she accused?" And they all universally said, "No, you wouldn't do that at all. You would check on the woman to see what kind of reputation she has." Well, that really shocked me. And then there's a number of questions: "What do you mean, reputation?" "Well, has she filed false reports in the past?", you know, and it wasn't -- and then Dr. Badri (sp), she kind of pursued: "You mean, is she kind of a loose woman or is she like that?" "Oh, no, not that at all. We would protect her, but we also need to make sure we protect the rights of those who are accused."

And so there was a -- it was kind of an eye-opening experience that they understood that the application of law needs to protect the ones who have been wronged, but also needs to make sure that you protect the right of the innocents. It was an eye-opening experience for me, because I had jumped to the wrong conclusion. And after asking those -- just universally, I just misunderstood. There was an acceptance, and where I've seen it there's been an acceptance that these are issues that need to be addressed by police officers. These are the kinds of issues that they all have to deal with, and they want to deal with them under the rule of law.

So I've been very encouraged, and have not seen the type of push-back that I expected to see when I first got here. So it has been very encouraging from those things that I have personally been able to witness.

Thanks, John.

Q: Thank you, Doctor. Just to be clear, the eye-opening experience, the reaction of the officers in question, those were male officers, or female officers, or both? MR. KEM: They were about 90 percent male officers in that class, though there was a woman police officer and there was a woman civilian lawyer who worked for MOI, so it wasn't just men in one group. But I could tell you that if you've been around a bunch of Afghans in a class, they don't hold back much. They ask a lot of questions and they -- what you get is pretty well the honest opinion. So I don't think they were inhibited. I think that was an honest and open interchange that I was able to see.

Q: Thank you very much, Doctor.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: And thank you everybody for your questions, and Dr. Kem for your comments today.

Sir, if you have any closing comments, you can go ahead with those now.

MR. KEM: Thanks, William.

Well, one of the things I just want to say, that the United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 is an important resolution that helps to incorporate a gender perspective into all of the operations. It is part of the driving factors we have. It is part of our NATO mandate that we have. It is an important issue that we include in all of our classes. And we also, of course, make sure that we incorporate what the Afghans have actually written themselves.

You may know that Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said at the Kabul Conference that Afghanistan will not achieve peace, development and human rights without the full participation of women. We really believe that if you take care of the other half of the population that sometimes gets neglected, you will be able to do peace and prosperity in this country and do that much more rapidly, and it will be a peace and prosperity that will stay and survive.

So this is an important issue which I think helps in the development of the Afghan national security forces, but also helps in the development of Afghanistan. And so I'm really pleased to be a part of this, and I know that everyone I work with is pleased to be a part of it. And we're pleased to see how the Afghans have embraced these issues.

So thank you very much for your attention and for all your questions tonight.

PETTY OFFICER SELBY: Once again, thank you very much, sir, for your comments today and for your time.

Today's program will be available online at the bloggers link on dodlive.mil, where you'll be able to access a story based on today's

call, along with source documents such as this audio file and a print transcript. Thank you to the blogger participants and to Dr. Kem.

This concludes today's event. Feel free to disconnect at this time.

MR. KEM: Thank you very much.

Q: Doctor, thanks very much.

END.