

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE AT THE FIFTH ANNUAL MILBLOG CONFERENCE WITH MAJOR GENERAL DAVID HOGG, DEPUTY COMMANDER-ARMY, NATO TRAINING MISSION-AFGHANISTAN, VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM AFGHANISTAN  
SUBJECT: COMMANDO TRAINING OVERVIEW: SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES OF DEVELOPING AN AFGHAN ARMY DATE: SATURDAY, APRIL 10, 2010

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LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG (Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): Thanks, everyone. Usually, I'm behind a comfortable desk and you don't get to see my face, so this is a first for me actually in person. So I'm glad to see you. As to the bloggers roundtable, we're going to have a quick little session, if you have any questions of the blogger roundtable process.

But I'd like to welcome you all to a very special Department of Defense bloggers roundtable for Saturday, April 10th, 2010. My name is Lieutenant Jennifer Cragg, with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, and of course I'll be moderating the roundtable today. And I just want to say thank you to Andy (sp). Thank you so much for the milblog conference for allowing me to host this blogger roundtable -- (audio break) -- I want to thank her -- thank her personally, but I wanted to thank -- (inaudible). He was really wonderful, and he started coordinating this about three weeks ago -- four weeks ago.

So a notice to everyone in the audience -- I don't really have to say this on the phone -- please stand up and go straight to the microphone and ask your question, and please state your name and organization or web prior to asking your question. And just so you all know, there will be a transcription from this. We'll post it on [dodlive.mil](http://dodlive.mil) on Monday.

So without further ado, I'd like to introduce U.S. Army Major David -- general -- excuse me -- Major General David Hogg, deputy commander, NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, who's going to be discussing the Afghan Army commando training.

So, without further ado, sir, the floor is yours, and we'll go straight into questions.

GEN. HOGG: Okay. Well, listen, thank you very much. It's absolutely an honor to be able to participate in this fifth annual milbloggers conference, and I look forward to providing some information and some education on what NATO Training Mission- Afghanistan is doing in this current part here in Afghanistan.

As you know, we do have a lot of challenges here. We have issues with leadership, leadership development. We have issues with personnel systems, with logistical systems, a variety of challenges. But I want to highlight a gem in the Afghan Army, and that is really the commandos. The commandos are -- I guess to put it in basic terms, are high-end, light-infantry fighters. Over the past couple of years, (cadres ?) of CJSOTF, the special forces guys, we have elements from French special forces and United Arab Emirates special forces, that are partners with the Afghan commando program.

Right now, we have seven commando kandaks, or battalions, that are currently deployed in operational status. We are -- the eighth commando kandak is currently going through training. And then we will develop a ninth commando kandak -- basically, a two-brigade force of these high-end, light-infantry guys.

The amazing thing with the commandos is that their attrition rate is less than 1 percent. That means that 1 percent -- less than 1 percent of those forces that join the commandos leave before their term of service. And when you look at it, it really comes down to three keys. And that's the pay: they get paid about \$50 more than your normal soldier. It's about partners: they are partnered with the Special Forces ODA teams from the day they go through training, all the way through deployment into their operational battle space. And then the other one is predictability: they actually have a program put together where they go through -- I'm using all the Army terms -- the red, green, amber. When they're red, that means the commandos are home on leave; when they're amber, they're training; and then when they're green, they're in the operational fight.

And this is the model that I know that the guys that work the fleet-development side of the house are going to incorporate when they start working the liaison for the -- (inaudible) -- Marine type of fleet force here in Afghanistan. Me, personally, I'm the Army guy, so ministerial development and army training is what my responsibilities are.

And I think I'll leave it from there, and follow up with any questions as we get into some more details of what our commandos here in Afghanistan are doing.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. And also, I just wanted, just as a side note: there's a small delay, which you already noted. So when he's talking, you'll hear his voice a couple of seconds later. And also, once again, there will be a transcript, as I say. We'll have it available on Monday.

We'll go with the first question. So whoever would like to pose a question, please proceed to the mike.

Q Hey, sir. How're you doing? This is Troy Steward, from YouServed.com, Bouhammer.com. I talked to you when we had you on the roundtable a few weeks back. I talked to you then about UCMJ, and the lack thereof in the ANSF, and how that was coming along. Since we last talked, just wondering if things have gotten any better, or if you have anything -- if anything's been implemented to input some sort of a UCMJ with the Afghan forces, either ANA or ANP, hold them a little bit more accountable.

GEN. HOGG: Yes, that's a -- that's a great question. We actually had that discussion this -- or actually, this morning, at another meeting. And they do -- the Afghans do have a UCMJ program or a system. Their challenge, of course, is how that system is being executed. And our legal advisers that partner with the Afghan legal system as well as our inspector general that partners with the Afghan inspector general are continuing to make some progress.

I don't have numbers for you, as far as cases and stuff, because a lot of this is also at the lower level, down at the brigades and battalions and the companies.

But they do have a system. It still needs more work as far as the execution and holding folks accountable. But I will tell you that our discussions with at least the Afghan leadership indicate that they understand it's now the execution part which, as we all know, is the most difficult part of the whole program.

Q Hi, General. This is Christian Lowe with military.com. What is the primary mission of the Afghan commando units? Is it more of a direct action kind of thing, or are they doing counterinsurgency? And have there been any sort of successful missions, where you can point to their capture of a high-value target or a Taliban official or something like that?

GEN. HOGG: Okay. Great question. First of all, the organization of the commandos. We have the commando battalions in each of the regional command and corps areas. They do not work directly for the corps commanders, the Afghan corps commanders. They work for the Afghan commando brigade commander, who reports directly to the minister of Defense.

Now, as far as operations, they've been involved in a lot of operations. Their spectrum of operation, if you will, is the full meal. They do COIN. They're very good at that because they're Afghan; they understand the local culture and customs. They do direct action. They do the whole realm of operations, as you would expect of a light infantry -- high-end light infantry force.

If you remember back in February, we had a pretty serious attack here in Kabul. About 25 insurgents came through, infiltrated in, suicide bomb, VBIED, et etcetera. It was the commando kandak that went in in

support of the police and actually took the insurgents out. Within about four hours of the incident started, they had it under control. In fact, they did such a great job, the day that we graduated the 7th Commando Battalion from their training, the chief of staff of the army, General Bismullah Khan Mohammadi, awarded presidential awards to some of the commandos that were involved in those fights.

In the recent operations in central Helmand, the first units, the very first units into Marja were the commando brigades, or commando battalion, the kandak. They actually went in, took their objectives and set the stage for the rest of the forces to come on in. Unfortunately, during that fight they did lose two commandos that were killed and three were wounded. But it was a highly successful mission by this well-trained force.

Q Yes, sir. Tom -- (name and affiliation inaudible). My question involves -- congratulations on the retention of this force. My question -- (inaudible). How do you find people? How do you recruit them?

GEN. HOGG: Good question. The Afghans actually have a recruiting command, if you will. It is mentored and partnered by elements from NATO Training Mission Afghanistan. So it's a combination of the Afghan recruiters going out to local populations; it's a combination of the Afghan leadership engaging the elders from the local area, because it takes the verification of at least two elders when people enlist into the army. And they use a combination of traditional cultural methods as well as the going out and advertising.

In fact, we're starting a big advertising campaign in the south. It's about a \$1.3 million program where we are going to target -- when I say "we," I'm talking the Afghans, using their culture to target more folks from the southern sector coming into the army, because right now that's probably our lowest sector when you look at the demographics for the army.

Recruiting right now, though, the good news is there's -- back in about September, we recruited about 850-some folks, pretty dismal for a whole variety of reasons. In December, with the energy from the Afghan leadership, they recruited over 8,000 new recruits into the army. In fact, they overwhelmed the training system that we had set up.

And so far, the recruiting's been going great. We have right now in the army 112,779 folks in the army, which is about 79 over what we need for glide path to make 134,000 by the end of October 2010. So recruiting's going pretty good right now. We're going to hit some tough times historically as we go into the spring/summertime, because of the agricultural and other job availabilities that will pop up.

The Afghan leadership, both the chief of staff of the army as well as the minister of Defense, said, though, they will not have a problem getting recruits in. And I will tell you we will know how accurate that statement is probably in the next couple months as we go into the springtime.

Over.

Q Thank you, General. I'm Jack -- (name inaudible). And I was in Afghanistan in 2004 and 2005. And my question is related to what you were just discussing, with the Afghan National Army. So my question is, what has been the relationship between the people of Afghanistan and the Afghanistan National Army? When I was there, it was -- (inaudible).  
GEN. HOGG: The polls that they run here in Afghanistan basically show that there is a confidence from most of the local population to the Afghan army. And one of the things the minister of Defense is working very hard is, you know, it's all about honor and being a part of Afghanistan and the security of Afghanistan. When you go out and you talk to these younger troops, they'll tell you -- and I've hit them in a lot of the different regional base four-year training centers we have throughout Afghanistan. And you ask those young kids -- you go, "Well, why did you join the army?" And they kind of look at you, and they go, "It's my country. It's my duty and -- to defend my country." And so there is some -- they believe in their country.

Now, is that a hundred percent? Probably not. I think the pay raise had a lot to do with it as well. But as far as the local population, they trust the Afghan army as a general -- (inaudible).

Over.

Q (Off mike) -- General -- (off mike) -- your time. We're streaming this over (MyStream ?), over the Web, so we have some people asking questions from across the Internet. And one of the questions is -- and I can testify that, you know, here in '06, '07 this was very bad problem -- (inaudible) -- what are the Afghan military leaders doing about the drug abuse that is prevalent in the units, and is this a major concern of yours and U.S. forces?

GEN. HOGG: Yeah, the use of drugs is an issue. As we bring in recruits, one of the things that we do with recruits, we go through the medical screening, we go through complete biometrics and we also do urinalysis. The urinalysis rate in the Army is about 5.9 percent, as far as the new recruits. We have not done a personnel asset inventory like the police have done. The police have found out they're about right around 15 percent. It's actually dropped a little bit. Why that dropped, I don't know.

The interesting thing with Afghan society and its culture is that the -- marijuana is not frowned upon as it is in our culture. In fact, if a young recruit comes in, it is not grounds for dismissal for marijuana. What happens is, they will sign a statement saying "I'm wrong, I won't do it again," they thumb print it, and they're allowed to continue training. If they come up positive for anything else, they're immediately eliminating from the ability to serve.

Now, in the commandos, their standards are very simple: No history of drugs. And that's their standard in commandos.

And so it is a concern. It is something that we're working with, with the Afghan leadership, and more will follow on that.

Over.

Q (Off mike) -- thank you. This is Troy again from -- (inaudible). Your (highlights ?) haven't talked about the problems with leave, annual AWOLs. Sometimes those are the same things (among the ?) officers ANA and ANP. But -- (inaudible) -- what's going on to combat the severe AWOL problem and -- with those soldiers, I guess for lack of a better term (in the ANA and ANP ?) ? GEN. HOGG: Yeah, simple question, but you hit a whole bunch of areas.

Q Yeah.

GEN. HOGG: One of them is accountability procedures as far as the personnel (if it's a non mission ?) -- (inaudible). That's a work in progress.

When you talk specifically about the AWOL, what we find with the commandos, one of the reasons that the (ministry and the ?) commandos have such a low, low attrition rate is because their rotation policy. In the last two weeks, the Afghan leadership, the ministry of Defense has established a decree, a policy to start doing a rotation policy with their Afghan units and their officers. It has not been executed yet. It's still being worked as far as, you know, we've got ongoing operation and a lot of other things going on. But rotation policy is one of those things that will get at the high AWOL rate.

The other thing that the minister of Defense is working on through his (new ?) -- the parliament, the Afghan parliament, is to try and make AWOL as a national (shame ?). Once again, it's a cultural thing.

And so the AWOL rate last month -- two months ago, excuse me -- was about 2.4 percent. That's significant, because our goal -- our targeted goal was 1.2 percent. It was a spike up in the overall AWOL rate of the army. And -- (inaudible) -- into this issue, what we found is their solar year -- which would be kind of like our calendar year -- their solar year was ending. And so like what we do when it's at the end of the year, they cleaned up the books, and that's kind of where this spike came up, because a soldier is not determined to be AWOL until 60 days afterward; in other words, they've got 60 days to get back to the unit.

This last month's was at 1.2 percent. And 1.2 percent is just exactly what we want as far as the attrition rate. Lower is even better, but it all goes into how we grow this army.

The retention rate, though, was 84 -- over 84 percent, which is very, very high. It's higher than what we have in the U.S. Army. Our goal for the Afghans and the Afghans' goal is between 60 and 70 percent. So they basically gave all their numbers this months. It was absolutely -- (inaudible) -- monthly report. So that was a good news story.

Whether they're going to be able to continue that, I don't know. And I will tell you that when you look at the units -- (inaudible) -- specific corps and brigades, those that are in the fight have a little bit higher AWOL rate than some of the others. So that's why I think a rotational policy by the Afghans will make a difference. But once again, we'll see once they get -- (inaudible) -- what the actual results are. Over.

Q Hi -- (inaudible). This is Troy again. We have another question from the chat room that's very timely. Any idea how the Polish soldiers in country are doing right now with the tragedy that's going on -- (off mike)?

GEN. HOGG: First of all, you know, when the -- when the news broke here, it was -- it was very tough for us, because we have Polish soldiers that are part of NATO Training Mission Afghanistan. And you know, they'll get through it, but it's tough and our hearts and prayers go out to them. Absolutely a tragedy. And that's really about all I have right now.

I know that Lieutenant General Caldwell got all the Polish contingent that worked at NTM-A and talked with them late this afternoon just to let them know that our prayers were with them.

Over.

Q General, this is Jamie McIntyre. You may remember me as the former senior Pentagon correspondent. I now have a blog called [lineofdeparture.com](http://lineofdeparture.com), which is part of [military.com](http://military.com).

I want to ask you one of those sort of silly, oversimplified reporter questions that has, obviously, a very complex answer. But I would just be interested in your feelings on this, because I think it's what a lot of Americans are really wondering about. And the question is, very simply, do you think the United States and its NATO allies are winning in Afghanistan?

GEN. HOGG: (Chuckles.) You're going to have to define "winning." No, I'm just kidding. (Laughter.)

The -- I will tell you that we are making progress. We're making a lot of progress. But we have a lot of challenges ahead of us. When you look at the operations in central Helmand, the challenge right now is to hold a portion of it as we institute COIN strategy.

So I will tell you that we're making progress. In some places, we're making baby steps. In other places, we're making gains. And that's why I wanted to highlight the issue of the commandos. I think the operations that will happen, spring, summertime, will be a better indication of the direction that we're heading here in Afghanistan.

Not a great answer for you, but that's all I got. Over.

Q And one brief follow-up. What do you think is the most positive development that's going on right now? I mean, you mentioned the commandos; that might be it. But what's the thing that you look at that gives you the most cause for some optimism, however cautious that might be?

GEN. HOGG: I will tell you, the one thing that I've noticed here in the last couple months is the efforts by the Afghan leadership, specifically with the minister of defense and the chief of staff of the Army. They get it. They're working together.

And then when you look at the operation that ISAF did in conjunction with the Afghans, that was a completely planned, together operation. I mean, they sat down; they -- and I'm talking about the central Helmand mission -- they worked that together. It was -- it was -- it was a combined operation from the start. And that's the first time that that's happened at that scale.

And that gives me hope, because it was -- it was fairly well executed. We had some challenges logistically that we worked through. Part of that is because we hadn't built all the enablers for this army. And so when you look at logistics operations and some of the other enablers that we have in our -- in our force that's here in Afghanistan, that's one of the things that we have to continue to assist the Afghans with. But that to me was a pretty positive event, and it's not so much the execution, which was good, but the whole aspect of planning together of a joint combined operation.

Q Hey, sir, this is Cory Serrigan (ph) -- (off mike) -- so shy, but I'll talk to you.

GEN. HOGG: (Chuckles.) Okay.

Q Couple questions -- I guess it's really just about the alcohol problems with the Afghan -- ANA and ANP forces. Anything you want to highlight or discuss about any alcohol problems in the Afghan forces?

GEN. HOGG: You know, to tell you the truth -- (laughs) -- I don't know of any problems with alcohol with the Afghan forces. So if it's happening out there, I'm not aware of it.

Q Okay. And the second question is, how much do problems with recruits vary from what we have seen, you know, U.S. forces that we -- what you've seen in Iraq, from -- different from Iraq, same as Iraq? (Off mike) -- same mission there? Anything different? Or -- (off mike)?

GEN. HOGG: I think with any army you've got the same challenges. I mean, when you look at some of the challenges that we have with the Afghan National Army and the development of it, our own Army went through similar challenges and issues, at least when I first came in. I think the biggest difference, when you compare Afghan to Iraq, as far as bringing the soldiers in and just the whole challenges, is that

tribal piece is a big deal. We work very hard with the Afghans as far as trying to maintain an ethnic balance, because that still has a play here.

And so as we bring in recruits, they will go through a -- prior to going to basic training, they actually get ethnically balanced prior to that. And the kandaks, the battalions, are ethnically balanced based on a percentage that has been provided to us by the MOD. And it's something that we want to -- working with the Afghanis, we really need kind of a national standard for the ethnic balance to make sure that the Pashtuns, the Tajiks, the Uzbeks, the Hazaras and the others are appropriately represented in the force.

And that's why the recruiting campaign down to the south is so important. And that will come. I think we'll get more and more recruits in from the south as the security situation in the south changes. Over.

Q Hello, General. My name is Price Floyd (sp). I work in the public affairs at the Pentagon. Since this is a bloggers' conference, I was wondering, how many people do you know in your command are blogging? And do you encourage people in your command to blog?

GEN. HOGG: (Laughs.) Okay, now, let's make sure we get this straight. My boss is Lieutenant General Caldwell, and he is the master of the blog and the social networking. (Laughs.) And so it is absolutely encouraged. And one of these days I will actually do a blog, and that will be a first for me personally.

But we do have a lot of guys and gals in NATO Training Mission Afghanistan that are hitting the blogs. And we have two websites. We have, of course, the official NIPR webpage -- website, but we also have an unclass website that's out there that anybody can get into, and it is updated continuously. So social networking, blogging, it is a big deal for this command. And that is because General Caldwell has made it a big deal for us. And it's a way for us to once again educate and inform the folks out there what is going on -- the good, the bad and the ugly. Over.

Q Sir, Selena Copa (sp), IVAW active-duty patriot here. My question, sir, is regarding the blogging.

Does that include expressions of concern for problems with the mission that the soldiers may have? Is it free and open blogging, sir?

GEN. HOGG: Great question. I don't know. All I know is that folks are out there blogging. And most of the guys and gals that are blogging are probably hitting a lot of the good-news stories and also some of the challenges.

I also don't know about the other aspect. I know it's come up in the Army and in the military a couple times, but I have not seen that yet in NTMA. I know that there are guidelines that we have to follow, which is pretty standard. But I have heard of no instances where that was an issue or, you know, I've never heard General Caldwell not encourage folks to blog.

Over.

Q Hi, General. It's Christian Lowe again, with military.com. And while I don't have quite the experience and gravitas of Jamie McIntyre, I too will try and put you on the spot. I have a question and a related follow-up. Since we've got you here, is there anything that you can tell us that you've found out from your level about the recent crash of a CV-22 Osprey? Can you tell us anything about whether or not that was a shootdown? Can you tell us about survivors and how they're doing and the status of that unit? And then I had a follow-up.

GEN. HOGG: Okay. You're not -- okay, you're probably not going to like my answer, because, to tell you the truth, because of our mission here in the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, which is institutional development, on the operational side, until actually seeing it on the news, I wasn't even tracking it was an Osprey that went down. So I don't have the details on that. And I'm sure if I did have the details, I wouldn't be able to tell you, because it would be an ongoing investigation. So we're -- just all really have been asked to kind of wait out on that one.

And I apologize for the answer. I know it's not what you're looking for, but it's all I got for you.

Q It's not what I was looking for, but it's what I expected. But I had to ask.

Related to that, what sorts of -- GEN. HOGG: (Chuckles.)

Q -- what sorts of enablers do you have for the Afghan commandos? I think I noticed the other day that there were some photos and video posted of an exercise that the Afghan commandos did using air assets and Mi-18s, (things like ?) that. What have they been trained on? And what's the down-the-road plan for providing them with some kind of vehicle support, aviation support, that --

GEN. HOGG: Oh, hey, great question. The -- of course, you know, the Afghans are partnered with the special forces, and so when they do their joint operations, they get additional assets. It could be a gunship. It could be fast movers. It could, in some cases, indirect support.

The Afghans themselves have 60-millimeters mortars as one of their indirect system, which is absolutely critical in this type of an environment. They train on it at Camp Morehead, where we do the commando training. And they're actually very good at using the 60- millimeter mortar.

The air assaults that you probably saw on the news -- that's using the Afghan Army Air Corps. They have Mi-17s. That's their primary lift helicopter. We also have about nine Mi-35s, but they -- we will eventually phase those out for something else to be determined.

So they do have the lift, and they have sniper capabilities -- we train (them on ?) snipers -- and then basic up-armored humvees as far as your basic ground transportation.

In the future I think what you'll see is that the commando formation, as we form a -- really a special ops-type division, will maintain basic light infantry equipment. They're all equipped with M4s. They do have a version of night-vision devices. They'll maintain their 60-millimeter mortars, and then they'll have (two sort of ?) weapons. Really we field them with M249s and -- now I'm having a brain dump. But anyway, they've got (NATO ?) heavy machine guns as well as light -- they've got the SAW. And that's really about what we're looking at right now with the commandos.

They get some other (Gucci ?) equipment that the rest of the army does not necessarily get. But because of the amount of training these guys go through -- it's about a 12-week training program -- they need it for their operations.

Over.

LT. CRAGG: Sir, we're going to take one more question after Troy, and we're going to wrap up the roundtable to get ready for next presentation. So, Troy, ask your question or questions. And if someone has one other question after Troy, please step forward. Q Hey, sir. Troy again from YouServed. The first one -- I have -- definitely have two. First one, a current topic: How have the comments and the (immediate ?) infighting between our administration and the Karzai administration affected your operations or the soldiers' morale -- (inaudible)? There have been many Whiskey Tango Foxtrot moments over there (in the talks ?). Are you guys kind of bewildered -- (inaudible) -- back here by that? I'll start with that question, and we'll see where we go next.

GEN. HOGG: (Laughs.) Okay. As far as that stuff -- no effect on the mission. I mean, we're moving out -- way outside our lane. And you know, one of the things that -- you know, we worry about the things we can control, and the things we can't control, we just move on with it. So it's not an issue as far as morale of the troops. And it has not affected our mission here in Afghanistan as far as what we do in the NATO training mission.

Over.

Q On the previous roundtable we had -- this is a follow-up from them -- we talked about the ANP, ANA forces', mostly commandos', acceptance of new weapons systems, more delicate, and they're harder- to-maintain weapons systems, like (U.S.-based ?). How is that coming alone? Are they liking that? And are they able to deal with that -- (inaudible)? And how is the old ammunition eradication process happening?

I know before you talked about -- (off mike) -- R2-D2 rounds.

GEN. HOGG: Okay, great questions.

The -- first of all, as far as the NATO weapons, they're working. And I'll tell you, General Bismullah Khan, I mean, he'll go down all the way to the individual soldier level. And he will tell them that, hey, you've got to take care of your weapons. You've got to clean them. Is it a good weapon? It's performing well.

What we have not done yet, and it is something that we have to do, they have a place called the central workshop here in Kabul. And it's kind of a depot-level maintenance facility.

You go in there and you have -- it's almost a museum, when you look at some of the equipment that they have refurbished: all the former Warsaw Pact weapons. They're to the point where they would actually pour metal and make parts for AKs -- (inaudible) -- you name it, it's very impressive.

And so our next level is to get their -- the Afghans the ability to do the same thing with NATO weapons, as far as being able to maintain them at the depot level. (Inaudible.)

Now, as far as the ammo, we've got known 5,900 metric tons of unserviceable ammunition that needs to go away. We're nibbling at it. We're not making the gains that we would like to make. But we have laid in caveats, as far as future expenditures in certain areas, that if they don't destroy this potential -- (inaudible) -- situation, then they don't get certain things funded. Nothing that will affect the actual warfighter however, because that is a priority.

So we still have a lot of work. In fact, I was at a deputies committee meeting at the palace this morning. And not a whole lot of -- not a whole lot of decisions yet, but we're working it with them.

It is -- it is a big issue, because a lot of this old ammunition, and it's a lot, it considered national treasure. And what we have to do is be able to convince them, number one, that if -- you know, we said 14.5 -- above 14.5 millimeters is what we want to destroy. We'll go 23 millimeters now problem there. But we've got a lot of stuff that just needs to go away.

We've got to convince them that it's okay, because we are replenishing it with good, serviceable ammunition, which they need for the fight. But it's still a challenge. And it's still something that we'll continue to work.

Over.

LT. CRAGG: And sir, we have one final question.

Go ahead, sir.

Q Yes, sir, how are you doing? My name is Pete (sp). (Inaudible.) I was with the office of military cooperation in 2004-2005. I was there when the national military academy started up. The first graduating class graduated in February 2009.

Just wondering if you had any experience with that group that's graduated and how they're doing.

GEN. HOGG: Okay, great question.

As far as with the 89 that graduated from that third class, I have not personally had any interaction with them. I was going to go with this latest class that just graduated in May, that graduated 212 new lieutenants into the Afghan national army.

Their assignments were done by lottery. And so we try and eliminate any potential for keeping them here in Kabul. In other words, we've got them to where they're being assigned down to platoon level out in the corps.

We just did a cornerstone ceremony this week for the new Afghan defense university, which was a very -- I was very impressed with the event. And so the national military academy of Afghanistan is alive and well.

We increased the student -- when I say we, I mean the Afghans -- increased the student enrollment from 400 to 600. We have about 650 cadets just starting this new class.

The 60 or, excuse me, the 50 are medical students who will go through the first year at the military academy. Then they'll go on to the medical academy, if you will. And once they get their degree -- once they become doctors, then they will join the army again.

And of that, the goal is 10 percent female. And so the national military academy is working well. It's a good institution. And it's one of these things that we want to be able to sustain and maintain over time. And the Afghans are all for it.

Over.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

And if anyone has any follow-on questions, let's say next week, you can send it to [bloggeroutreach@dma.mil](mailto:bloggeroutreach@dma.mil). With that's sir, let's turn it back over to you. If you'd like to, end with any closing thoughts before we wrap up today's roundtable.

GEN. HOGG: Well, Jen, first of all, I want to thank you.

You know, being new to the mil-blogger world about, I guess, three iterations ago, it's actually very enjoyable. The questions are good questions. They're the right questions. And some of them are

challenging and some of them I don't have answers for. But that's just the way it is.

I do appreciate being a part of this. It's a great way to get the information out and get the word out, as far as what's going on here in Afghanistan. And I look forward to the next opportunity to talk with you all.

Thank you very much.

END.