

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH MAJOR GENERAL DAVID HOGG,
DEPUTY COMMANDER-ARMY, NATO TRAINING MISSION-AFGHANISTAN SUBJECT:
PROFESSIONAL MILITARY EDUCATION WITHIN THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY TIME:
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SGT. LEE MCMAHON: Hello. I'd like to welcome you all to the
Department of Defense Bloggers Roundtable for Tuesday, March 16th, 2010.
My name is Lee McMahon. I'm with the Office of the Secretary of Defense
for Public Affairs, and I will be moderating our call today.

A note to our bloggers on the line. Please remember to state
your name and blog or organization in advance of your question. And if
you have to place your phone on hold during the conversation, please hang
up and call back in because we might hear your hold music.

Today, our guest is Major General David Hogg, deputy commander-
Army, NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan. Major General Hogg will discuss
the professional military education within the Afghan national army.
At this time, I'd like to turn it over to General Hogg for any opening
remarks, and then we'll go to questions.

Sir, the floor is yours.

GEN. HOGG: Well, thank you very much. And appreciate the
opportunity to talk to folks about something that's probably not as sexy
as some of the other operations going on, but is absolutely important to
sustainable capacity here for the training side of the house for the
Afghanistan national security forces and, specifically, the Afghan
national army.

What I want to talk about a little bit up front is just kind of
lay some groundwork as far as what has been done and what we are doing
for professional military education. And what we're talking about is
those professional schools -- the development of professional officers
and non-commissioned officers that will be the future leaders of
Afghanistan.

And a lot of people don't understand or don't realize that we
actually have a national military academy of Afghanistan, which is a
four-year program similar to our West Point. In fact, it's modeled after
West Point. In fact, on the 18th, there is a graduation of 212 brand-new

soon-to-be lieutenants for the Afghan national army. And it is their second graduation since the institution started.

It is a four-year program. Of these 212 students, we have about 58 that will go to the Afghan national air corps and become aviators. We've got six that we will maintain in the institution itself because of the technical skills they have. They will become instructors. And then we have about 158 or so that will be assigned and have been given assignments all the way down to platoon-leader level throughout the different corps here in Afghanistan.

In fact, we did that in a very transparent model. The cadets, in about a four-hour program, individually came up and drew their assignments and then read their assignment out loud to the crowd. You had Afghan news media. You had about eight major generals from the Afghan national army and the army G-3, Lieutenant General-- (inaudible) - - all present. And then they signed in their orders.

And the reason we did the transparency piece is because in the past, it seems to have been for these cadets to be given jobs like here in Kabul and ministry of defense levels. And the position is real simple. They need to go down to the units where they need the leadership down at the fighting force.

And so that was kind of a forcing function, and it actually worked out very well. And the G-1 of the Afghan national army was very pleased with that because it took the pressure off of him of all the phone calls he was getting from members of parliament, et cetera. The other courses we have -- we do have an officer candidate school currently run by the French. It produces OCS officers. And we're starting our first female OCS here in April. It will be -- there are 44 females that actually applied and tested; 42 were accepted. And they will be taught by Afghan -- female Afghan army instructors. And we will have, of course, advisers out of the United States from actually the 95th Division who will come here to be, train-the-trainer to run this first pilot program for female OCS program.

In addition to that, we have similar programs that we find in any of our institutional army to include the command and general staff college. We had a graduation, two weeks, about 73 officers graduated from that course and will then go back to their corps or their brigade, whatever unit they came from to apply those things that they've learned.

In addition to your standard piece, we do have a counterinsurgency training center. And that is -- we run it, but it's in conjunction with the Afghans. And the primary focus of that course is actually to train Afghans to counterinsurgency doctrine and counterinsurgency operations. But we also do coalition as well. And that is something that is really taking off.

And, finally, we do have a non-commissioned officer academy to include a sergeants majors academy where they are producing professional non-commissioned officers.

So that's kind of in our institutional side of the house. Along with that, we are developing and bringing on line our different branch schools to train the different specialties from armor, artillery, signal, military police, engineers, et cetera. And these are the professional course that will, as they stand up, will also support the officers as well as NCOs as we continue to develop a professional force here in Afghanistan.

And I think what I'll do is I'll stop there and start fielding questions because I'm sure there are a lot of other questions and areas that will pop up that I have yet to address.

Over.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Chuck, you have the first question.

Q Yes. Good evening, General. And thank you for speaking with us again. Appreciate it.

Chuck Simmins from America's North Shore Journal.

I wanted to ask about the program at the academy. At West Point, the cadets during the summer get the opportunity to do a great many different things, including some experiences that kind of point them in a career direction.

How similar is the Afghan military academy to providing that kind of an enriching experience?

GEN. HOGG: Yeah. Chuck, it's always good to talk to you again. And here's the thing. We're getting there on that program slowly but surely. It's not as well-defined or as well-executed as we have at West Point right now.

But I'll give you a couple of examples. I remember this past summer going down to the 3rd Brigade of the 201st Corps. That's their armored mechanized brigade. And they had the cadets that had decided that they were going to go armor were out there with the brigade commander and they were actually shooting T-55s and learning about the tanks out there as far as a separate curriculum attached to the academy.

And then this spring, they actually are going to send a group of Afghan cadets to compete at West Point on the Sandhurst competition. And then so there are programs, but I will tell you it's not as well-structured yet as we have at West Point.

In fact, we just increased the size of the class this year. There will be 600 cadets -- actually 640 because there's 40 cadets that were medical students that will go through that first year and then transition into the national medical college.

And consequently, you know, we have 600 somewhere -- we were at originally with 400, understanding only 212 graduated this year.

So there's a program there. It's not as fully developed yet as what we have at our own military academy.

Over.

Q Thank you.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Andrew, you have the next question.

Q Great. General, Andrew Lubin, Leatherneck Magazine. Thanks for reengaging. The last time was very good, and we appreciate you coming back. GEN. HOGG: Well, you guys didn't beat me up too bad, so I appreciate that.

Q Well, yeah. We're kind of -- sometimes, there's good media out there. What can I say? Even us.

General, when you're dealing with the KMTC, how do you deal with the literacy and language issues? They're not -- you know, while they're intelligent, they're not educated. How do they handle this? Or how are you handling this?

GEN. HOGG: A great question and a great challenge.

The Afghans overall -- and, you know, the literacy rate is fairly low -- but you've got to understand in the culture, they learning by doing. And it's amazing when you go to KMTC or some other regional warrior basic training centers, what you'll see is we'll have instructors -- they will show them how to assemble and disassemble an M-16 weapon. And they pick it up by doing versus being in a classroom.

And so we do a lot of show-and-tell and a lot of hands on, and that makes up for what we would consider as an official handicap of not having a lot of literacy capabilities. Now, with that, we are addressing the literacy program and the literacy problem. And so what we have pushed down all the way down to brigade -- some of what we did with the old BCEP program back in the '70s and the '80s -- we had a program for literacy that goes all the way down to brigade level. And then we are going to start instituting in basic training, in the first two weeks, kind of a zero week when the new recruits show up, literacy training to get them to the point where they can read their serial number on their weapon, to be able to write and read their name. Very, very basic literacy.

And so those are programs that are works in progress. The neat thing about this whole thing is the Afghans very much want to be literate. It is a motivating factor as far as keeping them in the army and also, bringing them into the army. There is a thirst to become literate because, as you know, when the Taliban was here, they pretty

much destroyed the educational system in this country. And what you're having is a bubble of folks that did not have the opportunity for going to elementary or high school. And now we have kind of a new generation that is starting to get educated, and they actually have some pretty good education systems here for the -- for your students. Not all those types, though, will enlist, but we do pull from throughout the hinterland.

Over.

Q Well, hey, guys, there's not many. So let me follow up.

General, then is it worthwhile trying to run the branch school at the same time? If you look at artillery, what you're doing at Fort Sill works over there. Then if you give the guy, you know, a D-30 manual, it forces him to learn how to read and write at the same time, doesn't it? Can you do that?

GEN. HOGG: It absolutely does. Andrew, you're absolutely right. And the one thing I'm saying that, for an NCO, they've got to have a basic third-grade education in the Afghan system and then, of course, the officers have to be literate as well.

So, you know, when we look at the branch schools and we're targeting them, initially, the non-commissioned officers and the officers -- those branch schools will only enhance the further education and literacy of the army.

Over.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Nick, you have the next question.

Q Yes. This is Nick Mottern. I write for TruthOut.org and also ConsumersForPeace.

Sir, a two-part question. Earlier, Brigadier Simon Levy was on a roundtable, and he said that he needed 2,000 more trainers in addition to the thousand that he had already. I don't know if you're part of his organization or not.

But I was curious if you do need more trainers. And, also, we're now into the war since 2001. Is what's going on with training of the Afghan forces any different now than it was a year ago? And if so, what would you say would be the principal difference in what's happening at this time versus what's happened over the last period since 2001?

GEN. HOGG: Nick, great question. And Simon actually works for me, so literally, we work these training numbers all the time.

The first piece is with the Afghan trainers. They have not fulfilled their full task skill or requirement for their training commands, similar to what we have done in the United States in our army

to a degree. And so they're still short, and they are still providing -- refreshing the Afghans to ante up the trainers they need so we can produce a quality force. And it comes down to a quality force.

Recently, the chief of staff has basically issued a directive pulling 30 non-commissioned officers from each corps to augment our training institution. And so they're slowly but surely getting the message, and it's a discussion we have almost weekly with them.

Now, since that time, as far as the additional trainers on the NATO side, I will tell you, in January, the United States Army deployed to us an infantry battalion to help thicken our training structure. It did not necessarily cover all the -- (inaudible) -- the requirements of NATO but it was absolutely value added and made it possible to increase the quality of the training. And we're working with our Department of Defense as well as NATO for the fulfillment of these other requirements for training.

Now, when you talk about the piece since 2001, the big thing -- if you look historically and you look at the numbers as far as resourcing, money-wise and personnel-wise, we really started building this army about three years ago when you look at as far as putting the effort into it. Why that is, I couldn't tell you, but I just know I've seen the charts and the -- and the pieces.

What we've got now is the branch schools are changed from the past. The way we are adjusting and training the Afghan students at the RBWTs -- or the regional basic warrior training -- has changed. They have doctrinal manuals now that they have produced in Dari all the way down to the squad level.

We have a whole lot of different resources. And what that is enabling us to do is not only produce the quantity but also have the quality associated with that. What we don't want to do is just send kids out there to be cannon fodder. That's not what an army does.

And the emphasis has changed dramatically. People understand that if we're going to build sustainable capacity for the Afghan national army, then they must have a professional force. And we still have a long ways to go, but there have been some changes.

Recent discussions with some folks that we just deployed some additional battalions, kandaks, down to the south. And the feedback we're getting from the units is that supplies have gone up. The quality of the battalions and the quality of the soldiers is starting to come up. And so we can see a definite comparison to having the appropriate number of trainers for the students.

And, of course, that sounds like a blinding flash of the obvious, but it just hadn't happened in the past. And so that's what I would present to you.

Over.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Kevin, you have the next question.

Q Could I just ask -- I wasn't clear on one thing about the NATO request for trainers. I think that the brigadier said that you needed another 2,000 from NATO in addition to the thousands that are there. Is that still the case?

GEN. HOGG: Right now, on the current CJ4, we were short 1,900. What we had of that, we have 815 current pledges. But we are short right now, positions without pledges, 1,033. Now, with that, once again, the Army -- the United States Army and also the Department of Defense is looking at how we can fill those positions that have not been pledged yet as a bridging tool until such time as NATO either fills that position or we end up having to discontinue to train those positions. That's how important this mission is.

Q So two-thirds of that group of trainers of 3,000 would be essentially U.S. troops? Is that correct?

GEN. HOGG: I will tell you, the manpower requirements -- just so your numbers are straight because you're throwing 3,000 out. The manpower requirement for CJ4 is 2,325. We've got 424 of those on hand. And we have 815 that have been pledged; i.e., the NATO nations have come up and said they will provide bodies for specific positions.

And then we have another 53 that are what we call bilateral agreement that will transition. These are nations that have come up on a bilateral status and said, hey, we've got 53 guys here or however many it is. It's a total of 53. They will transition to the CJ4.

So we are short 1,033 right now that have no NATO pledges or promises to fill at this point. And, right now, we're going through a sourcing process, and it'll continue on through the rest of this week. And we hope to get some more numbers in there.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Kevin Baron with Stars and Stripes, did you have a question for the general?

Q Yes, thanks.

General, you mentioned just in your last statement that the quality of battalions of soldiers has definitely gone up with all of these improvements that are happening. I spoke with journalists who are with Secretary Gates in Afghanistan just last week and said that, at Camp Blackhorse where they were, they learned that the training program was increased from seven weeks to nine weeks, specifically because the Afghanistan units were -- they just weren't making the grade. They were failing the courses.

Can you explain a little bit more about why that change was made or what goes into that? How many units have failed? What's the rate that had to go back and do more? And then how does that affect the push to speed up the development of the ANA to meet, you know, the administration's goals for the transition, you know, by July -- to start the transition by July 2011?

GEN. HOGG: Yes. Okay. Good. Good question. So you understand how this program works, you know, we recruit from across Afghanistan. They go into the recruiting command there. We do the ethnic balancing prior to kicking them through basic training.

The soldiers go through basic training. Once they have completed basic training, which is an eight-week program, they go into the combined forces -- or the combined fielding center, which is where we build battalions.

And so what Secretary Gates saw last week when he was here at Camp Blackhorse was the CFC or the kandak training which was an eight-week course. We are extending it to nine weeks. We're doing it for a couple of reasons.

Number one is to buy a little more time to work with the Afghan leadership and get them trained up. Number two is to make sure that the training teams from the coalition side of this house get there on time because the whole success of the CFC program, the building of the kandaks, is dependent on two major pieces. Number one, the partner unit being there -- the same ones that are going to be fighting with them whatever place they get deployed to, starting out from day one with the training -- and number two, making sure that the Afghan leadership, which is pooled from across the unit and assigned to those battalions, shows up.

You get those two people on time or those two groups on time and they go through the complete training thing, normally, there's not an issue with certification. Where you have issues with certification is where the partner unit shows up late or comes up inadequate, i.e., four guys out of 16, as an example, or the Afghan leadership, key people like the 4 or the XO or the 3, in some cases, the commanders do not show up. Then we have issues.

And that's where you have guys that we put through retraining. Since I've been here, there's been, of the kandaks that we've produced recently, there's been at least three that have had to be retrained because they failed something within the baseline of the certification.

And what that normally -- ends up happening is an additional week of training and then a revalidation for certification. Understand this is the first time that the Afghans go through any type of collective training. And in some cases, there are some individual trainings that we have to get through, but it's normally on a collective training side of the house.

So I hope that answers your question.

Over.

Q That does if I can follow it just to ask, you know, the size of each of these units. And you said three had to be retrained and go through an additional week. So that's -- you said an original eight. They went through one more week. So now all the units are going through an additional week longer; is that my understanding?

GEN. HOGG: We've changed the program from eight weeks to nine weeks. And so all future formations that go through the CFC fielding will go through a nine-week program. And that still allows us to maintain the glide path that we have to keep for the building of the army for the operational needs, but it also gives us opportunities to produce a better quality force. And when I say "we," it's the Afghans training Afghans. And we've got our teams down there working with them. So it gives us -- it's the right thing to do based on what we've done on the analysis and making sure that we get some quality out to the force.

Over.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Walter, you have the next question.

Q Walter Pincus with the Washington Post.

General, in the whole training field, starting with literacy, how many contractors do you have working on those? In one of pieces I wrote, there is Raytheon, in the past, has a literacy program contracted out. I wonder if you can go through from the -- particularly, the literacy side and then all the way up the chain -- basic training, combined training, officer's training. Where do the contractors fit into this?

GEN. HOGG: Okay. I'm not going to be able to give you exact numbers, and I'm not going to talk who has the contract. But I will tell you where we have contractors at.

Let's start down at the literacy program. That is a contracted program for the basic Dari. We also have a literacy program for English training, which is contracted out, in some cases, the Defense Logistics Institute is running that contracting or that program.

That becomes important for when we're training pilots. Pilots have to have English proficiency, as an example. When you look at drivers training, we have some contractors that work the program training Afghans to train drivers. We are in this process of -- in fact, we just got our first group of Marines in that will help augment each of the regions to improve on the driver's training because we basically need -- we've got a lot of drivers that we've got to train.

So the Marine Corps is coming on board as well as our contractors that are down there and our coalition guys. As you go into

some of the ministerial areas, that's where you find the majority -- a lot of your contractors is on the ministerial development piece, be they GS G-1, logistics personnel, et cetera at the ministry and the general staff level.

We also have some contractors that support the commando training program specifically on mortars, drivers training, and English language. The guys are going to run me the numbers, but we've got at least about 2,000 contractors out there on the Army side, but I'll come back with the right numbers so that I get at least the correct quote.

But the contractors are part of this program, and the reason they're part of this program is we don't necessarily have all the green suiters that we need or there's a specific skill set that is just better off to bring a contractor in to do for a short period of time or for a period of time and then transition either out of that program or transition it to the Afghans, which is what our goal is to transition to them doing the training with us just providing oversight.

So I think one of the things that you'll see over time is, as the quality of institution increases, you'll see a decrease in the need for our trainers and advisers and contractors. And that really kind of is the exit strategy when you look at what we do for the Afghan national army.

Over.

Q So, in effect, I mean, just -- if somebody can get the exact numbers, but if they're roughly 2,000, we have roughly as many contractors as you have trainers -- in-service trainers.

GEN. HOGG: That's correct. And like I said, I'll get you the exact numbers on what we have for contractors right now here on the Army side.

Q Great. Thanks very much.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

The next question I have was submitted online by Grim from BlackFive.net on the topic of professional military ethics education for the Afghan army. And I'll read this verbatim.

"Specifically, I'd like to know how they are adapting our own military ethics, which are rooted in just-war theory, which is itself rooted in Catholic teachings, to the Islamic culture of Afghanistan's military. Have we tapped any of our Muslim chaplains to try to find an Islamic root for these principles?"

GEN. HOGG: We actually, within the Afghan army, they have the ministry of cultural affairs -- religious and cultural affairs -- that are part of the army itself. And so we're not -- we're not inserting our values -- we're basically the golden rule values and the standards of what a professional military is all about. You know, it's having

standards. It's attempting to eliminate the corruption. It's attempting to put in a merit-based system for promotions versus nepotism.

And then so, you know, the basic standards that we expect of a professional officer, that the international world kind of expects as an international standard, is what we're using in conjunction with the Afghans. And that's kind of the direction that we're going there. But we're not putting in -- we don't do the -- we do it based on standards -- standards and discipline and what an armed force is supposed to be able to do. And the rule of law is preached.

The rule of law is important. And it's an international standard. And most of the Afghans that we deal with in the leadership, they understand that. And so it's just a continuous training like we do with our own force.

Over.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Did anyone come on line that had a question after we began?

Q Yeah. Paul McLeary from DTI.

SGT. MCMAHON: Okay, Paul. Go ahead.

Q Hi, General. Thanks for talking to us.

I'm curious about once you -- once these officers are graduated and they're given their assignments, how are you handing out the assignments? Are you sending most of these guys to the south and east? Are you splitting them up around the country to, you know, hot spots?

And, also, are you training them in logistics at all? Or is this just for combat command?

GEN. HOGG: Okay. Very good question. I'm glad you mentioned the logistics piece. I've been spending most of the week dealing with logistics issues.

The way it works -- we suggested and recommended to the GS G-1 that they do a lottery system. And so the GS G-1, with our adviser, a guy named Colonel Barry Schmidt (ph), work together and they came up with -- the Afghans came up with their solution. And it's not as simple as just assigning people to go somewhere. They have to take in consideration ethnic balance. And so as they looked at the vacancies throughout the corps and the new units they are forming up, the different branches, you know, whether you're an armor or infantry guy, a signal guy, an engineer guy, et cetera, they broke that all down and they drew assignments by their branch specialties.

Based on their branch specialties, there is a need for X, Y, and Z throughout the corps and certain ethnicities for each of the corps in order to maintain that balance. And understand that the main effort is

in the south, but there are also requirements in the other corps that need to be filled. But the majority of them -- I say the majority of them -- a good majority of them were assigned to the 205th Corps and the new corps, the 215th Corps, that is stood up down in the Helmand Province.

And so based on that, they went through and they did their individual pulling of their lottery ticket, if you will, and reading their assignments. So it was a very, very fair system. It also covered logistics as well.

And so we had a group of officers that were logistics officers. In fact, when you look at the logistics -- I'll break it down to you a little bit. You had -- they broke it down by the corps and the shortages. So they had 69 infantry guys. You had 20 armor, 20 artillery, 15 comm guys, 21 logisticians. We had ten that went into mine clearance engineering, nine finance, and then 49 -- not 59 -- I stand corrected on the -- going into the aviation side of the house.

And like I said, it was a very kind of interesting way that they had it, and it was very fair and very transparent. And when you look at the 203rd Corps, 205th -- you know, the corps -- the 205th Corps got about 40 of the soldiers, and the 215th Corps got 41. And, you know, so they kind of broke it out and they used their system, their assignment systems to fill the vacancies that they had for young officers.

Over.

Q Great. And where's the 205th Corps located?

GEN. HOGG: 205th Corps is located down in Kandahar.

Q Okay.

GEN. HOGG: They were the ones who were also involved in the operation down in Central Helmand. The 215th Corps is just stood up and is not operational yet, but some of their units have been in the fight down in Helmand as well. So they'll eventual split out Kandahar and Helmand where Kandahar will be the 205th Corps. Helmand and Nimruz will be part of the 215th Corps area of operation. Over.

Q Thank you.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir. Did anyone else come on line with a question?

Okay. Well, I think we have time for one or two more. Chuck, did you have another question for the general?

Q Yes, I did.

General, when there is classroom discussion and such and carrying out into the field, what language is used? What language is

used to the radio? What language is used to give orders, written or verbal?

GEN. HOGG: Great question because you've got the challenge between Dari and Pashtun, which are the two primary languages here.

Q Well, and then do the other ethnic --

GEN. HOGG: Go ahead.

Q Do the other ethnic groups have to speak either one of those two languages? The Tajiks?

GEN. HOGG: Yeah. It's generally Dari or Pashtun. In fact, my young aide who is actually an E-4 in the United States Army, he's a -- what we call a "zero nine lima (ph), " which means he actually grew up in Afghanistan; he just got his citizenship in November; and he speaks Dari and Pashtun. And it amazing the places we go -- the majority of the folks will speak Dari, but certain areas, it's Pashtun-specific just because of the mix or where they're at.

And so Dari is what we're teaching for basic literacy, and it will vary from unit to unit. Not a great answer, but it's kind of a mix and match depending on the unit, the organization, and where they're at. If they're Tajik, they're probably going to speak Dari. And, of course, the Pashtuns are going to speak Pashtun. The (Hazara ?), the Uzbek and the others will either speak Dari or Pashtun. Normally, it's Dari. Dari seems to be fairly common, but like I said, you get to the east and south. You'll get more Pashtun known there.

Over.

Q Thank you.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

Andrew, did you have another question for the general?

Q Yes, I do. General, one of General Bill Caldwell's first moves was to turn around and pay the Afghan army and police a living salary. Have you seen a corresponding emphasis and interest from them as far as both recruits in your classrooms now that they theoretically don't have to steal to make a living?

GEN. HOGG: Yeah. Okay. We're talking about the pay raise. The pay raise was actually started back in September. In October, it was finalized by both the MOD and the MOI. And then, in December, it was actually kicked in for the police -- excuse me -- for the army retroactive to October.

It was a \$45 increase in pay which brought them to up \$165. And then depending on where they're working, they get anywhere from 65 (dollars) to \$95 extra depending on the district. And thin there are

certain specialties that will get additional professional pay like the commandos get an extra \$50 a month.

The impact on that is then fairly dynamic. Number one, they get enough money to take care of their families an honorable fashion, which is one of the things that they want to be able to do. As far as the impact on presenting, you know, you said fast, I'll just put the question down.

I couldn't tell you if it's had an impact on some of the buffoonery going on, because it's still going on in certain areas. And with the partner units, they'll work on that.

But it has given them the money to take care of their families. And I think as we continue to develop a professional force, we should be able to purge some of the bad apples out of the organization. But that's going to take time.

And so that is a -- one of our emphasis as we continue to work with our Afghan partners is to make sure that they're doing the right thing all the time versus some of the time. But it's still a challenge.

Over.

SGT. MCMAHON: Thank you, sir.

We're going to have to wrap up it there for today.

Q Could I ask just one more question?

SGT. MCMAHON: If you can keep it fairly short. We're running out of time.

Q Very short.

The U.S. is running drone operations in Afghanistan, and I'm wondering if Afghanis are part of advising constantly on the use of these drones and whether you are training Afghanis to use drones or to supervise their use.

GEN. HOGG: Okay. A little bit out of my lane, but I can tell you that, with the Aerostat that we have here in Kabul, that's pumped right into the Afghan command and control center. So they are able to see the Aerostat (pictures?). As far as the unmanned aerial systems, they are not controlling. Now, what the unit -- the operational units, the IJC is -- because a lot of the headquarters, especially in the east, are merged. I mean, when you look at the 203rd Corps headquarters, you have one of the assistant division commanders and his -- and the staff from the 82nd that actually live and work in the 203rd Corps headquarters. So they're getting the feeds in there, and so I will tell you, on a partner side, it is a joint venture in some cases but not in all cases.

And that's probably about the best I can give you because I'm just not part of that operational fight. We're kind of the institutional side.

(Cross talk.)

SGT. MCMAHON: Sir, thank you very much for that.

We're going to need to wrap it up there, and I want to give General Hogg, if he has any final comments, an opportunity to share those.

Sir?

GEN. HOGG: First of all, thank you for the opportunity. I actually enjoy these after the first icebreaking. I do want to follow up. We've got 2,765 contractors total within CSTC-A NTMA. That also includes police, not just army. And those are advisers and mentors for training and training support only. So that covers down both on the MOD and MOI.

So that's across the board for all trainers. Our required strength for this organization, which encompasses everything from C2s to the training pieces, 5261. So that's a data point for you that you had asked for.

And other than that, like I said, thank you for the opportunity to talk about what we're doing here for the Afghan army. As you know, we've got a lot of work to do. The key for us is going to be transitioning responsibility and ownership to our Afghan partners. In some cases, that's going very smoothly. In other cases, we've got some work to do. And so I thank you for your support, and I hope to talk to you again soon.

Over.

SGT. MCMAHON: Sir, thank you.

For the bloggers that didn't get a chance to ask their second question, please send them to bloggeroutreach@dma.mil. Today's program will be available online at the DOD Live Blogger Roundtable link on dodlive.mil where you were be able to access a story based on today's call along with source documents such as biographies, this audio file, and print transcripts.

Again, thank you, sir, and thank you to our blogger participants. This concludes today's event. Feel free to disconnect at this time.

END.