

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH LIEUTENANT GENERAL WILLIAM CALDWELL, COMMANDER OF NATO TRAINING MISSION-AFGHANISTAN AND COMBINED SECURITY TRANSITION COMMAND VIA TELECONFERENCE FROM AFGHANISTAN SUBJECT: TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE AFGHAN NATIONAL SECURITY FORCE OVER THE LAST YEAR TIME: 9:36 A.M EST DATE: TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 9, 2010

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LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG (New Media Directorate, Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs): Hello, sir. Can you hear us? This is Lieutenant Cragg.

GEN. CALDWELL: I can hear you. Can you hear me okay?

LT. CRAGG: Yes, sir, loud and clear.

With that, without further ado, we'll go ahead and get started with the roundtable, sir. I know we have a number of bloggers on the line. I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense's Bloggers Roundtable for Tuesday, November 9th, 2010. My name is Lieutenant Jennifer Cragg with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, and I'll be moderating this roundtable today.

A note to everyone on the line: Please remember to clearly state your name and organization you're with prior to asking your question, and also respect the guests' -- guest's time by keeping the questions succinct and to the point. And please place your phones on mute after you've asked a question so we can make sure we hear our guest today.

And speaking of our guest, it is Lieutenant General William Caldwell. He's commander of NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan and Combined Security Transition Command.

Sir, I'm going to turn the floor over to you so you can discuss the training and development of the Afghan national security force and the overview for the last year. Sir, the floor is yours.

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, thanks, Jennifer. I appreciate that.

And to all those on the -- on the net today, thanks for joining in with us, and we're glad to have you here. I'm glad to be able to speak with many of you again.

And as you may have heard yesterday, we had the pleasure to celebrate our one-year anniversary with both the Afghan minister of defense and the minister of interior, and many of the nations who are contributing troops to the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan. I'd tell you it was a -- it was a superb event that was symbolic of our close association and cooperation with our Afghan partners and the international community at large. Together, we believe we have made significant progress (sic; progress) and reversed previous negative trends in the development of the Afghan national security force. This progress has really been essential to the overall effort in Afghanistan, as it will ultimately be up to the Afghan national security force to ensure that their people and their country are secure and stabilized.

Since the activation of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan last November, the Afghan national security force has made truly significant progress with the support of all the collaborating stakeholders, expanding their size and improving their quality. This progress has demonstrated an establishment of an enduring foundation for the generation of soldiers and police, the dramatic expansion of their end strength and their improved professionalization that's occurring.

In the first year of NTM-A, we assisted our Afghan partners to field a -- what we had called an infantry-centric army and security-focused police capable of participating in counterinsurgency operations. Before November of last year, 2009, there were insufficient resources which led to a focus on really just quantity alone. Recruitment and assignment of soldiers and police with little to no training, paying them less than a living wage and the inability to address leader development were the result of this lack of resources.

After the activation of NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, the focus shifted to improving the quality, building the foundation for the professionalization of the national security force, while also maintaining the capacity to increase their end strength. Today we have built a foundation for the Afghan ministries of interior and defense to recruit, train and assign police and soldiers across their country.

All members of the Afghan national security force now attend basic training, which includes survivability, professionalism and literacy training, before being assigned to their units. Pay has been increased to provide an income that will help prevent desertion and graft.

Finally, a dedicated focus on developing Afghan leaders has led to increased leadership capacity and capability and accountability at all levels. These measures together have created a basic ability to instill elements of professionalism within their force.

As we look into this next year, we're going to build on our combined efforts and sustain our momentum toward developing an Afghan

national security force that is dedicated to serve and protect the people of Afghanistan. We will support our Afghan partners here to expand the size of their Afghan national security force, build their support and enabling forces and help them develop self-sustainability systems and institutions and begin the process to professionalize this force.

Despite the progress achieved thus far, now is not the time for us to slow our momentum. We must continue to maintain a sense of urgency that we have created over this last year. In fact, it's going to be required if we're going to overcome the significant challenges that still remain.

There will continue to be officer and non-commissioned officer shortfalls in the Afghan National Army, and there are still many leaders in the army, and especially in the police, who require additional training, education and experience in order for them to embrace an ethos of service and stewardship, both hallmarks of a professional army and police force.

Literacy also remains a challenge, as only about 15 to 18 percent of Afghan national security force recruits can read and write or recognize numbers. Without the basic ability to read a map, write down a weapon serial number or read a bank statement, Afghan national security force recruits are greatly at risk on the battlefield and become highly susceptible to corruption in garrison.

Additionally, losses from attrition remain a constant challenge. In the simplest terms, we call attrition the endemic enemy of professionalization, as it greatly inhibits the continued expansion in both quantity and in the quality of the Afghan national security force. Each of these limiting factors can be overcome with the support of the international community and our Afghan partners. Trainers from across the globe have the unique skills and experiences to help the Afghans develop the capacity to generate, train, equip and sustain their security force.

Leader development, reduction in attrition, and the capacity to develop their own forces require instructors to do so. They require specialized trainers from our NATO and contributing nations. These additional trainers are required to enable growth and to continue to improve the quality of the force.

As the Afghan national security force continues to grow in size and capabilities, trainers -- especially these specialized trainers -- are required to help enable the balancing of the ANSF and building of the enablers or support forces needed for self-sustainment. Conversely, a lack of specialized trainers significantly jeopardizes the mission of developing a self-sufficient ANSF and prevents the transition of institutional capacity; or as my civilian boss, the NATO secretary-general, says, no trainers, no transition. With specialized trainer capabilities, we are optimistic that we can achieve our shared vision for the future. That is a vision where a(n) Afghan is secured by Afghans.

The significant progress that has been achieved (in/and ?) the challenges we have faced this past year are highlighted in our Year in Review, which was literally just published yesterday. If you've not had a chance yet to read it, we can provide you a copy either through e-mail or you can download it at our website, which I think most of y'all know is just plain old NTM-A.com. We still have a long way to travel, but we know that with continued support, we can sustain the momentum into this next year.

And with that, I'll be glad to take any questions y'all have.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you so much, sir.

Anand, you were first on the call. Please go ahead with your first question.

Everyone, also please limit it to one question each. I believe we have 10 on the line. We want to make sure that everybody gets a chance.

So Anand, please go ahead.

Q This is Anand from Registan. NTM-A has reported that the ANP will have about 23,000 training seats capacity at end state but has not discussed how many training seats the ANA might have at end state. NTM-A has reported that the ANA has about 23,000 training seats capacity right now. From other NTM-A releases, my best estimate is that the ANA might have -- that is, the Afghan National Army -- might have around 33,000 training seats at end state. Is this in the general ballpark? Could you elaborate? Over.

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, now, and let me -- first of all, let me just say thanks for being on. And you are right: We are seeing about 23,000 at the end state for the Afghan National Police. And for the Afghan National Army, on any given day right now, we've got about 20(,000), 21,000 that are in training within the country on any given day. And at end state, we in fact are going to continue to grow that number. I will pull out the exact figure here shortly and make sure I give you it accurately, and I'll have it in just a second for you. But we have done that calculation, making an assumption of what, you know, our enduring end state would require. And I'll grab that and have it here momentarily. Over.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Anand.

Spencer, you were next. Please go ahead.

Q Thank you. General, this is Spencer Ackerman with wired.com. One of the points that you make in the end state review is that attractive pay from private security companies is a contributing factor to attrition. What measures have you taken to discuss the amount of pay that private security companies are offering soldiers throughout -- and policemen throughout the Afghan National Security Forces? And are you still relying on security -- private security companies to fill some

of the shortfalls that you identify? Have you let out a contract for private security companies to help train the ANP, for instance? And if so, who won it? Thank you.

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, Spencer, hey, good to talk to you again. First let me just say, on the private security companies, I think you may -- most of you know that the president of Afghanistan has made a decree that they will all be eliminated. The question is just how soon and how quickly that is all going to occur. Right now they've already taken down about 23 what they call illegal private security companies. Those are private security companies that had not been properly registered with the minister of Interior. There are still another 52 that are registered with the minister of Interior that are operating that will eventually also be taken down.

We are working very closely with our Afghan counterparts, the international community, UNAMA and everyone else as we move forward towards a date which has been tentatively set right now of about the 15th of this month, where they want to come to a framework agreement on the continuing way ahead as to how they approach this with the private security companies. So there's still more to come on that. But the president of Afghanistan has said there will not be any private security companies that will be operating within their country under the current mechanisms that are in place at this time.

Another thing we've done -- you know, because obviously we are concerned that, obviously, those organizations did pay more than, you know, a regular soldier's pay or a policeman's pay. And, you know, that's something that was continually looked at but obviously is going to be negated here very shortly, once all these security companies have been brought -- again, I'm not sure how the final framework will be worked out, but they're -- they will no longer operate in the -- in the manner in which they're operating today within the next couple of months. And again, they're sorting that out as we go forward. Does that help?

Q It does. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Spencer. Edwin (sp), you were next. Please go ahead with your question.

Q Thank you for the time, sir. Secretary Gates and Admiral Mullen have indicated that Afghanistan should be able to handle its own security by 2014 and that NATO should endorse that timeline, which was proposed by Afghan President Karzai. Today you mentioned that the literacy rate, at about -- is -- stands at about 18 or 19 percent, and the attrition rate among recruits, they both pose major hurdles for the training mission in Afghanistan. My question is, will Afghan forces be able to operate independently and handle their own security by 2014?

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, Edwin (sp), good to talk to you again. Yeah, I think key here is, they're talking about December 31st, 2014. It's the end of December in 2014 when they're talking about -- that President Karzai has said they want Afghan security forces in the lead. It doesn't mean that there will still not be coalition forces here in

support of them, but the primary lead for security in this country must have been established with the Afghan security forces in the lead by the end of 2014.

And on the -- on the current growth projections and what we have seen over the past year, there's no reason to believe that that's not an attainable goal. By all accounts, it -- that is something that should be able to be achieved. I mean, we already see in very -- again, in very small areas, very small, select areas, where Afghan national security forces in fact are in the lead today -- again, very isolated cases, but already demonstrating the capability to do so.

So the answer to that question is, yes, we fully support and endorse and in fact, by all accounts, believe that we can in fact achieve that and have the Afghan security forces in the lead by the end of 2014.

Over.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Edwin (sp).

Paul, you were next. Please go ahead with your question.

Q Thanks for speaking to us this morning, General. It's Paul McLeary, from DTI.

As far as the long-term goal of training the Afghan police, I assume you're training them now mostly as a -- to fight the Taliban, you know, and as a paramilitary unit. How are you going to transition them to being beat cops and doing things like community policing?

GEN. CALDWELL: That's a great question. And the way, Paul, we've been taking that on is we've teamed very, very closely with the international community, specifically EUPOL. EUPOL and I talk, you know, on a regular basis -- I mean, several times a week. We attend all our meetings and sessions together. We look at them as really being the key for civil policing here in this country.

And clearly, the way we are instructing police today does require us to ensure that they have survivability skills and capabilities. You know, they're -- they have the highest loss rate -- even more so than in the army almost in this country today -- on their -- from, you know, the way they operate, in very small groups, independently, throughout Afghanistan. So we do spend a lot of time teaching them survivable -- survivability skills, in addition to law enforcement skills.

But the civil policing is still a little further away. It's going to take some time. So our focus now today is on security. We're taking on leader development. And in fact, EUPOL and us tomorrow will conduct our first provincial and regional commanders police conference here for three days, teaching leader development skills to the -- to the leaders, because we recognize that's also a shortfall. And then over time, you know, again, several years from now, we do see that

transitioning this whole effort towards civil policing. But it won't be something that will occur in the next year or two.

Over.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Paul.

Leo, you were next. Please go ahead with your question.

Q Yes. Hi, General. Leo Shane, with Stars and Stripes.

I wanted to follow up on the question (two back ?) about that transition in 2014. You said that the literacy rate -- I'm assuming that the small groups of folks who are working independently now or showing some level of independence there are folks who have a level of education, who are literate, as you said, can write down those serial numbers off of guns. If we're looking ahead at the next four years, how do you -- how do you tackle that problem as we move ahead to getting the entire security force up to speed?

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, I guess, Leo, first, let me -- let me say that when we talk about the -- you know, the illiteracy rate, what we're talking about is those who have just come into service -- you know, the recruits that are joining the army and the recruits that are joining the police. So there are those who go through our officer candidate schools; they are obviously literate. There are some that go right into the NCO programs; they are literate. And when I say literate: you know, a third- to sixth-grade level capability.

Within those, to join the army and the police as patrolmen or basic soldiers, you know, there's only about a -- you know, on the average, 15 percent are literate. So what we have instituted is mandatory literacy training. Did not exist last year. It's now being implemented across all the army and police programs, so that as soon as you come into the army or police force, you're tested so we know exactly what your literate level of understanding is. That's how we feel very comfortable in our data that we have.

And then we put them through 64 hours of literacy training, taught by Afghan instructors, Afghan teachers that we've hired. And what we have found, at the end of that we give them the Afghan Ministry of Education first-grade test, and we're finding there's about a 94-percent pass rate at the end of that 64 hours for these young men to demonstrate the capacity and the capability to pass the first-grade level and have then basic, you know, numbers capabilities, writing their name and that type of thing. I think what's real important to understand is, just because you're illiterate does not mean you're not intelligent. These young men are very, very intelligent. They have some very incredible street-savvy skills, their intellect, but they just haven't been educated. And so what the education gives them now is that ability to read and write, and allow them to really start the professionalization.

Any given day of the week right now we've got about 27,000 people in literacy training programs, and thus far we have trained and already had tested over 25,000.

And so that's generally where we are today. We're continuing to expand this program. Our goal is by about the end of December, that any given day, we'll have about 40(,000) to 50,000 in literacy training programs, and then hopefully by next summer, because we're going to continue to expand this out to the operational units, we'll perhaps have as many as a hundred thousand doing some form of literacy training either towards the first grade level, the third grade level or the sixth grade level.

We've also added it into a lot of our other courses, our specialized courses that we're starting to teach now -- the transportation courses, the maintenance course, the logistics courses. We're actually putting them through two full months of school, literacy training, before they even start to learn their specialized skills, because we've recognized that unless they have some ability to read and write, that we're going to be severely hampered in really moving forward to build this into a self-sustaining and enduring security force.

So literacy becomes very, very important for us at this point, something that we just took for granted when we were operating inside of Iraq, but here it's one that has to be addressed, and obviously we're moving very aggressively forward to in fact do that.

Q Great. Thanks.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Leo.

Gail, you were next.

Q Thank you. LT. CRAGG: Please go ahead with your question.

Q General, Gail Harris with the Foreign Policy Association. I was wondering if part of this training -- if you are now or plan to do training for the Afghans in types of operations to support the military operations, such as intelligence and maintenance.

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, Gail, that's a good question. We were not doing any schools at all of that type last year. Last November there was not one specialized school that was operating.

Today we have stood up and now have in operation 10 specialized schools out of the 12 that we've identified that are necessary that we're bringing on line.

So today, if you said, well, what are your specialized -- you know, the 10 that we have, they are like intelligence, human resources, finance, logistics, engineer, religious and cultural affairs, infantry, artillery, military police. And the one that we have not yet brought on line is, you know, like the armor school. But literally our signal

school that we have just opened -- I'm trying to remember, okay -- Saturday, this -- you know, on the 6th of November. So we're slowly bringing that on line.

But this is what we talk about, how we need specialized trainers. We need specialized trainers to come in and work in these schools with us, for us, one, we -- to train the Afghans on the basic skills, but then, two, to start training the Afghans to become the trainers in these schools. And that's really essential for us.

And so that takes trainers, more than what we have today. Today we've got about enough to open the school up, to get it operational, to just train Afghans but not to really take on and put in a robust train-the-trainer program, so the Afghans can, you know, hopefully, for then -- you know, about a year from now, become the primary trainers in most of these schools..

Over.

Q Thank you, sir.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Gail.

Christian, you're next. Please go ahead with your question.

Q Thanks, General Caldwell. This is Christian Lowe calling you from military.com. Hope all's well.

I'm going to ask you to climb up to about 50,000 feet here for a second, for this question. You have a very -- you have a unique perspective because you've spent a lot of time in Iraq; you had some time at Leavenworth to let those impressions of that conflict sort of ferment and stew a little bit; and then you just spent the last year in Afghanistan. And I'd like to know, from your perspective -- you know, this December deadline is hurtling at the White House for, you know, sort of an overall strategy report on Afghanistan. From your perspective, how is the war going there?

I mean, you know, your job plays a huge role in the U.S.'s -- or the administration's ability to make good on its promise of beginning withdrawal in July of next year. What is your overall assessment of how the war is going, especially based on your experience in Iraq?

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, you know, Christian, what I would -- I would say is that we've made significant progress here in the NATO training mission since last November. And you're right, I've been on the ground just a year now, and it truly is amazing. I mean, Lieutenant General -- retired -- Jim Dubik, who we've had out here now twice doing assessments on us, asking us to do -- you know, just come in and give us some -- you know, an outside look on how well we're operating and what we're doing, you know, has commented that from when he had been here a year ago to when he was just recently here, it was quote-unquote -- generally, he said, nothing short of a miracle in terms of what this organization was able to accomplish.

I mean, it truly is remarkable. There are so many negative trends that were occurring last year that we were able to arrest and reverse, and actually now have built some real momentum. And, you know, my boss -- like General Petraeus here likes to say a lot, it's about getting the inputs right. And that's exactly where the focus was for us this past year. You know, we had to get the resources set; we had to get the right strategy; we had to get the right organizational construct put together; and we had to make sure we had the right people. And by having gotten those inputs right, we've really seen the outputs starting -- (inaudible) -- finally, not only in terms of the numbers that we're putting through training, the additional leader development programs that we've brought online, the special-ed schools that are now standing up, the doubling and tripling of our training capacity here within insight of Afghanistan, tripling the number of trainers that were here now that were not here last year.

But we're also seeing it out in the fielded force, in the way they're starting to operate. And, you know, again, that's from people on the ground who have -- who've been here before that have come back and started to say, hey, we really see a difference in the way the Afghan security force is operating. You know, and for us, we -- our first response is, well, we hope you can.

Because a year ago we had no standards to graduate from any of our training programs. There were none. Today there are. We actually have midterm test and end-of-cycle test. A year ago you could -- we didn't require you to qualify on your weapon. I mean, if you can imagine, we were producing an army that there was absolutely no requirement to qualify on your weapon before you went through basic training. Today we have almost 100 percent qualification by every single soldier and policeman that goes through basic training. I mean, just a remarkable turnaround in some of the basic soldier fundamental skills that didn't exist a year ago. So we are producing a much more capable, confident and effective policeman and soldier than we did just 12 more months ago.

We've also taken that on in the collective training programs. You know, a year ago we barely had enough trainers to be associated with when we formed organizations to put them through a collective training program. Since that time now, we in fact have a very robust training team that works with them. We've extended the time period that we put them through training. We've recycled about seven different battalions, saying they were not meeting our standards to go out and operate in the field, and put them back through additional, you know, week or weeks of more training as a collective unit before we had let them go.

So, I mean, we've really taken the time to instill some really standards-based training, something that we habitually do in our own military back in the United States and we've now brought here to Afghanistan. And the Afghans are seeing that and understanding that too.

And then we've brought in Afghan trainers. You know, a year ago there were no Afghan trainers. Today, you know, we've got about 1,800

that are army Afghan trainers and about 800 that are Afghan National Police trainers. We're still growing that. We're still certifying them. But they're there, they're operating, and they're able to take on and start leading some of the training.

So in terms of building an -- you know, the base to make it self-sustaining and enduring, we have the momentum. We're not there yet; I mean, I'm realistic about the challenges we still face today, and they are there, you know -- that we still have leadership challenges, we still have the literacy challenges, we still have the losses-through-attribution challenges. But I am also very optimistic about where this thing can go, having watched the last 12 months of what occurred on the ground. You know, I'll tell you, if you talk to Minister Wardak or you talk to Minister Mohammadi at the MOI and the MOD, you know, they're both extremely optimistic about what they're seeing and where this force is going.

You know, I always have to remind them, we've got to be holistic still, though, about the challenges we face today, because there are some out there, and it's important to recognize them and to continue to take them on. But I'm actually very encouraged.

So when this review does occur in December back in Washington, you know, to us, a good-news story has been the evolution of the training mission here in Afghanistan and what has occurred.

You know, you can use other examples, like if you -- if you just look at how the security occurred for the Kabul Conference here in July; if you even look at election security, you know, last elections, last year, there was almost no cooperation and coordination between the army, the police, the national director of security, the NDS. I mean, they just -- there was no real dialogue and coordination. This year, a tremendous amount of meetings occurred and organizational planning was taking place, with all of those organizations working together as one team, outlining duties, responsibilities.

So I just get -- I am; I'm very optimistic about what is in the realm of the possible, having seen what the Afghans have done over the last year. Over.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Christian.

J.D., you were next. Please go ahead with your question.

Q Yeah, hi, General. This is J.D. Leipold from Army News Service. The confidence levels -- obviously, with training come increases in confidence levels. How would rate the increases in leadership, from the NCOs up to the senior officer level, with the training? How are these soldiers' confidence -- are you seeing a huge increase in confidence or -- leave that open to you.

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, I have seen a lot more confidence. I -- you know, part of that confidence occurs because we finally have gotten this instructor-to-student ratio right in our officer courses and in our

NCO courses. We weren't producing many NCOs last year. You know, last November we only had the capacity that we had put in place to produce about 1,900 noncommissioned officers a year, and yet we were growing an army of 134,000 at that point.

And so, I mean, we were already behind the power curve in developing the leadership that was necessary to operate inside this force. And so there were -- there just weren't -- I mean, the NCO training was really almost nonexistent. You know, today, you know, we're up to about 7,000 going through training, you know, on an annual basis, and we're continuing to increase that capacity to do that. And really what really does make a difference is -- it's the fact that we have enough student-to-instructor ratios -- they're, you know, low enough, or that -- you know, they can in fact spend the time with each of the students to teach them the basic skill sets that are required to enable them to feel comfortable that, you know, they can go out and take on what's necessary.

The other thing we've done is, you know, a lot of the NCOs were taken right out of the training base and put through a program to become a noncommissioned officer, which is good in one respect, in that you're getting some qualified people with some good training, but what they didn't have yet was experience, and they didn't also have education.

And so we've taken on both of those and we've started these -- what we call our -- we have in each of the corps now what we call a TLC course that's specifically for -- Team Leader Course. And the intent there is to go out and look into the army, find young soldiers who have been there for some period of time that have experience, and select them that you think they show leadership capability. We bring them back for a four-week, right there within -- in the core area, a four-week TLC course and then, at the end of that, graduate them as noncommissioned officers. And during that four weeks, they also get some literacy training in addition to their -- you know, the technical and tactical skills. So, you know, that in fact is helping to start give them much greater confidence.

And then within the officer side, you know, we are in fact producing them through the four-year National Military Academy of Afghanistan. The class that, you know, just started last year since we were here came in with 600 new cadets. Well, right now it's going through the screening for the next 600 that will enter in March. So we are starting to produce larger numbers of well-educated officers in their force, and then of course we have now put in place enough of these six-month officer candidate school courses with a good student- to-instructor ratio that they're coming out of that course a lot more confident too. Over.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, J.D.

And then, Susan, you're next. Please go ahead with your question.

Q Hi, General Caldwell. This is Susan Katz Keating. I write my own blog, and I'm also writing a book under contract to Naval Institute Press.

And my question is, sir, you know your warfare, you know your history. Are there any connections or parallels that you can draw between what you're doing now and other examples from military history?

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, there are. I mean -- I mean, in Vietnam, you know, we actually had a very mature process that had been put and built into place. And, you know, we still talk about perhaps there's even lessons from that that we have not fully inculcated into our Department of Defense mechanism.

But the people that I receive over here into NATO Training Mission, CSTC-A -- the two commands that we, you know, melded together into one and just call it NTM-A, basically, now -- you know, are individually selected, told to prepare for deployment, and then deploy over here. And so they arrive, and then we incorporate them into our program here.

You know, during the Vietnam period, you know, they actually had the CORDS program and many other things; MACV was established. And they actually did take time and develop them as advisers for up to six months in training with -- you know, it was an interagency kind of team, with language training associated with it, before they would deploy them over to serve as advisers working with the -- you know, the South Vietnamese Army. So there are some real lessons there, and we've tried to look at that and draw as many as we can that we can incorporate into what we're doing.

Over.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Susan.

And I know one other person had called in at the very beginning of the roundtable. I wanted to get his or her name. Can you please provide that at this time?

Q Yes. This is Carl Forsberg, with the Institute for the Study of War.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Carl. Good introduction. You're next with your question. Q Great. Well, thank you, General. A lot of media reports have suggested that the new ANA brigade deployed to Kandahar, the 3rd Brigade of the 205th Corps, has been largely ineffective in combat, if not sometimes a liability to the operation. Given that, do you have a basic assessment of how the new units in Kandahar have performed, things like attrition, and whether partnering is improving proficiency according to the theory of how that should work?

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, no, you're exactly right. The 3rd Brigade of the 205th has had significant problems. And they just replaced that brigade commander. So they started at the top, recognizing they had poor

leadership that was in charge of that organization that was causing -- obviously setting the stage for a lot of the problems that they were having.

The second thing is -- is they're being better partnered with now. Partnering really is absolutely essential to be effective. You know, as we say, we do the initial base training and then the initial collective training through the training mission here, and then we field the organization out to the field. But once it gets there, it needs to be continually trained even further. It needs to have its partners working very closely with them, to further enhance and develop, you know, the basic skill sets and the collective skills that they've learned so far. So we see that as absolutely essential.

And then, of course, feedback we get from situations like 3 of the 205th has led us to change our collective training that we were doing for the first nine months, which was at about eight weeks in length, to now going to nine weeks in length, because we've recognized there are some basic skill sets, collective-unit-type skill sets, that needed further development and refinement that even in the training base we weren't even able to fully exploit and bring up to the level that was necessary before they deployed.

Over.

Q Right. Thank you, sir.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Carl. Thank you, sir.

Anyone else that I've missed? (No response.)

Okay, we're going to quickly go around the horn. We have about six minutes left. So Anand, a quick follow-up question, please.

Q Yes. Hello. Can you hear me?

LT. CRAGG: Yes. Please go ahead, quickly.

Q This is Anand from Registan, again. I had a -- I had asked this question actually during the last roundtable, and perhaps you cannot answer it because of operational security. Could you, potentially, provide the list of countries that are currently training the ANSF? It has been reported by NTM-A that over 20 countries now train the ANP that are not part of NTM-A. I -- and if this is -- if there are operational reasons this cannot be disclosed, could you ask the MOI minister and the MOD minister if they could answer the question? Thank you.

GEN. CALDWELL: If I -- Anand, if I can just make sure I got the question right, right now today we have 29 different nations that actually have either policemen, soldiers or civilians that are currently a part of the NATO Training Mission with people on the ground here serving with us as part of this organization inside of Afghanistan. There are an additional 20 other nations that provide some kind of

support in kind, whether it be equipment, monetary resources or things of that nature, but do not have people on the ground operating with us. Which gives us about 49 different nations contributing, but only 29 with actually people on the ground here.

You know, we're very open about -- if you're -- I don't know if you'd asked which are those countries, and if you want to know that, we'll be glad to share all of that. There's nothing classified about any of that.

Is that what you wanted? Over.

Q Yes. And I'd asked that also during the last roundtable. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

Sir, did you want to go ahead before I turn it over to Spencer?

GEN. CALDWELL: Yeah, let me just -- one thing I do want to say also to Anand. He had asked that question earlier, what we're moving to right now in terms of the sustainment base for the Afghan National Army in terms of the training base.

Our capacity that we're building towards is 22,000. So there's not a tremendous amount of additional training capacity that we're going to bring online for them that we don't currently already have, but one thing we are doing is making sure that in each of the Regional Training Centers that we've put up in each of the regions around of the country, many of them have temporary facilities there right now, and we are actually building permanent facilities so that these become an enduring capability for the Afghan National Army to use so they can, you know, train regionally around the country and not have to do it all at a couple of military training center(s).

Over.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Spencer?

Q Thank you. General, the "no trainers, no transition" line in your report is a really stark one. Are you trying to sort of concentrate NATO's mind in order to get this shortfall redressed at the Lisbon conference? And where are the major specialty shortfalls you face right now?

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, I -- what I would say is, you know, it's the secretary-general really that first came out with the mantra, "no trainers, no transition." And we fully supported and embrace what he said because he is, in fact, accurate. If we're unable to train the speciality skills, if we're unable to get these courses opened and get the throughput occurring that needs to happen, then in fact we're going to be delayed in how quickly we bring on the security forces and give them that enduring, self-sustaining capacity. So it's -- that whole institutional piece is so important.

But it will take the speciality trainers for us to do that. And you know, again, we've talked and said today we're short about 900 NATO trainers to be a part of this mission. And we have gone through and tried to prioritize and identify and provide, you know, to all the NATO and coalition partners exactly what those skill sets are, how many we need, where we'd like them to operate inside of Afghanistan, what -- at what training centers, at what institutions and academies. I mean, we've really done the detailed work.

You know, the thing that I can say so far is, you know, this past year, we've really focused on building an infantry-centric warfighting force and put a lot of effort there. We are very fortunate the secretary of Defense from the United States provided us additional U.S. combat forces. They gave us, you know, an entire infantry battalion out of the 10th Mountain Division. And then, later in the summer, he gave us, you know, basically an additional battalion's worth of more soldiers so that we could actually get at and do a very thorough and concise job on doing the warfighting training. And so that we were able to accomplish. In fact, you know, both the Afghan National Army and Police were able to meet their, you know, growth goals three months ahead of schedule.

But as we move forward -- when I say "specialized trainers," one of the major areas of specialized trainers we still need are police. You know, they're the most critical skill set because, you know, as soldiers, we've gone through and we've identified within the police training programs all of what we call "green skill sets" -- those skill sets that can be taught by a soldier of any nationality. But within the police training, there are some skill sets that are blue and require law enforcement capabilities to train it.

So where we can, we have put military forces into our police training programs to teach the green skill sets, the survivee skill sets and those types of things. But we still need additional police, Gendarmes, Carabinieri, you know, the kind of specialized police trainers that do exist within the NATO and coalition forces, but, you know, we don't in fact have resident within the United States.

Over.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Spencer.

Edwin?

Q Yeah. Sir, I just wanted to verify that, as a result of the literacy programs currently in place, Afghan forces should be operating at an acceptable literacy level by 2014. Is that correct, sir?

GEN. CALDWELL: That is correct. By the end of 2014 --

Q Okay.

GEN. CALDWELL: -- we -- in fact, as we looked at the throughput that will occur and the level of the training that will occur out in the fielded force, that in fact we will have it to levels that are acceptable to enable it to be an enduring, self-sustaining force that will continue to professionalize and move forward.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Edwin.

Paul?

Q Yes, sir. I know the United Nations has quite a bit in experience -- quite bit of experience training police forces around the world. Are there any talks about bringing the United Nations in to provide some trainers for the Afghan police?

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, as you know, we are here under a U.N. mandate, is the way the International Security Assistance Force, of which we're a subset, exists here within -- inside of Afghanistan today. And we do -- you know, we do have police trainers. Like, recently Jordanian police trainers joined and became a part of NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan. So we do have police capabilities from around the world that we continue to dialogue with and talk and offer them the ability to become a part of this overall effort, because we do -- we see that as absolutely imperative that it's -- this is not just a NATO mission, but a NATO and coalition partner mission, especially in areas like police training, where we -- where we have a real void.

We do have the European Gendarmerie force as a part of the NATO training mission, and they have provided us, you know, Carabinieri and Gendarmeries and the Guardia di Finanza and those type of forces that are part of us. But again, we still need them in greater numbers than we currently have today.

Over.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Paul.

And, Leo, any further questions?

Q I'm actually all right. I'll defer to the next one.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, great. Gale?

Gale, going once, going twice.

Christian.

Q Yes. Thanks, General.

You answered my -- part of my question, but not the sort of macro question. And that was, what is your sort of opinion on overall success in Afghanistan and progress in Afghanistan, not just in the training realm? Do you think the administration is on track for a -- beginning phased withdrawal in July 2011?

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, I guess what I would say is, you know, this is -- it is a long-term mission. I have seen an increase in the capability of the -- you know, because I do travel around every week throughout Afghanistan. And I in fact, you know, am seeing progress in the way that the Afghan security forces operate. But it's still going to take time.

But I'm also very optimistic about where this entire effort -- not just the training mission, but the entire effort is going. You can see a change. You know, just talking to the people of the perceptions they have about the security of their country, their -- their desire to, you know, move forward and find themselves in a position where truly Afghans are going to secure Afghanistan is what they all want. So you know, I'm very optimistic about where this mission can go. But I think it's, you know, really critical to say I'm also realistic, though, about the challenges we continue to face in the future. So if that helps a little more?

Q Yes, thanks.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

At this time, I'm going to turn it back over to Lieutenant General Caldwell. J.D., Susan and Carl, if you have any follow-on questions, we didn't get a chance to ask or call on you, please feel free to forward them to me, and I'll get them to NTM-Alpha.

Sir, at this time, I'll turn it over to you for any closing thoughts for today's roundtable, so the floor is yours.

GEN. CALDWELL: Well, thanks much.

Jennifer, what I'd just tell everybody there is, you know, like, first of all, I want to thank you all for joining in and participating in this. And secondly is, truly on our website we make that available to anybody. There's no password or requirements to get onto it, and we really do try to post quite a bit of information there. We operate almost in a completely unclassified manner in this organization. And that if any of them want more specific data, we'd be glad to pull it together and provide that back to them. And again, Jennifer, they can route that through you and you can get to us, and we absolutely will get back to them.

We do a tremendous amount of data collection and analysis. We have an entire element devoted to that here. So there's probably -- anything they would ask, we probably have tracked or monitored in some shape or form almost at this point in time, with over about 150 different

data slides that we update and go through every month in a fairly deliberate manner.

But I will tell you that I actually am very excited as I start my second year here serving in Afghanistan and look at where this mission can go because I see us continuing to build on the professionalism within the Afghan security force. The challenges we face are sizable, and -- but I'm confident that the progress we have achieved thus far can in fact be sustained through our partnership with our Afghan partners, the support of our NATO and our contributing nations. And again, it's the sheer perseverance of the men and women serving here in NATO Training Mission, both the military and the civilians, who continue to make just an incredible difference every day.

I mean, I know I've said it, but I am. I'm realistic about these challenges, but I truly am optimistic that we can achieve the shared vision that we have with our Afghan partners, with them one day, you know, finding themselves with Afghans securing Afghanistan.

And I guess with that, Jennifer, I'll turn it back over to you. Over.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you so much, sir. And just to remind everybody, you can access the audio file. And the transcript, once completed, I'll send it to everyone via e-mail and also load it to DODLive.mil.

Today, you've been listening to Lieutenant General William Caldwell. He is commander of NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan and Combined Security Transition Command. Thank you so much, sir, for talking to us today. And thank you for the bloggers and online journalists who called in. Please feel free to disconnect at any time. This ends today's call. Thank you, everyone.

END.