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# Building the Police through the Focused District Development Programme

It was not until 2006 that the international community fully recognised the importance of an effective police force for tackling the growing insurgency in Afghanistan or became aware of the scale of the problems faced by the institution. Following the international intervention in 2001, comparatively little effort was expended in building the capacity of the Afghan National Police (ANP) or the ministry of interior (Moi), the ministry responsible for the ANP. As with other state sectors, the ANP was quickly co-opted by self-interested factions. The ANP soon gained a reputation as a coercive and corrupt force, composed of poorly trained and predominantly illiterate policemen.<sup>1</sup>

From 2002 to 2007, Germany had overall responsibility for the coordination of the international community's support to the ANP as the 'lead nation' or 'key partner' for the police. In 2007, the German mission was subsumed within the newly formed European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan (EUPOL). Germany had made important contributions to the policing sector, including opening and managing

the Kabul Police Academy. However, there was growing frustration, particularly from the US, that these efforts were too limited and too slow.

The Focused District Development (FDD) programme was designed to be the biggest police reform programme in Afghanistan, operating nationwide. The initial budget for the financial year 2007 was estimated at US\$2.5 billion.<sup>2</sup>

## 1. THE PROGRAMME

The FDD programme, which was launched in November 2007, was designed to train and build the capacity of the Afghan Uniformed Police (AUP) – one branch of the ANP – at the district level.

The goals of the FDD included enhancing the capacity of the AUP, building linkages between the AUP and the local prosecutor's office, and strengthening ties between the district-level police forces and ANP command at the provincial, regional and zonal levels.

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<sup>1</sup> For background on the ANP in Afghanistan see 'Reforming Afghanistan's Police', *International Crisis Group*, 30 August 2007, available at [www.crisisgroup.org/~media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/138\\_reforming\\_afghanistan\\_s\\_police.ashx](http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-asia/afghanistan/138_reforming_afghanistan_s_police.ashx), and Andrew Wilder, 'Cops and Robbers? The Struggle to Reform the Afghan National Police', *Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit Issues Paper Series*.

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<sup>2</sup> It was very difficult to get precise figures on the budget for FDD. The figure of US\$2.5 billion was an estimate based on meetings with Combined Security Transition Command, Afghanistan (CSTC-A) officials during 2007. See Frederik Rosén, 'Third Generation Civil-Military Relations and the "New Revolution in Military Affairs"', DIIS Working Paper 14, available at [www.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/WP2009/WP09-03\\_New\\_Revolution\\_in\\_Military\\_Affairs\\_web.pdf](http://www.diis.dk/graphics/Publications/WP2009/WP09-03_New_Revolution_in_Military_Affairs_web.pdf).

FDD was to be combined with other programmes in the justice sector and was intended to build the capacity of the MoI by involving the ministry in the design, implementation and management of the programme. Overall, the hope was that FDD would allow the Afghan government and ministry of interior to 'project success'.

FDD was the brainchild of the Combined Security Transition Command, Afghanistan (CSTC-A), the US military component charged with the training and reform of the Afghan National Army (ANA) and the ANP.<sup>3</sup>

The basic idea was that district-level AUP forces would be taken out of the district to be re-trained at a regional training facility and then put back into the district, accompanied by mentors for a period of two to three months. If there was a lack of policemen in the district in question, there would be a recruitment process to ensure that the district had fulfilled its *tashkeel* (the MoI staffing structure that lists the number of policemen designated to each area of the ANP and across the country). All AUP would be trained to similar standards and receive the basic police curriculum for incoming policemen. During the training period, the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP) would 'backfill' and be placed into the district to ensure a continuing police presence. At the same time, each district would be assessed for its policing and justice needs by a task force comprised of Afghan government officials and representatives of the international community, and a district-specific tailored assistance programme would be developed.

An FDD 'cycle' was to last for six to eight months for each district, with approximately five to six districts included in each cycle. FDD was structured around six phases:

1. Assessment and recruiting – approximately 60 days;
2. Insertion of a temporary covering security force – put in place during a ten-day period;
3. Recruitment and training of the new District Police Force – eight weeks;
4. Reinsertion of the new District Police Force into the district – during a one-week period;
5. Mentoring by Police Mentoring Teams (PMTs) with continued collective training in the district – 2–4 months;
6. Sustained operational mentoring – indefinite.

As of April 2010, 83 districts had completed FDD. At that time, a new programme, called the Directed Police District Development (DPDD) programme, was

<sup>3</sup> In November 2009, CSTC-A was merged with the NATO Training Mission, Afghanistan (NTM-A) to form a coordinated training mission.

also being implemented. The DPDD programme is similar to FDD but with training conducted in the districts rather than at regional training centres.<sup>4</sup> It has proven difficult to access current information or statistics on the FDD. A more recent US Department of Defense (DoD) report makes no mention of either programme.<sup>5</sup>

## 2. PROGRAMME ANALYSIS

FDD represented a welcome shift in attitude, with the international community recognising that efforts had to be made to improve the police force at the district level rather than focusing almost entirely on provincial or Kabul-level developments. This concept was coupled with the notion of hands-on and sustained mentoring from PMTs working alongside the district police force. Not only would this provide the AUP with direct support and oversight, it also offered the opportunity for PMTs to gain a real insight into the realities of policing in Afghanistan.

In its presentations on the FDD, CSTC-A consistently emphasised that the MoI was to be involved in every step of the programme's planning and implementation. In reality, however, the MoI ended up merely rubber-stamping a programme designed by American military planners. Lieutenant General Abdul Hadi Khalid, then first deputy minister of the MoI, initially raised some objections to the programme design – including the limited amount of training and the selection of districts (see below) – but these were quickly brushed aside. Other officials in the MoI were loath to criticise a programme that promised the investment of a couple of billion dollars in the police force. Nevertheless, this still marked a change in the mentality of the US military, recognising the need to engage Afghan officials directly as part of programme implementation.

The programme involved the deployment of the Afghan National Civil Order Police (ANCOP). Established in 2006, ANCOP was designed as an elite police unit, receiving double the training of regular ANP (16 weeks in comparison to the standard 8 weeks) and higher pay. Local communities responded positively to a better trained and more disciplined police unit. This reinforced the need to ensure that the AUP was trained not just as a paramilitary fighting

<sup>4</sup> 'Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan', Department of Defense Report to Congress, April 2010, 122, available at [www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/Report\\_Final\\_SecDef\\_04\\_26\\_10.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/pdfs/Report_Final_SecDef_04_26_10.pdf).

<sup>5</sup> See 'Report on Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan', Department of Defense Report to Congress, April 2011, available at [www.defense.gov/news/1231rpt.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/news/1231rpt.pdf).

force but as a civilian police force able to respond to and respect the needs of the communities, and not tarnished by a reputation for corruption and abuse. ANCOP demonstrated that more rigorous recruitment and vetting, creating incentives for good performance and conduct, and providing more thorough and extensive training could have a significant impact on the performance of the police.

By 2009, the US Department of Defense reported that there had been an 85 per cent decrease in local national casualties in the districts that had completed FDD.<sup>6</sup> However, there is very little information on how these figures were collated or what this figure actually means – in other words, whether it refers to deaths or injuries, what type of injuries and how such casualties are caused.

Despite these positives, FDD did not fulfil expectations. In part this was a result of the programme's ambitions. FDD initially envisaged developing holistic reform programmes for each district – combining police reform efforts with programmes in justice, development and public works within very limited time frames. In reality, FDD was scaled down to focus almost entirely on policing issues.

Of more consequence was that there was little attempt to develop lessons learned and to use these to re-design and nuance the programme to be more effective as it developed. FDD was driven by the need to achieve something, and to achieve it quickly. It came to represent the largest undertaking in the area of police reform by CSTC-A under General Robert W Cone's leadership. Suggestions on how the programme could be altered were considered a criticism and rebuffed.

In particular the programme suffered from weaknesses in the six following areas.

## 2.1 District Focus

The FDD programme included an initial assessment phase of each district's needs and requirements. District Assessment Reform Teams (DART teams), comprised of international and Afghan government officials, were to deploy to each district in advance and collate information to be used in the design of the programme for that specific district. However, there was often difficulty in securing participation from government officials. As a result, the assessments were conducted by US military personnel who had

<sup>6</sup> 'Progress toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan', Department of Defense Report to Congress, January 2009, 45, available at [www.defense.gov/pubs/OCTOBER\\_1230\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.defense.gov/pubs/OCTOBER_1230_FINAL.pdf).

little knowledge of the districts or local policing and justice issues. Part of the explanation for this was the lack of buy-in for the districts selected (see below).

## 2.2 Curriculum

While the FDD was supposed to be tailored to the specific district in question, each AUP force was trained according to the standard national curriculum, designed and implemented by the US Department of State's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs (INL). Several organisations, including EUPOL, as well as officials within the MoI, had for a long time requested changes to the curriculum through the International Police Coordination Board (IPCB)<sup>7</sup> and in bilateral meetings with CSTC-A and INL, including a greater focus on the rule of law and justice and basic numeracy and literacy skills.<sup>8</sup>

In discussions with former diplomats involved with the FDD, one reason given for the initial reluctance to adapt the curriculum was the contractual relationship between the US Department of State and DynCorp International. DynCorp, a for-profit organisation, was contracted to provide training at the Regional Training Centres (RTCs).<sup>9</sup> Attempts to coordinate training efforts, adjust curricula or build on training modules using experts on police subject matter would have reduced demand for DynCorp's services and, ultimately, affected potential profits. As summarised by a former diplomat, 'In the case of FDD, corporate interests seriously undermined the ability of the international community to coordinate and deliver a comprehensive and synchronized program.'<sup>10</sup>

## 2.3 Evaluation

When FDD was first proposed in September 2008, several embassies and organisations were asked to provide comments and analysis on the draft proposal. Although detailed comments were submitted by, for

<sup>7</sup> The International Police Coordination Board was formed to ensure better coordination between the Ministry of Interior and the international actors working on police reform.

<sup>8</sup> Literacy training is now included as part of the training for the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), which include both the ANP and ANA. In its current form, the ANSF Literacy Program began in September 2010.

<sup>9</sup> See DynCorp press releases of 2011, 2008 and 2005 respectively, available at [www.dyn-intl.com/news2011/news021411-di-llc-awarded-afghan-training-and-mentoring-contract-valued-at-up-to-\\$1-billion.aspx](http://www.dyn-intl.com/news2011/news021411-di-llc-awarded-afghan-training-and-mentoring-contract-valued-at-up-to-$1-billion.aspx); and [www.dyn-intl.com/news2008/news080508.aspx](http://www.dyn-intl.com/news2008/news080508.aspx); and [www.dyn-intl.com/news2005/news090705.aspx](http://www.dyn-intl.com/news2005/news090705.aspx).

<sup>10</sup> Discussions with former diplomat in Afghanistan, November 2010.

example, the European Union using combined input from the office of the special representative of the European Union in Afghanistan, the European Commission and EUPOL, there was no response to the comments. It soon became clear that the programme had been decided upon and there was little scope for any changes.

As an example, members of the IPCB suggested conducting an independent programme evaluation at the end of the first cycle of FDD. CSTC-A did not agree to this proposal. Instead, they established the FDD After-Action Review meetings (AAR) to provide continuous analysis and evaluation. In practice, these meetings focused entirely on the technical aspects of the FDD (including troop movements and training facilities) and substantive issues were not discussed. It remained difficult throughout the programme to obtain up-to-date information or analysis on the FDD.

## 2.4 District Selection

CSTC-A initially sought the involvement of relevant agencies, including the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), in the selection of districts for each cycle of FDD. Despite meetings to discuss district selection, it became evident that district selection was to be driven almost entirely by the operational priorities of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). At the beginning of the FDD, this involved securing crucial supply routes around the ring road, which is the main road connecting all major centres in Afghanistan. As a result, the districts in which the FDD was implemented were spread out across several provinces. Little attention was paid to the dynamics between various districts within and across provincial boundaries or to designing a more objective criterion by which districts could be selected. As late as 2009, UNAMA attempted to influence the selection of districts for FDD to coincide with a programme – referred to as the Integrated Approach, which focused on districts in which there was a rapidly declining security situation – with little success.

CSTC-A had envisaged that other organisations would implement development, justice and public work programmes alongside the FDD. However, the list of districts selected and the time lines for implementation, which were presented without consultation, showed no understanding of the time required by other organisations to develop programmes or secure funding. Instead, many of the CSTC-A officials felt that this was just another example of civilians being uncooperative, slow and inefficient.

Part of the difficulty was that FDD was being rolled out without any coherent idea of what the police force

was being trained to do. CSTC-A and the US military were almost entirely focused on developing the police as a paramilitary force with which to meet the security threat, whilst other actors felt that the international community should focus its efforts on developing a civilian enforcement agency.

## 2.5 Recruitment

In those districts where the number of existing policemen did not fulfil the *tashkeel* for the district, CSTC-A implemented a recruitment drive. It was very difficult to get information on how these police were recruited or how they were vetted. In the summer of 2008, Task Force Phoenix (TF Phoenix) conducted a survey of the number of policemen in Afghanistan. US military personnel informed district chiefs of police that they would be conducting a count of police personnel two days in advance. Even with this method, which allowed police chiefs to mobilise policemen that may have otherwise not reported for duty, TF Phoenix found that the police force was at only 80 per cent of its official strength. It was estimated that attrition rates amongst the ANP at this time were at 21 per cent.<sup>11</sup>

Despite these findings, FDD did little to address problems of retention within the ANP. As an example, Canadian officials informally reported that turnover in Kandahar remained high. There were unconfirmed reports that following the implementation of FDD in the district of Panjwayi in Kandahar province, there was 100 per cent turnover in personnel within the AUP.

## 2.6 EUPOL

EUPOL took over from the German policing mission in the summer of 2007. The mission's mandate limited its activities to the zonal, regional and provincial levels, which meant that EUPOL was unable to take part in what became the largest international effort in the policing sector. EUPOL staff attended meetings and sat on FDD committees, but their role was nominal, and they were unable to assert any influence on the programme's direction. This also fractured EUPOL's efforts. EUPOL staff comprised secondments from different countries, including EU member countries, Canada and Norway. The objective was to ensure that all countries involved coordinated their operations and followed an agreed mandate to

<sup>11</sup> See 'Policing in Afghanistan: Still Searching for a Strategy', International Crisis Group, Asia Briefing No. 85, 18 December 2008, quoting from 'Review of the Quality, Structures and Accountability of the Afghan National Police', presented to the JCMB VII, January 2008, 6.

prevent dislocated efforts driven by national agendas. However, those countries that wanted to participate in FDD had to divide their forces. Canada, for example, had some police officers under the umbrella of EUPOL and others acting independently and participating in the FDD. As a result, EUPOL's reach and influence over national forces operating in the field were reduced.

### 3. CONCLUSION

US government officials quickly acknowledged that FDD was constrained by factors including a lack of police mentors, restrictions in the number of training places available at the RTCs and a shortage of trained ANCOP units.<sup>12</sup> However, by 2010, the DoD admitted

that 'many districts have only had minimal success after completing the FDD training program, due to the lack of reform in other areas such as governance and rule of law. Without these institutions in place, police training efforts will only be minimally effective.'<sup>13</sup>

In many ways, the FDD marked a welcome transition with the international community finally paying focused and sustained attention to the reform of the ANP. However, there was little recognition that operational and technical programmes to improve the capacity of the AUP would be of limited benefit without concomitant political efforts to tackle the systemic problems plaguing the ministry of interior and the ANP including corruption, links to the narcotics industry and political interference.

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### ABOUT THIS CHAPTER

This chapter is part of a larger volume called *Snapshots of an Intervention: The Unlearned Lessons of Afghanistan's Decade of Assistance (2001–2011)*, edited by Martine van Bijlert and Sari Kouvo. The volume is a collection of 26 short case studies by analysts and practitioners, each with long histories in the country, who were closely involved in the programmes they describe. The contributions present rare and detailed insights into the complexity of the intervention and, in many cases, the widely shared failure to learn necessary lessons and to adapt to realities as they were encountered.

The chapters and full document can be found on the AAN website ([www.aan-afghanistan.org](http://www.aan-afghanistan.org)) under publications.

<sup>12</sup> 'Progress toward Security', 46 (See FN6).

<sup>13</sup> 'Report on Progress', 122 (See FN4).

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