# Measuring Quality of the ANSF

*Col Karl Gingrich, NTM-A CJ-5 Assessments, karl.gingrich@afghan.swa.army.mil*
*CDR Matthew Shane, NTM-A CJ-5 Assessments, james.shane@navy.mil*
*Maj Matthew Durkin, NTM-A CJ-5 Assessments, matthew.durkin@pentagon.af.mil*

"Quality is never an accident. It is always the result of intelligent effort." John Ruskin

As the national and international debate on progress in Afghanistan continues, many pundits are now turning their attention to the **quality** of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) we are producing here shoulder-to-shoulder with our Afghan counterparts rather than the **quantity**. This is a logical follow-on argument given the Afghan's displayed ability to achieve their 2010 growth goals early and their continued positive growth trends. But, what does quality really mean and how do we measure it? Unfortunately, there is no easy answer to this question and critics everywhere will likely grasp at convenient, but potentially misleading, measures and use them to advance their argument. Having examined the topic of measuring the quality of Afghan forces in detail with some very capable colleagues, we offer this essay as a point of departure for the debate on quality. Our intention is not to provide empirical evidence that the Afghan Security Forces are "quality" forces—they are—but rather to show the limitations and difficulties to the use of quality as a metric. We hope to learn from the ensuing debate and use those lessons to refine our current processes.

The ultimate measure of quality for any security force is operational effectiveness—can the force successfully execute its mission on the battlefield? The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command employed through May 2010 a largely objective system of measures called the Training and Readiness Assessment Tool (TRAT) process to measure unit effectiveness. Following the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) report, the Commander's Unit Assessment Tool (CUAT) replaced TRAT and added a subjective portion to the assessment in an effort to better articulate true capability of the unit to function on the battlefield. While many believe the CUAT is an improvement over the TRAT, two lingering issues prevent its wide acceptance as a true measure of quality. First, the ISAF Joint Command (IJC) continues to tweak the system, which has yet to produce steady-state results and therefore limits any trend analysis. Second, many are unwilling to accept a single metric like the CUAT-produced Rating Definition Level (RDL) as a measure of quality. Perhaps it is unfamiliarity with the process or the lack of transparency that prevents wider acceptance of the RDL. While we believe the CUAT is the right system and the RDL is the correct metric to assess overall operational quality of the force, we also believe that NATO Training Mission—Afghanistan (NTM-A) produces quality outputs from the institutional base that contribute to the overall effectiveness of Afghan units. The difficulty is measuring this quality.

Before we try to articulate how we think quality should be viewed, we must state an undeniable fact. Quality is inherent in everything we do. We never set out to produce anything less—a fact we think is lost, or at least not acknowledged by many critics and commentators. We are not wired to do otherwise. All of our actions are an effort to maximize quality subject to the constraints we face. The constraints we face are composed of those placed upon us by our civilian and uniformed leaders and those driven by the environment we operate in here in Afghanistan. We are constrained by the time given to accomplish our tasks or mission and by the needs of the operational commander, which place time limits on our institutional processes. Funding is finite and the controls placed on these resources constrain our actions, as do our own efforts to remain good stewards of these resources. Manpower further constrains our actions and ability to produce quality and will only become more restrictive as we shift focus to the fielding of technically intensive specialties. Finally, the environment of Afghanistan has the greatest constraint on our quest for quality. The lack of infrastructure, the pervasiveness of corruption, and the largely illiterate population among many other environmental factors make the attainment of quality that much more difficult to achieve. Difficult—yes, impossible—no; we prove it every day.

Although operations are the responsibility of IJC, everything we do here in NTM-A directly contributes to the operational effectiveness of the ANSF. Whether we are building a facility, advising an Afghan counterpart on policy within one of the security ministries, or training the next Afghan Kandak to enter battlespace, we are contributing to the quality of the ANSF. Therefore, the quality of our outputs is nested and contributes to the overall quality that is measured through the CUAT. However, unlike the CUAT, our processes and outputs are so diverse that a single measure of quality is indefinable. Naturally, we collect many metrics that are indicators of quality, but no single metric or mathematical aggregation of metrics is satisfying, let alone feasible to be a standalone measure of quality. The best we can do is to develop an overarching qualitative narrative assessment supported by a series of quantitative and qualitative indicators that describe the quality of our outputs.

Several issues with assessing quality must be discussed before we describe the framework of this narrative. First, when assessing quality we should avoid comparative assessments that are not instructive. For example, to assess quality by comparing an Afghan noncommissioned officer (NCO) to a coalition NCO is not useful because the systemic differences are so great between the two. We have just started to create an NCO corps in the Afghan Army while coalition NCOs are the result of a system that has matured over centuries. This supports the second point, where assessments of quality should be objective and not subjective. More specifically, the objective assessment must be within an Afghan context, not a Western one. A true assessment of quality must be one that is objective and measures the current state against the planned state envisioned for this period of time. We must account for this temporal aspect when assessing quality. There are certain attributes that are required today to support immediate operational needs, but others will be required in the future as the ANSF transforms to a National Defense/Rule of Law based force. It is not instructive to

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measure the quality of today's ANSF with the same yardstick used to measure a force with centuries of institutional history.

The framework we propose for the narrative assessment of quality of the ANSF is composed of four pillars—education, training, experience, and effectiveness. These four pillars are fundamental elements of any operationally effective force. These are the same elements we use in the U.S. Army to life-cycle manage not only our soldiers, NCOs, and officers, but also our units, to a certain extent. Each element is supported with qualitative and/or quantitative data that the narrative is based upon. We will briefly describe each of the elements in greater detail.

Education is an essential component of the development of all military leaders. Military and civilian education develops the attributes and traits that are required by effective leaders. It serves as the core of the professional development of our leaders and is a career-long endeavor. Within the context of education, quality is gained by exposing the individual soldier to increasing levels of educational opportunities. In a nation where the basic literacy rate is estimated at 28%, literacy and numeracy rates are key measures of quality. The greater percentage of the ANSF that we can make increasingly literate will directly benefit operational effectiveness (e.g., orders and directives) and stewardship of personnel and equipment (e.g., supply accountability). More importantly is the second- and third-order effects a more literate society has on the governance and development of the country. It is basic literacy that will serve as the building block to professionalization of the force. Measuring quality here includes the number of Professional Military Education (PME) courses established and the number of graduates from these courses. In assessing graduation rates of PME courses, it is important to remember that operations limit the potential number of attendees. Simply counting PME graduates is not sufficient either, so a required distribution of graduates throughout the ANSF should be developed and quality assessed as they progress toward this goal. The next two pillars build upon this foundation of education.

Training is designed to prepare soldiers, policemen, NCOs, and officers to fight and win in battle. NTM-A is charged with the mission of training the ANSF, creating the institutional training base, and developing Afghan capacity to operate the training base independently. This is analogous to training someone to fly an airplane as it is being built around them. This has been, and will continue to be, a challenging mission, but it is an area with numerous metrics that directly (and indirectly) measure quality. Quality commitment is evident in the process for modifying Programs of Instruction (POI) based on lessons learned and instructed by Afghan combat veterans. The number of Afghan certified trainers measures the quality of instruction because Afghans (as we have learned) learn best from their peers. The number of branch school courses and graduates from these courses is indicative of quality in that it shows the extent to which the ANSF is providing its own enablers and leaders of these technically challenging fields. Other useful indicators of ANSF quality include marksmanship rates, instructor to student ratios, and collective training validation scores. Obviously this is not an exhaustive list of relevant measures; however these are easily captured and are applicable for describing quality of the ANSF. We will now look at the third pillar—experience, which more than any other requires time to generate true quality.

Experience is invaluable for security forces, especially for leaders, and cannot be replicated or replaced by any amount of training and education. Experience cannot be accelerated either; it must be earned over time and then the appropriate lessons must be applied and reinforced so that they become inculcated into the fiber of the unit or individual. The responsibility of ISAF is to ensure the ANSF gains experience at the appropriate rate and under the appropriate conditions. Experience-derived metrics on quality are focused on measuring the opportunities for soldiers and police to gain experience. Specifically, the average time of service is a great indicator of quality because the longer an Afghan serves the greater the experience base and the greater the effectiveness. In the absence of a by-name personnel system it is impossible to track average time in service. We can, however, consider metrics such as retention, attrition and absent-without-leave (AWOL) rates, and NCO and officer fill rates as an indicator of increasing average time in service and consequently increasing experience. Additionally, we can assist the ministries in implementing initiatives that incentivize longer or continued service beyond initial terms such as merit-based promotions, award systems that recognize performance and achievement, and a retirement system that enables management of the force and expands opportunities for experience. Because we are working toward ANSF independent operations, we must also look at measures of ministerial and enduring institution capacity as indicators of quality. Capacity gained in these two areas is largely experientially driven and allows for the ANSF to become self-sufficient from the national to local levels. The more the ANSF can do for itself, the higher quality of the force. Finally, partnering is critical to ensuring that experience is gained under optimal conditions. Partnering coverage and units with an operational deployment cycle are measures of quality of experienced gained. Experience built upon a foundation of education and training contributes to the effectiveness of individuals and institutions, the last pillar we will discuss.

Operational effectiveness, the performance of units on the battlefield, is supported through the effectiveness of individuals and institutions from the ministerial to the tactical level. Quality indicators are derived from measures of individual and institutional effectiveness. Effective individuals operate within a code of conduct (like most professions), are not corrupt, and selflessly serve. Indicators that support the assessment of effective individuals include percent of the force that have signed a code of conduct or received formal training, the number of corruption convictions or ineffective leaders removed from the force, and AWOL rates of NCOs and officers. Institutional effectiveness is indicated by stewardship of resources and systemic linkages from national to local levels. Institutional capacity and Operational Deployment Cycles were presented in the previous discussion on experience, but are applicable here as well. Metrics that measure stewardship include equipment accountability and serviceability of equipment and facilities. Greater accountability and serviceability rates indicate increased effectiveness and thus higher quality. Systemic performance (Logistics, Training, etc.) is more difficult to quantify, but would measure the effectiveness of translating policy into critical outputs and

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meeting the needs of the force. Increased effectiveness of these systems indicates increased quality and will ultimately lead to greater self-sufficiency and sustainability.

The opening quotation attributed to John Ruskin truly describes our quest for quality in NTM-A. Quality is inherent in everything we do. Unfortunately, many don't realize this statement of fact and do not account for it in their calculus when assessing the quality of the ANSF. Our challenge is not building a quality force, but rather how we measure the quality of that force in a consistent, comprehensive, and defendable manner. There is no single quantifiable measure of quality that is meaningful and meets these three criteria. We are proposing that the best way to describe the quality of the ANSF is to adopt an overarching narrative assessment that weaves together the series of quantitative and qualitative indicators that directly or indirectly measures quality. The narrative should be based on a framework of education, training, experience, and effectiveness; realizing there are others that are just as applicable. To ensure the narrative is instructive and valid, it must be objective, conducted through an Afghan perspective, and account for where the ANSF is along its developmental timeline. We believe the methodology presented here meets the immediate needs of our command, but could benefit from additional viewpoints and ideas—we may be too close to the problem. We welcome the insights of others and look forward to the debate.

## Author Biographies

**COL Karl Gingrich** is the Chief of Assessments and Deputy of the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) Planning Directorate. As an operations research analyst, he has served on the Joint Staff, Army Staff, the 2005 BRAC Commission and has served a tour in Iraq in MNSTC-I. He is a 2002 graduate of Air Command and Staff College, a 2010 graduate of the Industrial College of the Armed Forces, and holds an MS in Industrial Engineering from the University of Louisville.

**CDR Matthew Shane** is an F/A-18E pilot. He left active duty in 2006. He had two deployments with Carrier Air Wings to the Persian Gulf; this was his first deployment to Afghanistan. He was a recalled reservist. His current reserve unit is "Strike Force Training Pacific," where he is the Air Operations officer for the reserve staff. CDR Shane is a 747-400 pilot for Cathay Pacific Airways. He lives in Carlsbad, California.

**Maj Matthew Durkin**, recently completed a six month deployment to NTM-A/CJ5, Camp Eggers, Afghanistan. He has a MS in Systems Engineering from the Air Force Institute of Technology and a BS in Engineering Mechanics from the US Air Force Academy. Major Durkin is currently assigned to the HAF/A9RI as the Branch Chief for Portfolio Analysis.

# MEETING REPORT

# Maritime Domain Awareness … Round Two

*Mr. Steve Notarnicola, Lockheed Martin Corporation, steve.notarnicola@lmco.com*
*Mr. Tom Denesia, NORAD USNORTHCOM HQs J-84, thomas.denesia@northcom.mil*
*Mr. Kirk Michealson, Lockheed Martin Global Training & Logistics, kirk.a.michealson@lmco.com*
*Mr. Duane Boniface, Chief, Office of Standards Evaluation and Development Commandant, U.S. Coast Guard (CG-523), duane.e.boniface@uscg.mil*
*Mr. Terry McKearney, The Ranger Group, terry.mckearney@therangergroup.com*

The security environment of today includes a wide range of "targets" that must be tracked. These include potential terrorists, smugglers, those illegally accessing natural resources, paramilitary naval forces, and others, on both domestic and international fronts. Dealing with this security environment requires an awareness of the maritime domain; often referred to as Maritime Domain Awareness (MDA) or Maritime Situational Awareness (MSA). Generically, MDA can be defined as:

*"... the effective understanding of everything on, under, related to, adjacent to, or bordering a sea, ocean or other navigable waterway, including all maritime-related activities, infrastructure, people, cargo, vessels, or other conveyances."*
September 2009, the Canadian Assistant Deputy Minister Marine Security Committee

In October 2009, under the advocacy of the U.S. Northern Command (USNORTHCOM), the Military Operations Research Society (MORS) and Defence Research and Development Canada, Centre for Operational Research and Analysis (DRDC CORA), oversaw a meeting to identify and discuss MDA issues common to the United States and Canada. Conducted at the Château Cartier in Gatineau, Québec, more than 115 attendees from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom, and Norway worked to tackle significant analytic problems covering a wide range of issues in an unclassified environment. As a result of this meeting, several analytic tools were developed and fielded, including the Maritime Timeline Analysis and Requirements Toolset (M-TART), as described in the article by Neil Carson and J.D. Caron of the same name in the December 2010 issue of *Phalanx*.

During that meeting, the organizing committee was approached by **CAPT Kurt Salchert, CF**, and **CDR Wayne Renaud, CF.** Kurt and Wayne suggested that a follow-on meeting be convened within 18 months designed to provide solutions to specific operational MDA problems, posed in advance of the workshop, that are of interest to a sponsoring agency in much the same way that P.M.S Blackett envisioned when he penned his now-famous treatise entitled "Scientists at the Operational Level."[1] A proposal was therefore made and accepted by the MORS sponsors in January 2010 that such a meeting be convened. This year MORS and DRDC are partnering again to conduct our second MDA meeting in San Diego from 2–5 May 2011 at the U.S. Navy's Anti-Submarine Warfare