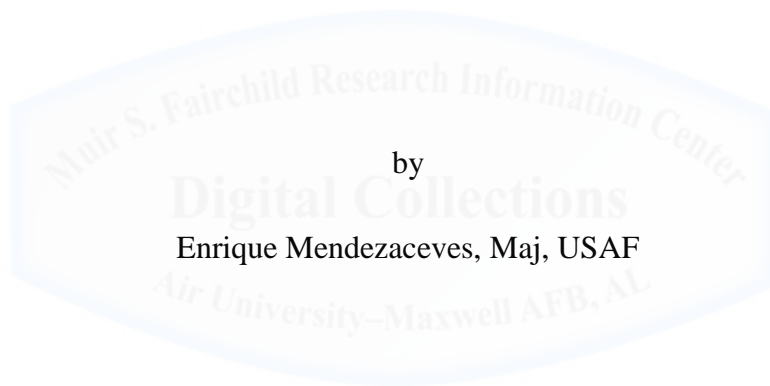


AU/ACSC/2016

AIR COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

AIR UNIVERSITY

**FIGHTING WITHOUT THINKING: ISSUES WITH AFGHAN  
MILITARY EDUCATION**



A Research Report Submitted to the Faculty

In Partial Fulfillment of the Graduation Requirements

Advisor(s): Dr. Fred P. Stone

Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama

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## ABSTRACT

This paper used an evaluation framework to provide solutions to the question: How can US forces resolve inadequacies in the training of the Afghan National Security Forces?

Conclusions were formulated by studying the human capital issue with regards to the IMET program. Once data was collected, four criteria requirements were defined to ensure an adequate process. Finally, four different Courses of Action were compared using the previously defined criteria requirements.

The conclusions are that the United States has been providing funding and training to Afghan military personnel, and it will be almost impossible for the US to affect the Afghan IMET program if Afghans do not act in the form of reforms to their AWOL and military service commitment policies. Measures which force Afghans to “bend” to US will would create animosity. Advising the Ministry of Defense and Ministry of Interior to change their policies seemed to be the most viable option since it met all the criteria requirements.

## Introduction

Human capital is, “the sum total of skills embodied within an individual: education, intelligence, charisma, creativity, work experience, entrepreneurial vigor, even the ability to throw a baseball fast.”<sup>1</sup> When talking about Afghanistan and its development into a self-supported nation, this human capital is necessary for economic, social and even military maturity. Thanks to the efforts of non-profit and US state department organizations, like the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), human capital in Afghanistan has improved over the last decade through the ingression of schools and training.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately, this human capital is slow to provide dividends and improve the country. It takes decades to bring an individual from a relatively illiterate level to a level of intellectual maturity to handle the complex tasks of running a government or, more to the emphasis of this paper, to run a military. Social, economic and geographic factors also play a big role when taking advantage of education and training.

The NATO Operation RESOLUTE SUPPORT provides training, advice, assistance, equipment and develops Afghan National Defense Security Force (ANDSF) capability as affirmed during the Chicago NATO Summit of 2012.<sup>2</sup> The train, advice and assist mission has its drawbacks when dealing with individuals with lower human capital. It is hard to teach an Afghan enlisted soldier the finer point of the most up-to-date logistical systems when this soldier lacks the knowledge in arithmetic, computer skills and sometimes even language skills. Additionally, few Afghan enlisted personnel have ever been in a situation where they had to formally learn and adsorb information in a classroom environment.<sup>3</sup> This being the case, many Afghans who enlisted in the military to fight have problems absorbing knowledge for eight hours per day during several weeks that it takes their trainers to instruct the complex process of military radio

repair and maintenance. This problem becomes clearer as the coalition continues to equip the Afghan military with more technologically advanced systems for which the regular Afghan enlisted soldier has trouble accounting for, ordering replacement/sustainment items for, or even repairing.<sup>4</sup> High quality human capital is quickly becoming a limiting factor in the development of Afghanistan as a whole, but much more so in the military sector.

The introduction of new technologies to the ANDSF, coupled with Afghan leadership general disinterest in emphasizing education, is causing the knowledge gap to widen.<sup>5,6</sup> Coalition forces recognize this fact, and as a result put a lot of effort and funding toward the train, advice and assist mission, which has accumulated a price tag of \$7.52 billion since 2005 in the training effort alone.<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately, coalition forces can only control the quality of the training and not the capacity, capability or motivation of the trainee. There are many instances when personnel do not show up to training, or are not prepared for instruction. For example, the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reported a shortage of 600 mechanics for the Afghan National Police (ANP) and the Afghan National Army (ANA) due to training and retention concerns.<sup>8</sup>

Personnel are not utilized in the manner they are ultimately trained. In a recent effort to promote integration of women in the military, 109 completed ANP training in Turkey, but there is high resistance in putting them in positions commensurate to their training.<sup>9</sup> Afghan officials cite dangerous environments and lack of acceptance from their male counterparts in a Muslim culture as the reasons females do not get the positions.<sup>10</sup> But this phenomenon is not uniquely relegated to the cultural issues like women in the military. There is no system that properly tracks personnel in the Afghan military, as such, it is impossible to investigate if personnel are being properly utilized based on their training.<sup>11</sup> The lack of this type of system, however, gives

low confidence that assignment authorities take training into account when making staffing decisions.

Although the scope of this research cannot encompass all ANDSF training, there has been recent global scrutiny on the international military education and training (IMET) program which has been made available to Afghans with international coalition-controlled funding.<sup>12</sup> This research examines how US forces can resolve the current inadequacies in the international training program architecture of the Afghan National Security Forces.

In order to answer this question, Afghan leaders in charge of educational initiatives will be surveyed. Secondary sources, such RAND and SIGAR studies will be used to further define the problem. Finally, information from the IMET branch of the Security Assistance Office in Afghanistan (SAO-A) will be leveraged to find the actual details, numbers and demographics. All this information will be researched in a problem/solution framework to come up with courses of action (COA) which may positively affect the problem. These COAs will be evaluated based on criteria derived from the research. The best solution will then be the final recommendation of this paper.

## **Background**

Thirty years of war can dramatically affect the population of a country. This is seen in Afghanistan. While war has sometimes been classified as part of civilization, economic and social development are stifled as the conflicts progress.<sup>13</sup> In the case of Afghanistan, the decades of conflict have effectively retarded many facets of its social, economic, political, and military structure.<sup>14</sup>

Human capital is the leftover once a person has been stripped of all monetary and economic possessions.<sup>15</sup> An increase in human capital, as defined, requires an investment of time and

money. This time and money are used to send individuals to school, or to skill training, or as apprentices. In a country where people need to farm or fight, mental and skill training tend to take a backseat to the need for survival in a hostile environment.

Such is the case in Afghanistan, where in 2002 only an estimated 900,000 male students attended school from a population of 22 million.<sup>16</sup> Since then, the United States Agency for International Development has built over 16,000 additional schools and hired over 154,000 teachers. The results of this effort is an enrollment rate which now is ten times what it was in 2002.<sup>17</sup> Despite this improvement, efforts should continue. Even if the adequate number of students are educated, it will take them a decade or two to be at a point where their human capital maturity can affect the present situation in their country, especially when it comes to security.

Finding people with adequate human capital is a big problem when trying to build military capacity. While many weapons do not require a high mental aptitude to use, the repair, maintenance, and resupply of logistics definitely does. In addition to this, there are many technologically advanced weapons systems which require much more complex processes to operate accurately, such as the ScanEagle Intelligence Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR) Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV) program currently being stood up to be operated and maintained by Afghan ANA personnel.<sup>18</sup> This is why the Research and Development (RAND) Corporation cites illiteracy as one of the biggest challenges when building Afghan Security.<sup>19</sup> Only 28% of all Afghans are literate in their native language of Dari or Pashto. This is a country where only 21% of enrolled students attend secondary school.<sup>20</sup> Some NATO figures of 2012 suggested only 10% of the ANDSF were literate at that time.<sup>21</sup>

The Partnership for Research in International Affairs & Development (PRIAD), a non-profit organization, noted one of the biggest threats to the ANDSF security posture is the lack of a

formal education base.<sup>22</sup> The organization notes that the largely illiterate and innumerate Afghan National Army force is a big challenge. This sometimes means that part of military training sometimes has to include literacy classes. These literacy classes allow Afghan soldiers to accomplish simple tasks such as read the serial numbers in their equipment or learn to navigate with a map and compass.<sup>23</sup>

Another challenge to education is the constant and significant Absent With-Out Leave (AWOL) rate. This represents a problem as individuals who the coalition have invested time and funding for their training leave the Afghan military. This “AWOL challenge” attritions about 10% of the force on average.<sup>24</sup>

Afghan institutions have also shown a lot of resistance, if not complete disinterest, in adopting several capacity building programs to include education. One of the fields that seems to hold the least interest for the Afghans is logistics. ANDSF troops still lack fundamental skills and procedural knowledge to run logistics networks. Already the ANDSF as a whole shows many failures within the logistics infrastructure to requisition and distribute items. The ANDSF also lacks maintenance and procurement skills necessary to provide oversight of Coalition-donated assets. This lack of procedural internalization is not new. The Soviets went through the same challenges when working in Afghanistan. The result was the eventual pilfering of Soviet depots.<sup>25</sup> Both Afghan and American Officers have noted that skills learned in coalition-provided training are a perishable commodity lasting only weeks in length.<sup>26</sup>

Finally, the ANDSF leadership lacks the culture of institution building. As such, they favor nepotism and cronyism to leadership and officer building through the ranks. There is little incentive for individuals to surpass or excel in any given training as it does not lead to advancement. Indeed, the ANDSF advancement track is poorly defined.<sup>27</sup> This weakness leads

to the underdevelopment of a professional Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) and Officer cadre.<sup>28</sup>

The ANDSF is authorized 352,000 personnel.<sup>29</sup> This manning includes an array of security organizations that accomplish a variety of functions. The Afghan National Defense Security Forces are comprised of many organizations under the Ministry of Defense (MoD), and the Ministry of Interior (MoI). Some of the organizations within MoD include the regular ANA, Afghan Air Force (AAF), Afghan National Army Special Operations Command, Combat Support Kandaks and Corps Logistics Kandaks. Likewise MoI has the regular ANP force, the National Civil Order Police (ANCOP), and the Afghan Public Protection Force (APPF).<sup>30</sup>

Given the number of personnel and organizations, training is conducted in a decentralized, varied form. The original Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams (OMLT), have evolved to Military Advisory Teams (MAT) and Operation Co-ordination Centers Advisory Teams (OCCAT) and finally Security Force Assistance Teams (SFAT).<sup>31</sup> Beyond engagement teams, there is the Kabul Military Training Center, the Afghan National Army Training Command, Kabul Military High School, and the National Military Academy of Afghanistan just to name a few of the ways in which Afghans are trained.<sup>32</sup>

The array of the national human capital methods and organizations in Afghanistan are numerous and trying to address their issues is beyond the scope of this paper. This study will focus on the International Military Education and Training (IMET) program offered to Afghanistan by coalition forces. IMET will be used as a representative sample because there is reliable data available from the IMET program. This is probably due to its management from coalition forces. The IMET program faces many of the same issues which affect the rest of the Afghan education and training pipelines. Additionally, the IMET program has recently come

under scrutiny due to some of the issues already discussed in this background.<sup>33</sup> This scrutiny has generated general and national interest in the program.

### **Problem and Key Issues**

The IMET program brings officers and enlisted members of foreign militaries to the United States, and other participating countries, for training and education. There are many benefits to this type of training. The IMET program builds enduring relationships with foreign allies. The program creates a better understanding of the United States to foreign students who can experience the American way of life firsthand. It allows foreign officers to understand the way the US military operates and therefore be able to integrate their countries' capabilities more seamlessly during combined operations. IMET instills professional military education to nations who may have less developed military educational systems, or countries who do not have the resources to fund such training objectives for their forces. Finally, it provides English training.<sup>34</sup> The US Secretary of State determines which countries will have US-Sponsored programs and the US Secretary of Defense implements the program.<sup>35</sup> In Afghanistan, the IMET program also receives NATO donor funding.

#### **Unfilled Slots:**

The IMET program is successfully managed in countries all over the world. For example, an exhaustive study of IMET over seventeen different countries' programs found both international/domestic graduate students and administrators perceived the benefits of IMET programs as consistent with the main goals and reasons the IMET program was created.<sup>36</sup> The IMET implementation in Afghanistan, however, is running into many of the same issues other Afghan training initiatives encounter. For example, the IMET program is underutilized. In FY15,

81 foreign school slots out of 368 were forfeited by the Afghan MoD by failing to find candidates for the program. FY 16 fared much worse. Of the 259 slots offered in FY 16, 134 slots were filled as of 11 Sept 2016 (Fiscal Year 2016 ends in October 2016).<sup>37</sup> This is not uncommon in Afghanistan. In 2006, Patrick Monahan wrote a memoir of his time as a Major in the Security Assistance Office – Afghanistan (SAO-A). In it, he describes how he had issues getting Afghan Parliamentarians attend a Marshall Center Seminar in Washington DC. According to his account, there was very little interest for such training.<sup>38</sup> Whitney Grespin of the PRIAD policy journal came to similar conclusions.<sup>39</sup>

There can be many reasons for the under enrollment experienced by the Afghan forces. The most corroborated of these, as stated above, is the general disinterest to support or emphasize training. It could be argued the afghan military cannot find qualified people. After all, much IMET training requires some English proficiency. An Afghan enlisted soldier may not have this proficiency starting out. The Afghan military leadership, however, could incentivize the plethora of English courses offered by coalition forces to bring candidates to qualifying levels. After all, most forfeited training is considered basic enlisted or officer training meant to teach from the ground level up.<sup>40</sup>

Another possible reason for under enrollment is corruption in Afghanistan. A source which works daily with the MoD International Training Branch, and requested anonymity, explained training slots to the United States can be bought. According to this source, training slots are usually bought for anywhere from \$20K-\$50K depending on the class, the location, and the length of instruction. While the source of this corruption cannot be vetted for obvious reasons, it is consistent with Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) reports that, “corruption cut across all aspects of the reconstruction effort, jeopardizing progress made in

security, rule of law, governance, and economic growth.”<sup>41</sup> It further states that “failure to effectively address the problem means U.S. reconstruction programs, at best, will continue to be subverted by systemic corruption and, at worst, will fail.”<sup>42</sup> Not many people in Afghanistan have \$20K-\$50K to spend, so classes go unfilled. This theory could also explain why there are so many personnel choosing to go AWOL during the time they are attending international military training.

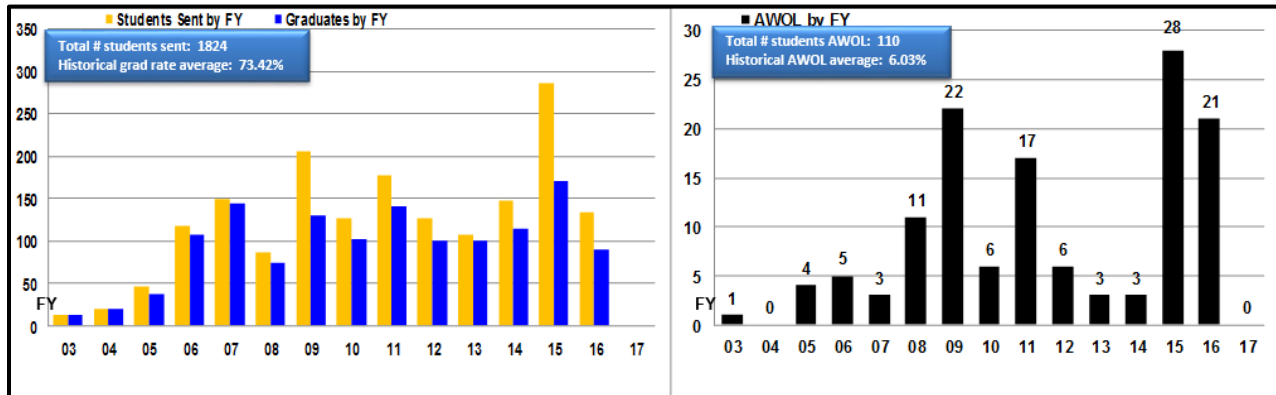
**Issues with AWOL Trainees:**

There has been a lot of scrutiny over Afghan military personnel going AWOL.<sup>43</sup> In a 2010 SIGAR report, AWOL rates were responsible for a troop strength which was 25% lower than advertised across the MoD.<sup>44</sup> Given this numbers, the IMET AWOL rates seem to be reasonable, except for the fact that Afghan military personnel are using US funding intended to build capacity in Afghanistan to immigrate to the United States. The table below has some statistics with regard to the AWOL rate during IMET training:

	<b>ANDSF FY14</b>	<b>ANDSF FY15</b>	<b>ANDSF FY16</b>	<b>ANDSF since FY03</b>
Number of Students	147	287	134	1833
Graduation Rate	78%	68%	66%	73.42%
Number of AWOLs	3	28	20	112
Percentage AWOLs	2.04%	9.75%	14.9%	6.65%

**Table 1 AWOL rates compared to number of students using the IMET program.**<sup>45</sup>  
 (Adapted from Unclassified “A-29 Pilot Training Presentation”  
 produced by Security Assistance Office – Afghanistan)

Even though the number of AWOL’s do not seem significant in magnitude, this phenomenon, combined with the current graduation rates and the unfilled slots can undermine the effectiveness of the IMET program. For example, in FY 16 the IMET program had 368 slots available, of which only 134 were filled with a 66% graduation rate resulting from failures and AWOLs. The resulting graduation rate of 90 students is only 25% of the expected graduation rate which would have justified the expense in education.



**Table 2: Breakout of School Attendance, Graduation and AWOL Personnel.**<sup>46</sup>  
 (Adapted from Unclassified “Professional Military Education and Training Branch” status presentation. Produced by the Security Assistance Office – Afghanistan)

The table above tells the AWOL story. During the first couple of years when the IMET program began (2003 and 2004), only one person went AWOL. As the program grew from 2005 to 2008, more people went AWOL, but still relatively few as compared to the personnel being sent to international training during that time period. This may have been due to the relative tranquility of the time. Things changed in 2006, as the Taliban re-invigorated the tempo of the insurgency.<sup>47</sup> According to RAND reports, one of the main causes of AWOLs and desertions has to do with the high operational tempo of the Afghan National Army.<sup>48</sup> From Table 2, one can see that it took some lag time, but the forthcoming insecurity and increased operational tempo caused an alarming number military Afghans to desert through the IMET program.<sup>49</sup> In 2008, there were 85 slots assigned to the IMET program, so the 11 personnel who deserted represented 13% of the personnel which were sent to school internationally. In 2009, of 200 slots, twenty-two personnel (eleven percent), went AWOL.

SAO-A office approached the Afghan leadership to address the upward trend in AWOLs during international programs. SAO-A was concerned that personnel deserting while in the US did not provide benefit to the Afghan military and those individuals misappropriated US funding by accepting international training with duplicitous intent.<sup>50</sup> In response to this argument, Afghan leadership imposed a requirement whereby a guarantor (usually a friend or family member), signed an agreement to be financially responsible for misspent money should a student decide to go AWOL (Please note: this agreement did not establish processes to return the misspent funding from the guarantor to the US government).<sup>51</sup> Over the next couple of years, this policy was effective in reducing the number of AWOLs during international military education and training events as seen in the relative drop of AWOL incidents between 2010 and 2014 on Table 2.

In 2014, however, a guarantor refused to pay the costs of his relative going AWOL and took the issue to the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice ruled that the warrantor did not have to be financially responsible for his relatives' transgressions (despite signing a contractual document).<sup>52</sup> This resulted in the all-time high AWOL rates experienced in 2015 and 2016.

The SAO-A office has been aggressively pursuing solutions to the AWOL rate by interfacing with the Deputy Minister of Defense for Personnel and Education (DM P&E). The best solution DM P&E has provided is re-instituting the warrantor program. While this solution worked, it has already been deemed unlawful as it stands. Should it be implemented without any changes, it would not pass scrutiny based on the already-imposed precedent. At the time of this report, MoD has yet to implement a comprehensive AWOL policy of any sort.

## **Career Tracking and Progression:**

The Afghan military promotion system mirrors political mobility even at the lowest levels. In the Afghan military, the individual who gets promoted is the one who has the correct connections, family and is able to navigate the social landmines that Afghan interactions can become. He is therefore able to survive and thrive within the Afghan military aristocracy. The Afghan military is run more like an aristocracy, than the meritocracy many western nations employ. In the Afghan military, the most important things are family ties, tribal ties, the current political environment, and the military individual's ability to navigate through power brokers for better positions and power.<sup>53</sup>

Many Afghan military officers distrust other officers with competing loyalties. This was evident during the time that Bismillah Khan was the Minister of Defense. Bismillah Khan and his patronage circle competed directly with former President of Afghanistan Karzai's circle. The result was verbal abuse between military members of the Pashtun tribe and the Tajik tribe.<sup>54</sup> Beyond tribal affiliation, there are other patronage networks to take into account. For example, some military personnel at the senior levels had been trained by Soviet Russia. These officers, who value processes above many other things, are at odds with senior officers who used to be mujahedeen and bring little to the table in the form of education, processes and discipline. These social dynamics make it hard to exert influence over a unit. Commanders cannot get rid of, or punish, inept individuals that may be backed up by a strong patronage network.<sup>55</sup> Under these dynamics, human capital in the form of skill, education and training plays a small role in military advancement.

The Afghan military has little to no training tracking capability.<sup>56</sup> In 2010 the Combined Security Assistance Command – Afghanistan (CSTC-A) contracted a company to develop a

Human Resources system for the Afghan MoD and MoI. The Afghan Human Resource Information Management System (ARHRIMS) is supposed to manage accountability, training, duty location, etc. for the Afghan forces.<sup>57</sup> The system was supposed to be fully implemented on July 2015. As of August 2016, 75% of the ANA and 88% of ANP personnel were “slotted” to a position in AHRIMS. Many of these records, however, are incomplete or inaccurate. CSTC-A is concurrently running a data cleansing effort along with position slotting and hopes to finish by FY18.<sup>58</sup>

The lack of accountability toward personnel career training and accountability produces negative consequences. Given that there is inadequate training and personnel slotting accountability, it is safe to say that many of the personnel who received specialized training do not go to positions where they can make use of the training they received. It is more likely that the IMET program is used to incentivize patronage networks.

There is currently no active duty service commitment (ADSC) policy in MOD. Personnel can currently attend training and leave the military right after the United States has invested in their human capital. This issue is most pronounced within the AAF. Many enlisted aircraft maintainers are sent to the US to attend maintenance courses for aircraft platforms. These maintainers go through the Defense Language Institute (DLI) to become proficient in English before being sent to the International Air Forces Academy (IAFA) for basic maintenance school and subsequently unique platform training. This training sometimes takes up to 24 months, at the end of which the maintainer comes back to Afghanistan to separate from the service because there is no active duty service commitment (ADSC) to retain him.<sup>59</sup> The maintainer then looks for a job within the many maintenance contracts the US provides the AAF now that he can speak English and can work on military platforms. These contracts are put in place as an interim

solution as the Afghans build an organic military aircraft maintenance capability. Capability is slow to come by, however, as skilled and language-proficient maintainers attrition the maintenance force an additional twenty percent beyond the losses from AWOLs and non-graduates.<sup>60</sup> The result is a self-licking ice cream where the US maintenance contracts must stay in place longer because the Afghan capability is not there. When the AAF gets adequate human capital for maintenance, they leave for the US contracts taking the AAF maintenance capability with them and thus having to keep the maintenance contract longer. The result is that the US government pays several times over for the same capability.

### **Criteria for Solution COAs**

Many human capital issues with regards to the IMET program in Afghanistan stem from the following sources:

1. Current AWOL policies to not dissuade personnel from deserting the ANA or ANP while attending international training in the US.
2. No Active Duty Service Commitment or similar policy ensures the US investment in training cannot be leveraged to develop ANDSF capability.
3. Afghan military leadership does not incentivize merit based advancement and may instead be leveraging the IMET program within their patronage networks.

Based on these three main problems and all the preceding discussion, the Courses of Action (COA) which can improve human capital within the IMET program must: 1. Achieve a more capable ANDSF, 2. Meet IMET objectives, 3. Be cost effective and 4. Be legal, both in Afghanistan and the United States.

### **Does the COA achieve a more capable ANDSF?**

The NATO RESOLUTE SUPPORT mission began in 1 January 2015 to, “provide training, advice and assistance to the Afghan Security Forces institutions.”<sup>61</sup> The RESOLUTE SUPPORT mission came as the result of NATO Resolution 2189, which was unanimously adopted as all NATO partners saw the need to sustain the ANDSF to ensure stability in the country.<sup>62</sup> Given this fact, the COA chosen to help with human capital within the IMET program should ultimately contribute to the current mission in Afghanistan.

Increased human capital within the ANDSF does not necessarily translate into capability. Personnel that have been trained sometimes get out of the service, or are not utilized in the manner they were trained. In both these cases, military human capital increased, but not ANDSF capability.

It is essential that the solution not only increase the human capital of the country. The solution must also increase the capacity of the ANDSF so stability can be achieved in the country. This stability is essential for mission success, but beyond that, without it Afghanistan could fall back into an era where human capital is not nurtured and not encouraged. If this happens, all the progress and efforts Afghanistan and coalition forces have achieved could be thwarted.

### **Does the COA achieve IMET objectives?**

The Department of Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) website points to the many objectives of the IMET program. Of those mentioned, the ones which pertain to this study are: “[To] train future leaders, establish a rapport between the U.S. military and the country’s military to build alliances for the future, enhance interoperability and capabilities for joint

operations, focus on professional military education, [and] provide English language training assistance.”<sup>63</sup>

The chosen COA must ensure these objectives remain relevant. If the solution does not allow IMET to meet its intended purpose, then there will be no reason to keep IMET as a program of record in Afghanistan. As such, the solution must support or encourage the objectives as outlined by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA).<sup>64</sup>

### **Is the COA cost effective?**

It is the responsibility of the administrators of the IMET program to ensure the most cost effective solutions are implemented and thereby meeting their responsibility to the tax payer. As such, any COA designed to help Afghanistan needs to take into account a cost benefit analysis to ensure both the funding and the effort are worth the solution.

The budget for the FY16 IMET program in Afghanistan is \$17M.<sup>65</sup> While this is only an estimate, one could say that 12% (the percentage of personnel that went AWOL in 2016), was misspent by personnel leaving during training in the US. The rough order of magnitude loss due to AWOL personnel could roughly be calculated to \$2.04M. Any effective solutions should not cost any more than \$2M to implement lest the implementation be more expensive than the problem.

### **Is the COA legal, both in the United States and in Afghanistan?**

This criteria came out of the previous discussion in which guarantors who agreed to be financially responsible for students were allowed to renege on their agreement by the ministry of Justice. As US government representatives, all actions to implement programs must follow US

laws. Needless to say, solutions must also be legal in Afghanistan. These two edicts drive this criteria requirement.

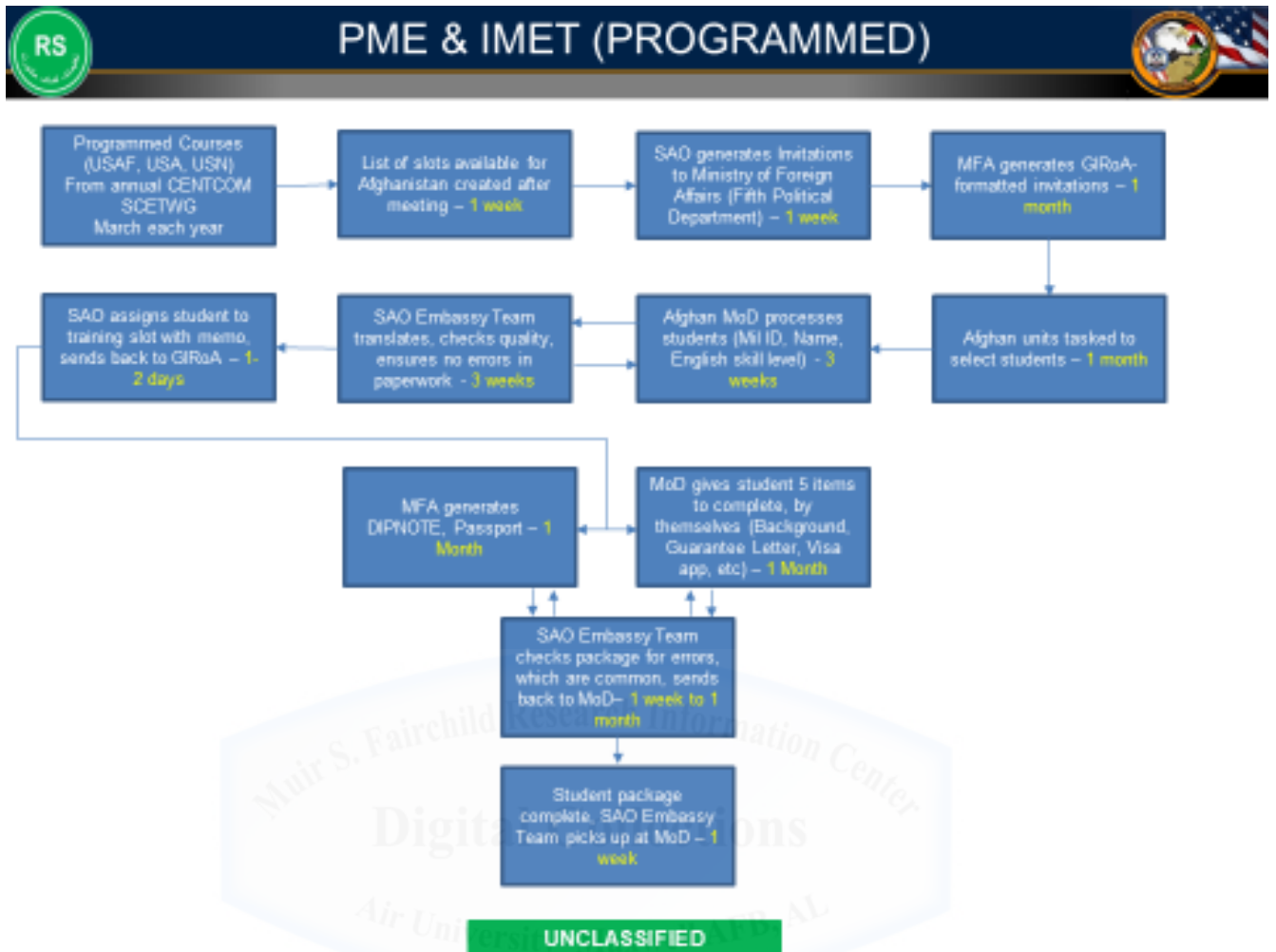
As seen above, some of these COA criteria supplement each other. For example; achieving a more capable ANDSF should easily supplement the IMET objectives of training future leaders and enhancing interoperability between the two governments. Having said this, some of the criteria may become contradictory. For example, achieving a more capable ANDSF does not necessarily supplement having a cost effective solution.

### **Description of Alternatives**

There are several solutions to the issues which affect IMET. These solutions range from taking more control of the program to giving full control of the program to the Afghan government. In between these two solutions, other methods would include lobbying for policy changes, both on the side of the Afghan government as well as on the United States. The following is a list of the most viable solutions with their descriptions.

#### **1. COA 1: Change selection protocol for IMET program in Afghanistan:**

Currently, the process of student selection is left to the discretion of Afghan military officials. The slide below explains the selection process in more detail:



**Figure 1: IMET program initial selection process, Afghan vetting.**<sup>66</sup>  
 (Adapted from Security Assistance Office – Afghanistan  
 Training Branch Review presentation 17 Feb 2016)

Based on this slide, the process of selection takes about seven and a half months. Once SAO-A sends out invitations for the next IMET program selection, the Afghan process takes about five and a half months to find and vet a candidate. Procrastination from Afghan officials could be a cause for the number of student slots that go unfilled.<sup>67</sup> Note that **Figure 1** shows the vetting which occurs within the Afghan government. Before attending courses in the United States, international students are also given English proficiency tests, background checks and visa applications (i.e. international travel vetting), before being permitted to go to the US to study.

Two ways SAO-A could affect the selection process are to energize the ANDSF to adopt different processes or to take over the entire selection themselves. SAO-A may be able to imbed several advisors within MoI and MoD to monitor the selection process, interview candidates, and search for military talent throughout Afghanistan by personally surveying personnel or taking the requests of other coalition advising agencies. This process would be very labor intensive to find 289 personnel (the quota for FY 16), with no knowledge of career progression or aptitude. The other option would be to try to use the Afghan personnel system, as rustic as it may be, to find suitable candidates for IMET. Both these options have their advantages and disadvantages which will be vetted through the pre-established criteria noted in the previous section.

## **2. COA 2: Change ANDSF AWOL and ADSC policies:**

Some people believe the US has the power to change how the ANDSF works by the mere fact that the force was initially put together and funded by the US. This is not the case. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) is a sovereign nation in its own right and therefore, while it may take funding, mentoring, training, and equipment from the US, decisions with regards to policies within the ANDSF fall to the organizations that run them, such as MoI and MoD. While the United States, CSTC-A, or the SAO-A cannot change ANDSF policies directly, it can definitely encourage and energize the process.

In this case, CSTC-A and SAO could lobby for a change in the AWOL policy and request the institution of an Active Duty Service Commitment (ADSC) policy. Military students should be punitively liable for defrauding both the US government and the Afghan government. Also, students that leave for the US to study should incur additional service commitments commensurate to the level and length of training they acquire. Finally, it would be beneficial if there were changes in the promotion structure of the Afghan military so as to promote human

capital and merit. This last suggestion implies severe changes in the social structure of the Afghan military and the country overall, so it is unlikely to be a realistic reform.

### **3. COA 3: Change Location of International Training:**

Changing the location of international training could solve the AWOL issue Afghanistan is experiencing. Since Afghans currently use non-NATO standard (read: eastern bloc) weapons systems, much training could be diverted in that direction. Turkey would also be viable solution for training, given that they are an Islamic nation which could cater to Afghan customs and curtsies in different ways. Finally, much training can be conducted in Afghanistan by bringing in contractors with the correct expertise.

### **4. COA 4: Change US policy toward AWOL personnel:**

While immigration and asylum issues are beyond the scope of this research, the issue of AWOLs who used the US government to fund their trip and provide them with a student visa is not. After all, these personnel were identified to improve the human capital of the ANDSF. When these personnel go AWOL and defraud the US government, they take away human capital capability from the Afghan defense forces and ensure this opportunity is not utilized by other eligible candidates who would have capitalized on the opportunity.

Afghanistan is not the only country which suffers from AWOL personnel within the IMET program. The AWOL rate in Afghanistan is higher but consistent with other Middle Eastern nations such as Egypt and Saudi Arabia.<sup>68</sup> Having a stricter policy toward AWOL personnel in US soil may dissuade future AWOLs, not only from Afghanistan, but from other countries as well.

## **Analysis of Courses of Action**

In order to choose the best course of action to help the human capital issue in Afghanistan, a COA-comparison was accomplished. This comparison evaluated the COA based on the defined criteria and assigned a value of (+) positive or (-) negative for every issue within a specific criteria. Finally, the results were tabulated at the bottom of **Table 3** located at the end of this section.

### **1. Analysis of COA 1: Change selection protocol for IMET program in Afghanistan:**

The feasibility of the first COA, to change the current selection process, would not advance Afghan security forces into a more capable force, is not cost effective, and may not even be legal. Two ways to change the selection process would entail either taking the selection process away from the Afghan military or to make Afghans use a different process. Both options would imply implementing processes without Afghan buy in or advocacy. This situation could cause more disinterest in training and education due to general resistance to control. Additionally, the US would be taking away an opportunity for Afghans to fix processes themselves.

Taking over the IMET program for Afghans would also be cost prohibitive. To implement, CSTC-A would have to put a monitoring team which could scout and vet possible candidates, a very hard feat given that there is currently no real personnel tracking system which would show personnel qualification to US personnel. While the Afghan system is imperfect, at least they have a way to vet some of their candidates, either through connections and word of mouth (to which Coalition Forces are not privy to), or by following an officer's career.

Finally, it may not be legal, and definitely not very diplomatic, to tell a sovereign nation that the US will choose personnel which will get the education and training to eventually lead the ranks of their Army. This may be tantamount to placing individuals in positions of power for influence,

something Afghans would not stand for. One final point is that the US tried to shape the Iraqi army once by dismissing many Sunni officers. The results were far from positive.<sup>69</sup>

## **2. Analysis of COA 2: Change ANDSF AWOL and ADSC policies:**

Encouraging changes to the current MoD and MoI policy for deserters and students who just finished attending IMET is one of the two most viable options to help fix human capital issues plaguing the IMET program. This solution increases ANDSF capabilities on several levels. This COA also meets IMET objectives as students exposed to the US and interact with US officers would stay within the Afghan military structure. This solution would have no additional costs for the US.

By retaining more internationally educated students through changes in ANDSF policies, Afghanistan would build a more capable defense force that would meet IMET objectives. The ANDSF would be able to retain more personnel with higher human capital, eventually making the ANDSF a better trained force. All in all, the retention of these additional US trained personnel would boost both ANDSF capability and meet US IMET objectives for the Afghan program.

This option would also be cost effective because all the resources are already in place. There would be no change in personnel or mission. By coming up with their own solutions to their human capital issues, Afghans would ensure such policy changes would be in line with the Afghan culture and the way of life, as well as ensure it were legal within the Afghan construct.

### **3. Analysis of COA 3: Change Location of International Training:**

COA number three, changing the location of IMET is a COA that would work as an exception and not the main rule. Training in a country other than the United States would still build ANDSF capability, although it is unclear as to whether it could achieve the same standards as US training facilities. This COA, however, would not meet some IMET objectives of exposing foreign national officers to the United States and its culture, and it may be extremely cost prohibitive to implement.

A case can be made for training Afghans in countries other than the US. For example, a few years ago, the US spent \$1B in the purchase of several MI-17 Russian Helicopters to equip the ANDSF.<sup>70</sup> Being that these platforms are mainly operated in eastern bloc countries, training could be implemented in these countries since personnel would have operational knowledge of the platform. They would also be adept at maintaining these helicopters. Another example is the recent police training of several Afghan females in Turkey.<sup>71</sup> But these cases should be looked at as the exception and not the rule.

The US has arguably one of the most professional forces in the world. Given this fact, it is hard to foresee other forces around the world providing the same level of professional training to Afghan forces. It would be hard for Egypt or Saudi Arabia to achieve the same level of Special Forces, Ranger, pilot, or senior leader training that the US can provide.

The cost for providing these capabilities would also be prohibitive. It would be hard to find an institution to substitute the training provided by the National Defense University, the Naval Postgraduate School, or other finishing schools currently located in the US. Building this capability in other nations where Afghans would not want to go AWOL would be hard.

Finally, several goals of IMET would not be met if international students were diverted to other countries. Previous discussions point to IMET objectives to expose partner nation officers to the American culture. IMET is also designed to allow foreign officers an immersion into US operations so as to be able to integrate more seamlessly during combined endeavors. This would not happen should Afghans train in a country other than the US.

#### **4. Analysis of COA 4: Change US policy toward AWOL personnel:**

Changing US federal policies toward Afghan AWOL personnel, while seeming one of the best choices, adds several layers of ambiguity due to implementation difficulties. For one, the solution by itself does not increase or decrease ANDSF capacity. It may meet IMET requirements, but not necessarily support them or enhance them. It is questionable on whether or not it is cost effective since it is hard to predict resources necessary to carry it out.

If the US were to institute policies toward AWOL personnel, it would at best dissuade personnel from leaving Afghanistan. There is little this foreign policy could do to curve the exodus of personnel leaving the military after gaining valuable training however. This solution would not allow Afghan officials to figure out Afghan-unique solutions to problems. Because of this, it is hard to assess whether this solution would really improve ANDSF capacity. If foreign policy toward Afghan AWOLs were adopted, the solution would be unique to the IMET program and could not be implemented throughout the Afghan military if successful.

It is also questionable as to whether this solution is cost effective. While these policies would decrease the number of AWOLs during international training, a cost-benefit analysis would have to be accomplished to figure out how these federal regulation are enforced. For example, what would it cost for the US government to have constant surveillance of Afghan international students, and how would this students feel about being constantly monitored? If

someone goes AWOL, would a special task force be assigned to search the entire US for this individual? AWOLs number a couple dozen in one year – at most. At most, each instance would represent tens of thousands of dollars, hardly an amount that would justify a multi-million dollar persistent capability to monitor the international students.

## Results

Below is the COA comparison chart accomplished based on the analysis in this in the previous section:

<b>COA Comparison</b>				
<b>COA</b> →	<b>1.Selection Protocol</b>	<b>2.ANDSF Military Policies</b>	<b>3. Location of IMET</b>	<b>4. US policy toward AWOLs</b>
<b>Criteria</b> ↓				
More Capable ANDSF?	--	+	+	0
Meet IMET Objectives?	+	+	--	+
Cost Effective?	--	+	--	+
Legal?	--	+	+	+
Totals	-2	4	0	3

**Table 3: COA Comparison based on Criteria**

Based on the above COA comparison COA 2, encouraging ANDSF policy changes to disallow AWOL personnel and incur an active duty service commitment would be one of the most effective solutions. This is based on the fact that this option meets all the selection criteria requirements as initially defined.

The results show that COA 1, taking over international student selection from Afghans may meet IMET objectives in that personnel would be selected and sent to training in the US. This COA however can do nothing for personnel that would leave right after training, or encourage Afghans to make their own solutions. This option would also require additional manpower and funding to

search, vet and select Afghan personnel, a function currently accomplished by the Afghan military. Finally, because this solution impinges on Afghan sovereignty, it may not be legal to execute.

Changing the location of IMET, or COA 3, would allow Afghans to choose their personnel and would bring back increased human capital which is bound to enable the ANDSF. It would not, however, meet IMET objectives because of the lack of contact Afghan officers would have with US personnel and culture. This option would become cost prohibitive as the capability of US training would have to be replicated in other countries. This solution would be legal in that it would not change the current status quo.

Finally, COA 4, changing US policy toward AWOLs seems to be ambiguous in the sense that it may not increase ANDSF capability to make decisions. It would also be hard to enforce given that labor and funding, probably in excess of \$2M would be needed to run this program every year. This COA would meet IMET policies because Afghan students would be able to interact with US personnel. Finally, it would be legal based on the nature of its operations.

## **Conclusions**

This paper ends in a somewhat somber note because the research, background, and analysis shows it is up to the Afghans to make a change. When it comes to human capital, the US government and the coalition provided much funding, facilities, training, and expertise to ensure Afghans are able to have opportunities to push ahead. There is a point where any more intervention would be detrimental in the long term.

The US continues to invest heavily in Afghanistan's human capital. This is done through state organizations like USAID and by military programs like Essential Function Four (EF 4), which is the organization leading the main effort of training in Afghanistan and the IMET program. Despite the plethora of options, many courses cannot fill a quota satisfactorily.

Logistics and maintenance courses are constantly undermanned. It also seems that Afghans are not interested in incentivizing human capital because these courses are not mandatory, kept track of, or part of rank progression.

Unfortunately, the US and the IMET program proctors cannot make Afghan officials emphasize human capital. Trying to do so would violate the sovereignty of the Afghan state. Instead, the US and coalition forces work hard in advising the Afghan military officials to take action. This may eventually work; but given the present social structure within the military, if such a change is not personally advantageous for a military individual to enact, the change may never take place.

Adding US federal regulation to sway human capital in the US seems to be more counterproductive than beneficial. This is because such regulation would need to be enforced. The enforcement of such a policy would be funded by tax-payers, and probably be more expensive than the sunk costs of training. Never mind the fact that such a move would not change the immediate situation in Afghanistan and may even make relations with the Afghan government worse if the US decided to incarcerate Afghan citizens.

Taking over selections for the IMET program from Afghans may produce similar results as dictating policy. Afghans would not have to take ownership or learn anything new. The US would need additional labor and capital to monitor and select qualified individuals. Finally, Afghanistan may not look too kindly to the US military telling their military how to run their selection programs.

Changing the training locale may only bring more disinterest to the IMET program than it currently has. Beyond this, it would become cost prohibitive to empower schools with the same professional standard found in the US. Such an endeavor would not meet IMET objectives since

graduates from these programs would have minimal to no interaction with American officers or US culture.

## **Recommendations**

This paper advocates for working and advising the Afghan military to make changes in their policy with regard to AWOL personnel and individuals who leave the military after their training is complete. This recommendation is based on research and analysis accomplished through this paper. While this solution is not elegant in its implementation, it does meet all the COA criteria set at the beginning of this study. This solution is also one that respects Afghan sovereignty and eventually increases human capital capability by allowing for unique Afghan solutions and eventually increasing human capital through such solutions.

Some would find this solution unrealistic based on previous discussions pointing to the fact that the Afghan military may not be interested in some, if not all forms of training. While this is still the case, a conditions based encouragement approach may make Afghan military policy makers more interested in advocating for better human capital policies. Conditions-based encouragement consists of commitment letters, a tool consistently used by CSTC-A to encourage compliance in high importance areas. Commitment letter conditions are used to encourage Afghanistan to, for example, build a more transparent contracting infrastructure with internal controls which can adequately execute contracts with US funding. These commitment letters normally include a condition. There is normally a monetary reward if the condition is met, or a penalty if not met. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), John Sopko, in his report to congress, suggested this method to thwart corruption and increase capacity while providing accountability to donor nations.<sup>72</sup>

In the case of the Afghanistan IMET program, lack of progress in the AWOL and/or the ADSC policy could result in the closing of some of the most sought after IMET slots. By contrast, positive movement could result in additional IMET budgeting. If these incentives fail to make progress, then maybe CSTC-A could leverage other contracts or areas, such as fuel for training, or schedules to training facilities.

Encouraging the Afghan military to change their policies is not the only way the US can help when it comes to the IMET program. In order to find more ways to help, one need only to look at the one anomaly program that has had little to no issues with AWOLs or retainability, the A-29 pilot program. The A-29 pilot program has never had any personnel go AWOL.<sup>73</sup> Most of the students graduate from the course, and very few leave the military after training. While a formal study has not been done, advisors do note the difference between the A-29 pilot training track and other training programs the fact that, in the A-29 pilot track, Afghan military students train with the US students and develop enduring relationships which are also harnessed when the A-29 US pilots come to Afghanistan as advisors or operational personnel to work directly with their old classmates. The A-29 program is the only training which is set up, by accident, to work in this manner. The logistics and surveillance to try to replicate this type of relationship with other personnel is difficult. The US military would have to identify personnel who went through training with Afghans and try to place them in a position where they interphase with their previous classmates. This is hard to do given the lack of surveillance the Afghan military has on their personnel and their assignments. It may be a solution worth considering once there is an accurate personnel system which tracks the Afghan military.

When asked what he had learned from his experience in many crisis areas, a retired US State government employee said, “You get the country you deserve”, meaning that one needs to

work toward solutions to issues with courage and resolve. The US has given a lot of effort, funding and personnel to solve the Afghan problem. Now it is up to the Afghans to take advantage of the opportunities provided to make a better life for themselves and their futures.

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