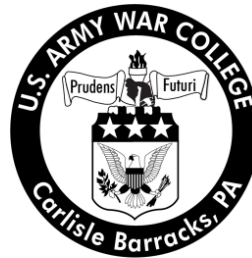


Strategy Research Project International Fellow

The Czech Provincial Reconstruction Team: Civil-Military Teaming in Logar Province

by

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United States Army War College
Class of 2013

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) xx-03-2013		2. REPORT TYPE STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE The Czech Provincial Reconstruction Team: Civil-Military Teaming in Logar Province				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Lieutenant Colonel Roman Nahoncik The Czech Republic				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Dr. James H. Embrey Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Word Count: 7495					
14. ABSTRACT This paper describes the development and implementation of the reconstruction process by the Czech PRT in Afghanistan as a model of cooperation between civilian and military elements. It proposes recommendations for possible improvements to civil-military cooperation not only between the Czech Republic Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), but also in Afghanistan's own reconstruction programs. This paper also addresses interconnection of the funds allocated in medium-term planning and identifies deficiencies in PRT military and civilian operations in established reconstruction activities. Finally, this SRP recommends changes in the PRT's overall command and control, the integrated planning process, organizational structures, and the use of new and improved equipment for the Czech PRT in Afghanistan and future operations.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Afghanistan, NATO					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 36	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UU	b. ABSTRACT UU	c. THIS PAGE UU			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code)

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Report Date: March 2013

Page Count: 36

Word Count: 7495

Key Terms: Afghanistan, NATO

Classification: Unclassified

This paper describes the development and implementation of the reconstruction process by the Czech PRT in Afghanistan as a model of cooperation between civilian and military elements. It proposes recommendations for possible improvements to civil-military cooperation not only between the Czech Republic Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA), but also in Afghanistan's own reconstruction programs. This paper also addresses interconnection of the funds allocated in medium-term planning and identifies deficiencies in PRT military and civilian operations in established reconstruction activities. Finally, this SRP recommends changes in the PRT's overall command and control, the integrated planning process, organizational structures, and the use of new and improved equipment for the Czech PRT in Afghanistan and future operations.

The Czech Provincial Reconstruction Team: Civil-Military Teaming in Logar Province

The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) which was comprised of civilian experts from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and military units from the Ministry of Defense (MoD), launched operations on March 19, 2008 in Afghanistan's Logar province as part of the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) mission. This decision was made to strengthen the Czech Republic's participation in the reconstruction of Afghanistan as part of the international community's efforts to ensure security and promote stability and reconstruction of this independent Islamic republic. UN Security Council Resolutions 1386 and 1510 defined the mandate of the unit which authorized ISAF forces to assist Afghan authorities in providing security through ISAF operations across Afghanistan. Alexandr Vondra, the Czech Minister of Defense, described the intent for cooperation between the MoD and MFA ministries and the results of PRT operations in Afghanistan saying: "All the Czechs in the PRT- the military, civilian experts, and professionals - are doing the necessary work. I am glad that the cooperation between defense and foreign ministries is to our mutual satisfaction, even thousands of kilometers behind the borders of our country."¹ In addition, the Governor of Logar Province Atiqulláha Ludin described the PRT's efforts as highly essential to Afghan success:

You have a good reputation in our country since the days of Czechoslovakia. With your soldiers that we use professionally, working with them is good. I hope that the Czechs will be able to continue to work together and that we will help in the future. I have got big plans for the reconstruction of the economy of the Province. We would like to particularly focus on the repair of roads, bridges and rehabilitation of agriculture, especially beekeeping. I believe that when once you leave here, people here will say that the Czechs are good people. ²

The past three years have proven crucial to the future of Afghanistan. The previous strategy of the international community did not bring timely and sufficient results as Afghan institutions remained weak and their leadership continued to struggle with corruption, as shown in the August 2009 presidential elections and the subsequent tainted recount. Despite the slight improvement in the economic situation of the country, Afghanistan remains dependent on outside help for not only specific development projects but also public funding and finances. However, the major problem remains the Country's level of security. Although the Afghan security forces such as the Afghan National Army (ANA), Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan Local Police (ALP) are increasingly able to undertake capable of successful combat operations, they are unable to maintain control over conquered territory. Even with the support of the international community, the Afghan government remains incapable of controlling and securing large areas of the country, particularly in the southern and eastern provinces.

Due to the deteriorating situation, both NATO and the EU are rethinking some aspects of their strategy for Afghanistan. The widespread consensus among Europeans is that there is a need for a well-balanced combination of civilian and military engagement of the international community in Afghanistan. Robust and visible civilian activities are attempting to build Afghan institutions and expand economic development while improving the local population's perception of their government and supporting international forces. Additionally, a strong coalition military presence ensures an adequate level of security for development activities, accelerates the training of Afghan security forces, and safeguards the Afghan people against extremist influence.

The common strategic approach of both civilian and military efforts within the International Community is to "Afghanisize" all areas of security and governance. This policy aims to develop accountable and transparent Afghan institutions at national and provincial levels, develop the national economy, and create a functional local security force. As an active civilian and military player in the long-term stabilization of Afghanistan, the Czech Republic focuses on three core areas for its institution building operations in the Country: promoting good governance and the rule of law, reconstructing and expanding the economy, and developing and strengthening security.³

Crucial to success in the NATO "Transition" strategy is the establishment of a capable and legitimate government as well as the existence of a functional justice system. Government support is an integral part of the Czech Republic development programs which currently provide infrastructure and equipment for government and judicial authorities, expanded educational programs, and material and training for security forces. Through the framework of existing programs and the deployment of the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Logar, the Czech Republic became intensely involved in directly advising the provincial government by deploying reconstruction experts to work side-by-side with Afghan officials from 2010 - 2012.⁴

Czech PRT Efforts to Date

In the Czech approach, reconstruction and development are closely connected in building government capacity, infrastructure, and security with an emphasis on the diversification of actors. Rebuilding the country is an integral part of the overall stabilization of the security environment, and sets the conditions for overall economic development. Therefore, the Czech Republic is focused on supporting all these areas

through numerous efforts that include Provincial Reconstruction Team operations and additional development activities through the “Foreign and Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Assistance” bilateral contributions to the Afghan government's programs that promote economic development.⁵

The main objective of the PRT in the midterm (through the first half of 2013) will be to lay the foundations for sustainable political and economic development that connects the people of Logar province to central government in order to complete the process of transferring all responsibility to our Afghan partners. To achieve this goal, the continuing focus of Czech PRT reconstruction activities will be to work in conjunction with the U.S. Agriculture Development Team (ADT) on infrastructure improvements so that people of the Province will have access to basic services through providing medical equipment, school buildings, administrative buildings for the provincial government, along with advisors for the district offices and police stations. These parts of the program have been successfully launched and were essential for success by the end of 2012, with continued efforts with through 2013 to reinforce success through additional reconstruction funding.

An integral part of success in the Province is developing the energy network and resolving energy shortages. The Czech PRT does not have a budget that would allow active involvement in solving this problem, but the PRT supplies expert advice to Afghan officials in the preparation of roads and buildings by finding alternative, non-complex temporary solutions in the case of energy security. These solutions include solar energy, water resource analysis for the possible construction of small hydro-electric power projects, repair of existing water works and exploration of wind energy.

Based upon the PRT's expert advisor recommendations, the majority of programs are focused on the recovery and use of water resources.

A fundamental condition for the future success of the Czech PRT in Logar is to "Afghanisize" the planning and management of infrastructure projects. Key to building confidence in the Afghan government is that the projects must be presented to local Afghans as aid and assistance coming from their own government. All projects are therefore coordinated with both the provincial government and local community leaders, and are implemented solely by Afghan partners. The completed projects are then transferred quickly to the ownership of Afghan institutions or communities. However, by the end of 2012 it is apparent that these efforts have not been adequate. The Afghan population still does not see the Afghan Government as meeting the people's needs and depends on the PRT and non-governmental organizations as a "parallel" structure for planning and funding development projects. The provincial government does not have a project budget from the national government nor does it believe it is capable of selecting projects and contractors. The PRT's civilian experts are responsible for overseeing and allocating funds directly to contractors due to the high levels of corruption in the state administration and the possibility of illegal contractor activities. In the future for Afghanistan and other missions, PRT's will face similar very difficult problems in working with local administrations that are still building their capabilities to provide services to their people.⁶

There are several possible solutions for putting Afghan officials in a lead. First, the Czech PRT must identify the sectors which are suitable for transfer of responsibility of the Afghan government as a first step for this test program. Second, the relevant

provincial ministry will get the chance to design and implement the project according on its own. Based on the result produced by the Afghan leaders, the PRT experts can assess the possibility for full transfer of responsibility on a project by project basis. However, so far these three steps have not been very successful. Finally, a short-term solution could be to encourage greater media coverage of local government activities and decisions by officials. When the media informs the people of the success stories of their government, they build support for the government as they develop the credibility and need for an independent media. In all, actions such as these will remain key elements of the governance improvement programs of the Czech PRT.

At present, the Provincial Government lacks the capacity to design and manage its own projects. Government leaders propose the projects they would like to implement, after which the PRT experts perform a complete project assessment, document findings and select required contractors. In this system, the Provincial Government has only a consultative role because it has no management or funding responsibilities, and project supervision is handled by the PRT who also verifies its completion through a Czech advisor. To build provincial ownership and management in Logar, the PRT started the process of transferring selected development programs exclusively to government officials in 2011. The Czech PRT partnered with local officials to complete construction of facilities for government and justice systems in Logar Province by the end of 2012 as part of their continued support to Afghan national programs. After ensuring adequate facilities, the PRT will continue through 2013 to transfer lead responsibilities to local officials.

It is the international community's responsibility to continue supporting the transfer of authority to the Afghan government, but these transfers depend on geographic location, safety assessments, ethnic composition, infrastructure, and in particular the leadership ability of the provincial government. For these reasons, national PRTs must have tailored local approaches to the transfer process. The Czech Republic understands the difficulties of this process and its obligations in Logar Province, but also wants to build Afghan institutions through a patient, natural process. Therefore, despite the deteriorating security situation, plans were prepared for a progressive transition of development responsibilities to local Afghan leadership starting in 2010. According to the original plan, the Czech Republic wanted to begin the transformation process in 2011 (based on the security situation), but the process slowed in 2012 and will likely take several more years to fully accomplish.

A continuing challenge from 2010 - 2012 has been to communicate to the Afghans that military operations are fundamentally a supporting effort to civilian reconstruction activities. In traditional districts such as in Baraki Barak, Chark or Kherwar, where the security threat is high, it is not possible to carry out civilian - led activities without the assistance of the military element of the PRT. This problem can be partly resolved by continuing coalition and Afghan Security Force efforts to improve the security situation which will diminish the amount of troops needed within the PRT to safeguard civilian project inspection. Additionally, putting the military in support of civilian efforts highlights the positive aspects of civil-military cooperation that can be emphasized during "shuras", security meetings and media comments.

Improving PRT Unity of Effort

Challenges remain in cooperation between national PRTs and European Union (EU) elements. In all, there needs to be better coordination between the national PRT and other actors working inside the Provinces such as the European Union Police Mission (EUPOL) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), especially in the area of civil construction and the training of the Afghan National Police (ANP). Individual PRTs, NGOs and EUPOL usually work autonomously. The highest priority for these teams is to work in a coordinated manner between civilian and military activities to create local conditions and reforms in the security area that strengthen Afghan civil order. Although all of these advisory elements attempt to coordinate activities among each other, each actor's organizational structure, national and donor interests, schedule of projects and rules of engagement are different. The focuses of National PRTs also greatly differ from one country to the next in areas beyond reconstruction. For example, American efforts focus mainly on the creation of an Afghan National Army, the Germans on police training, the Italians on judicial reform, the British on the fight against the trafficking in narcotics, and the Japanese on disarmament and demobilization. As a result, PRT efforts are sometimes disjointed and lack unity of effort toward common NATO objectives across Afghanistan. Better coordinated efforts in provinces across programs for education, agriculture, and ANP training would help reduce friction and achieve strategic goals faster at local through national levels.

The key to unity of effort across the variety of NATO and EU organizations working in the provinces is probably best developed prior to deployment rather than after beginning operations in the field. A suitable platform for improving cooperation across national teams started in the NATO PRT Conference in Prague during January

2010. The participants exchanged experiences and identified priority areas for improved cooperation between the PRTs, the Afghan government, non-governmental organizations and local residents. Delegates agreed that strengthening cooperation in accordance with certain principles would improve PRT's activities. These included support for the approval and implementation of a policy of local government control and strengthening the importance of the PRT Executive Steering Committee under the leadership of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIROA) to improve coordination at the regional, provincial and national levels.

Other management solutions included strengthening the local capacity of Afghan government officials and institutions via PRT staff and programs in cooperation with the Afghan government's program of civil and technical assistance. This included promoting transparency and accountability for PRT activities across Afghan and international donors, increasing the capacity of local procurement to stimulate the economy, and avoiding market distortion and inflation at local levels. In addition to the focus on basic crop production and strengthening efforts to restore agricultural trade for job creation and economic opportunity, the PRT's also agreed to focus on increased productivity for higher yields and the exploration of new farmer credit. Coordinating the content of civil-military courses taught to PRT members through the NATO Academy in Oberammergau, Germany and the COIN Academy in Kabul was also a major improvement in strengthening civilian leadership and expertise in PRTs. Finally, the PRT – sponsoring counties agreed that developing plans and coordinating actions could reduce sources of instability, and focusing development efforts at the district level in order to improve their relationship with the provincial and national levels to improve

support for the Kabul leadership and improve communications and support with the local populace.⁷

In all, effective coordination for PRT activities should occur prior to each national team's deployment and initiation of activities in order to avoid fragmented efforts and to achieve greater success in helping Afghan officials and people across the province. This is not a criticism of the efforts of PRTs in other provinces which have done a tremendous job under challenging conditions. However, there is an overall need for unified coordinated development strategy from the local through national levels. This will result in more efficient infrastructure reconstruction, better use of funds, and will ultimately improve Afghan governance and organization from national through district levels - a major element of overall success in Afghanistan.

At the local level, activities by the Logar PRT were coordinated with those of the EU who was also operating in the Province. On the basis of the EU's long-declared intention of supporting Afghanistan on its way to security, stability and prosperity, and in light of the deteriorating situation in the country, the EU approved plans to enhance the building of Afghan state capacity. The EU focused on areas in which its capacity building could bring added value such as improving communications between the national government and citizens, training government officials, fighting corruption, training the Afghan National Police, revising electoral legislation, strengthening the capacity of local governance, promoting human rights, and improving agriculture. The Czech Republic is coordinating efforts with these EU programs in areas of mutual interest. Many of these areas are compatible with the priorities and activities of Czech

efforts, and the PRT has considered requesting the use of European Commission funds for cost-sharing in mutual development projects.

Sustaining Success

Recently, there has been a significant increase in the development activities sponsored by the Czech PRT and numerous improvements in collaborating with and building the management and leadership capabilities of our Afghan partners. To continue this successful effort, it was necessary to ensure that sufficient funding was available for ongoing projects and new projects that can be completed before the end of PRT supported reconstruction activities and prior to the implementation of austerity measures by the Czech government. Based on needs analysis developed by the PRT in 2010, the Czech Republic increased civilian component (who coordinate efforts with Afghan officials) of the PRT from 10 to 12 people and strengthened the expert group (who provide technical skills and project support) in order to build Afghan capacity good governance and to expand economic development. Continued PRT funding through the national budget is important to the Czech Republic as it seeks to be recognized as a donor that invests directly in Afghanistan success. While expenditures for military and civilian advisory personnel is not accounted for as part of reconstruction budget funding, increasing and sustaining the advisory effort to improve Afghan leadership and confidence is essential to our mission's success.

In addition, improving the security situation in Logar remains an essential precondition for operations by the civilian component of the PRT as they design and implementation projects. In order to support this civilian effort, the military element of the PRT was reinforced by a platoon of combat support vehicles equipped with Pandur II vehicles in 2010. In addition, the Czech government decided to strengthen liaison teams

involved in the training of Afghan security forces in order to strengthen the Afghan National Police (ANP) and Afghan Local Police (ALP) through training new members at local levels. Finally, the PRT security operations will continue to need adequate logistical support to PRT combat based in Shank as the Czech contingent maintains a secure base for local operations.

The Role of Civilian Professional Experts within the PRT

Czech PRT reconstruction projects are identified and formulated by local Afghans based upon the guidance laid out in several key documents such as the Afghan National Development Strategy (ANDS) and the approved “Provincial Development Plans” which are constructed locally and forwarded to Kabul for approval and funding. The primary PRT goal is to support Afghan development activities along three main “pillar” areas and to ensure the comprehensive and sustainable development of the Province to meet the needs of the people.

The first pillar of improving security and developing good governance is enabled by PRT programs focused on building effective security, upgrading leadership and administrative skills, and increasing participation by provincial authorities in the preparation and implementation of development projects. These efforts ensure that provincial authorities increasingly think and decide on their own without outside support, and that the PRT civilian experts are counseling and mentoring their counterparts rather than planning projects for the Afghans. All of these actions are building toward a successful transition where the Afghans themselves will determine their own future, as the PRT will tailor their efforts to provide Afghan local leaders with the support and counseling needed to lead effectively in the Province.⁸

The second pillar for PRT efforts is promoting local progress through economic opportunity and essential services development, with a focus where it will make the most difference to the majority of the Afghan population – in improving agricultural production and water management. The PRT provides agricultural development funds, assists in the design and execution of water projects, and supports small and medium-sized enterprises – all of which are design to provide better everyday lives for the Afghan people. In the past, the most effective efforts have been made through military forces executing a series of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs). These projects have worked well in the past to help improve security and are perceived very positively by local populations because the results are visible and quick, and not delayed by lengthy negotiations and extended completion deadlines like other development projects.

Supporting the growth of an independent media and educating the population on the government efforts are also integral parts of Czech provincial support. PRT efforts in this area include establishing expanding independent radio stations, expanding community radio support, and supporting the provincial branch of the state radio “RTA,” through technical equipment and financing of carefully selected media campaigns. In addition, education and information campaigns through the local media are an important tool for communicating success and progress to the rural people, so PRT efforts to expand the local media’s capabilities through better transmission equipment which will broadcast across Logar Province and also into Pansir were also essential improvements. Finally, rebuilding a local branch of the Ministry of Culture in which the provincial government is linked into training and utilizing local media was an important

contribution by the Czech PRT in building the overall Afghan government capacity to communicate effectively with its own people.⁹

For essential services, the PRT's efforts mainly focused on the restoration of education programs and school facilities, providing small infrastructure projects and equipment to support medical operations, and expanding transportation infrastructure projects like bridges and secondary roads. An integral part of these activities is community-based projects such as a playgrounds or libraries that benefit all members of the community and improve the life of young Afghans. Support to the Province in sponsoring and accomplishing these projects will continue to be governed by the basic principles which include seeking long-term solutions, ensuring sustainability and participation by the beneficiaries in the local community, transparency, and close cooperation with major donors. Using this approach will avoid the problem of creating parallel (Czech) structures to the Afghan government, and these projects are in areas where the PRT has available expertise to support projects based on Afghan identified needs.¹⁰

To promote economic development, the PRT focused on water management projects in the traditional Karez water system and reconstruction of the water supply system in the Khoshi district. As in most of Afghanistan, water is essential in Logar Province to ensure the overall agricultural livelihood of the population. After the completion of these projects, people no longer had to go to their local springs for water as they had water available in their homes and businesses. The system was designed by Czech civil engineers as a continuation of a local source of repairs to Karez irrigation, but the project was based upon an identified, critical need by Afghan officials.

The director of the high school on the shore of the dam at Surchab Abdul Wahab Ahmadzai emphasized this when he said: “We are excited to be working here and the Czechs are helping us. Without water, local farmers would not grow anything.”¹¹ Across the province, water management structures had to be addressed comprehensively throughout the watershed. For example, in completing unfinished projects such as the hydroelectric power station in Chark, the PRT discussed completing this project with local leaders, but experts recommended canceling it because the proposed hydroelectric power station could have adversely influenced hydrologic factors and water flow across the district. Also, if the government was responsible for poor water management that impacted farmers, it would significantly affect impact the people and could add cause for people to support the insurgents in the political conflict.¹²

An integral part of the economic development program for the Province was agricultural improvement. In this region, the most important project was the construction of an agricultural and mechanical secondary school in Pol-e’Alam to educate young Afghans in better farming techniques. The initial building was completed in late 2011 – 2012 and the building is still expanding to accept more students based upon the popularity of the program. This school is the first professional institution in Logar which prepares students for work in a needed technical area. Other key projects in this area include three milk collection centers, several silk farms, and a beekeeping center in Pol-e’Alam. All these projects show the long-term possibilities for local residents to expand production and job opportunity in this area through working with their government.¹³

The third pillar for success is building security capacity. The main project for 2011 – 2012 focused on supporting the Afghan Ministry of Justice in the long-term

construction of a new prison in Pul-e' Alam, which is struggling with financial and contractor problems. This project was designed to address the intolerable prison conditions by improving the facilities and expanding the amount of prisoners that the facility could hold. Although progress is slow at the prison, the Ministry of Justice, has had greater success with completing a control and observation check point in Chark (as one of its seven major checkpoints in the area) to improve conditions for the Afghan police. In contrast, the construction of the observation point in Khoshi district where the checkpoint enabled the ANP to control access to Azra district suffered many setbacks. The project was attacked and partially destroyed by a group of local Taliban after which the contractor refused to continue on this area unless the Czech PRT could ensure worker force's safety. As a result, the PRT guarded the construction in Khosi continuously for a month and the ANA secured the site for two weeks, even though the project was primarily for ANP needs and the police could provided the guards for facilities being built for police use. From this we can conclude that the capacity and ability of the PRT to provide security should be used selectively and for very short and important projects to augment Afghan forces - - not as a substitute.

Another example of a major security project was in Baraki Barak, a key point of access by road through the Tangi Valey to Wardak Province. This project was delayed due to difficulties in finding a capable contractor. To support the development of an ANA base at Altimur, the PRT successfully completed the construction of a hospital and the headquarters of the 1st Kandak, 4th Brigade. Finally, the last major security project was the completion of the provincial court and library in Pul-e'Alam. In an interesting situation, local leaders were unable to agree who would officially accept the building on

behalf of the Afghan government, again illustrating a basic lack of leadership and organization amongst local provincial authorities who are not yet able to assume full responsibility for the Province without outside help.

It is clear that the Czech PRT in Logar Province has worked hard to produce results. However, the problem persists in teaching Afghans how to care for and maintain new buildings that are designed and built with new technologies and materials to European specifications - - things not common to construction in this region. Two years ago, I had opportunity to inspect a forward ANP control point in Terra Pass after two years of local police use. In all, the building was not only poorly maintained, but was a health hazard due to poor sanitation practices by the police who occupied the building. The disastrous condition of structure required the PRT to not only rebuild the building but also to teach the Afghans how to maintain the building and keep it in good working order. Without Afghans learning and accepting responsibility for maintaining the facilities to a proper standard, our many years of building will be wasted, not only in the construction of infrastructure but also in the equipment given to the ANA. In the long term, we can anticipate that NATO will be forced to leave experts who will teach and supervise Afghans on the proper use and maintenance of buildings and equipment even after main force departure at the end of 2014.

Security Capabilities for the PRT

The security organization and capabilities of the PRT are an essential part of the team's success in providing independent security support to safeguard civilian efforts, as well as participating in joint operations with other partners in the Provincial area of operations, such as the U.S. Brigade Combat Teams (BCT), ANA, National Directorate of Security (NDS), and ANP forces. During operations, the escort of PRT civilian experts

to assess and direct projects was a secondary priority. The current organization provides a Mechanized Infantry Company which is dedicated to the protection of the civilian experts during project management and for escorting individual advisors to coordination sessions. The Mechanized Company has three mechanized platoons that can perform independent escort and security missions daily to several different places. The internal military structure of the PRT contains a Reconnaissance Detachment, which also performs intelligence gathering in areas for future operations, escort missions for civilian experts and joint operations as needed. Supporting these elements is a platoon of combat support vehicles equipped with “Pandur II” armored vehicles with ground support teams.¹⁴ This robust security structure enables the PRT to also conduct partner operations that develop ANA and ANP skills to perform these operations on their own. Additionally, through the time spent in the area of operations, the military forces of the PRT had opportunities to analyze the environment and recommend possible sites for future projects. After the end of PRT operations in 2013, the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) will provide limited security but overall security will be maintained by the ANA. The first of these teams started operations in Wardak Province in 2010 with the mission to train and mentor the 6th Kandak ANA until the unit obtained full operational status. This approach will help implement the “Transition Strategy” as a small group of experts and development funds will be provided to the OMLT, both of whom will focus on strengthening security forces in Afghanistan with an emphasis on continuing to develop the ANA.

Another key element within the PRT is Military Police instructors group, which helps with the training of new ANP and ALP recruits. They provide training in basic

police procedures and weapons employment needed for the future. Each course has 60 recruits, of whom 85% successfully complete the course. This program is focused on building security forces and promoting support for rule of law efforts in Afghanistan, but the future of this program or the number of instructors who will continue training the ANP is uncertain.

An integral part of force protection is the Road Clearance Patrol (RCP) effort by the Mechanized Company and combat support platoon during movement operations to access areas of operations and cleaning of major roads in the Province to enhance mobility for coalition and PRT elements. This element is also very effective in removing Improvised Explosive Devices (IED) to protect against further attacks. In the future, maintaining access to these types of RCP and anti – IED capabilities will be extremely important to maintain the mobility of future Czech element as U.S. forces depart and ANSF elements take the lead.

In all, the ability to provide security limits the PRT's overall civil-military effectiveness. A Czech Special Report noted that "With their small complement of troops and limited armament, PRTs were extremely vulnerable, if they were not co-located with Coalition combat units."¹⁵ Additionally, the first commander of the Czech PRT said to an Afghan counterpart: "We came to your country to help your government in building better conditions for your life. We don't want to kill anyone, but we have enough power to forcibly defend ourselves if necessary."¹⁶

While the PRT remains logistically dependent on the BCT, the PRT has the ability to protect itself and to partner with others for local security. In 2011, Task Force (TF) Storm and TF Thunder conducted five joint security operations with the PRT in

Logar, where either three mechanized platoons or two reconnaissance platoons from the PRT supported security operations for up to 14 days. These operations were very successful, as units located enemy ammunition, weapons, barrels containing fertilizer and equipment to prepare IEDs.¹⁷ Such joint operation changed the local population's perceptions of the PRT, who were seen not only as securing projects but also as expanding security across the Province. Overall, responses from the locals were mixed: the PRT was always intended to support and assist the locals, but several local leaders were confused or alienated when the PRT began conducting offensive operations to clear Taliban from the area. This rising local resentment put pressure on the PRT commander to conduct meetings and negotiations with the local government and with the council of elders "shuras" to explain his actions and defend his unit's actions as beneficial to improving security for the people.

The Future of the Czech PRT

So what will the future hold for the Czech PRT in Afghanistan and beyond? In the near future, the Czech Republic is going to continue investing in stabilizing Afghanistan from 2012 – 2017. Future contingents will support the civilian experts who are responsible for renewal and development efforts. The reduction of the military part of the PRT to about 100 personnel is planned for early 2013, as another 100 soldiers prepare for a gradual redeployment from the PRT operating base at Shank. However, Czech forces will maintain a helicopter unit in Afghanistan of up to 65 soldiers and three Mi-17's that will provide transportation and supply support in the second half of 2013. In addition, the aviation units left on the ground will play an important role in transferring technology and advising Afghan counterparts.

However, this reduced structure will not sustain full PRT reconstruction activities as in the past. The biggest risk will be to maintain a feedback system that can help monitor how funds will be and are being used. An alternative method would be to include a team of budget experts to oversee funding for projects and teach Afghan counterparts. In terms of feasibility, it is reasonable for the Czech Republic to keep a sufficient number of people in Afghanistan to implement this strategy, but it will be difficult to monitor Afghan corruption and the accomplishment of projects.

Even if the Czech Republic withdraws all troops from Afghanistan, it should still maintain a mentoring team in place to ensure continued training and a good relationship between the Czech Republic and Afghanistan. This would maintain a positive image of the Czech Republic as a reliable security and development partner. Key here is for the Czech Republic to guarantee a predictable level of advisory and resource support to Afghanistan. Over the next two years, the 590 Czech soldiers in Afghanistan are reduced to 539 soldiers by 2013 and 340 in 2014.

Over the next few years, the Czech Republic will reduce its support for development programs in Afghanistan. The Quick Impact Project (QIP) budgets that supported local, small projects in Logar Province grew from \$60,000 in 2007 to over \$1,444,000 in 2009. With the reduction in Czech development assistance funding in 2010 from \$4,250,000 to \$3,650,000 and its stagnation in 2011 – 2012, meant that there will no longer be support demining (\$ 2 million per year) or QIP (\$2,880,000) in 2011 and beyond. With an additional \$1,025,000 in funding from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' reserve fund, the total available resources amounted to \$3,905,600. However, the complex political and security challenges in Afghanistan made it extremely difficult

to expend all of these funds in a timely manner; consequently only the PRT and other Czech efforts were able to expend only \$2,454,354 in 2011. The MFA has tried to efficiently and economically implement its budget but the combination of project implementation delays caused by complicated local conditions on the ground as well as a difficult and slow financial allocation process in the Czech Republic. For this reason, several projects had to be postponed on the priority list which resulted in an under-expenditure of \$1,451,246 in 2011. Although the PRT has an already developed and prioritized list of projects based on the funds anticipated, budget cuts and austerity measures based on the Europe financial crisis resulted in fewer funds than expected. There are other options for managing reconstruction funds more effectively to prevent the loss of these monies at the end of the fiscal year. First, funds that might be lost could be allocated (up to \$ 2,500,000) to either the UN's Consolidated Humanitarian Challenges to be used by one of the UN agencies or registered non-governmental organizations registered in the Czech Republic.¹⁸ Second, it would be possible to allocate such Afghanistan funding for development projects accomplished by non-governmental organizations registered in the Czech Republic (maximum amount of \$ 1,250,000 per project).¹⁹

Due to budget reductions, it is necessary to note that in 2013 the Czech Republic can only guarantee about \$1,000,000 for international development cooperation in Afghanistan, which would represent a decline of 75% compared to previous commitments. As for future investments in a developing Afghanistan, the Czech Republic will provide over \$7,000,000 to continue to build Afghan capacity in 2014 – 2017, an increase of over \$ 4,000,000, with \$3,000,000 to support the development of

Afghan security forces. This plan will change the processes of the Czech Provincial Reconstruction Team in Logar when more funds are managed by the Afghan government directly. The Czech Minister of Foreign Affairs Karel Schwarzenberg noted that: "The proposed measures are a new form of assistance to the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan after the transition of the PRT in the first half of 2013." Based on the commitments of the international community in Chicago, donors are to provide at least 50 percent of their development support directly to the Afghan national government and that the Czech's would provide Kabul over \$1,000,000 in direct funding for support of the ANSF.²⁰ As a key NATO partner, the Czech Republic will continue to support funding for both security and development after 2014.

Lessons for the Future

Over the course of the Czech PRT's employment in Logar, there have been a number of key lessons learned on how a combined civil-military team can and should operate together in a conflict environment. As the Czech Republic considers using similar teams in the future, there are several considerations that should be kept in mind to guide their formation and operational effectiveness as part of NATO operations in other conflicts.

First, in preparation for deployment future civil-military team, a PRT should concentrate on understanding the overall situation they will face in the country in the context of the history and conditions the country. Future teams will need to understand the linkages and ongoing efforts between governmental and non-governmental organizations that are involved in reconstruction efforts, and how the PRT's efforts will work along side these partners in order to contribute to overall success. During pre-deployment preparation, the PRT's commander along with the civilian head of the PRT

and its staff must practice and develop communication and negotiations skills for use with the local government. They must create their plan for developing cooperation with host-nation institutions that will emphasize the need for local leaders to take responsibility for their province within the transition process in PRT 2013.²¹ In addition, the PRT commander must clearly define the conditions for the use of military force and Czech participation in joint security operations by coalition troops before deployment, and train all members on the possible use of military force and the rules of engagement to be used by the PRT.²² By eliminating this confusion, the Team can better develop a shared understanding of what PRT operations can and cannot do during the deployment.

Second, the government of the Czech Republic, to include MoD and MFA should work more closely together in the preparation and implementation of the overall concept for PRT operations. This civil-military plan should be as detailed as possible, going past simply earmarking funds from each ministry to include the development of a common civil-military strategy that guides the overall deployment of the PRT. Previous frictions developed when operations were focused on accomplishing political interests which the military does not have a clear idea of what the Czech government wants to achieve. In all, the planning and preparation for deploying a PRT is not a hasty action by the Czech Parliament and Republic to show their ability to be a reliable partner of NATO who is able to spread goodwill.²³ Future efforts should not repeat the hasty actions of 2007 when the government decided to set up the Czech PRT Logar through the Czech government Resolution No.1179 on 22 October 2007 with no real political debate or specified focus before taking this major step.²⁴ In summary, the government must

develop better methods that improve cohesion between politicians, define clear strategic objectives and end states based upon a civil-military planning process, define and focus the plans for the allocation of funds, and set clearly defined termination of deployment.

Third, our national PRT efforts must be planned and integrated with the planned PRT deployment by other NATO partners. Information sharing system must be set up between the national PRTs in all provinces, and mutual experiences across national PRTs should be shared across teams in order to help others in developing projects for agriculture, education and assistance to provincial governments in other provinces. Information-sharing may include details on projects already completed that may better inform experts in other provinces. This system could speed up the process of planning and selecting construction projects that support the overall NATO mission. Of course, approaches vary across teams, and plans vary based upon the needs of each provincial government and the financial capabilities of each national PRT. The question for the future might be if it would be worth bringing together all national efforts to create a common PRT coordination center to improve unity of effort across provinces. This would improve information sharing and streamline procedures for managing the reconstruction of the country.

The coordination of internal activities is greatly influenced by the level of team preparedness among PRT members. It turned out that joint civilian and military preparation, such as training together prior to deployment, was essential for field effectiveness because the representatives of civil departments had no experience in working together with Czech troops and with Afghans in demanding conditions. In

addition, the PRT rotation periods are different for soldiers and civilians, a factor which may impact the cohesion of teams as military members rotate out more quickly and there is a loss of coordination experience and transfer of knowledge. Finally, having both the senior military commander and the senior civilian representative exercise dual-command of the PRT led to problems in the past. While there was mutual respect between civil and military leaders in coordinating and directing PRT actions, not having a single person in charge to decide difficult issues, issue orders and instructions, and set priorities for all PRT members caused a lack of unity of effort. We can solve this leadership problem by strictly determining who will be in the lead. My opinion is that PRTs must be led by a military leader, not only because the Team is made of mostly of military forces, but also due to the often dangerous security situations in the area of responsibility, the availability of intelligence and information, and the need to provide coordinated capability to provide force protection for all civilian efforts.

In all, the deployment of the Czech PRT in Afghanistan met the Czech government's goals in supporting and coordinating Afghan local reconstruction activities. During the deployment, the joint civilian-military team undoubtedly did a tremendous job in supporting the Afghan government, and in building infrastructure and providing security in the Logar Province. Nonetheless, there remains a lot of work to do to fully develop the capabilities of the local and provincial governments of Afghanistan. The Afghans must continue to improve their actions and own leadership; this will be solely their responsibility for the future of their country without outside help. Further development mechanisms have already been established by coalition forces that have laid the foundations for success through 2014. The PRT model has proven to be a

valuable concept for coordinating aid and development not only in Afghanistan, but also in other operations of the future. Members of the Czech Army and civilians from the MFA have accumulated rich experiences in the management of such operations in an international environment, and the question remains of how to make future joint efforts better for all participating organizations. In terms of being a valuable strategic contributor, the Czech Republic has proven itself to be a reliable partner in the NATO alliance with a proven ability to contribute significantly towards joint operational success.

Endnotes

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