

DISARMAMENT AND REINTEGRATION

IN AFGHANISTAN

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DISARMAMENT AND REINTEGRATION IN AFGHANISTAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The domination of Afghanistan's political landscape by armed parties and individual commanders is still the principal obstacle to implementation of the political process that was agreed at the Bonn conference in late 2001. Without a credible process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former commanders and fighters into society (DR), it is inconceivable that any of the key elements of that political process – including the adoption of a new constitution, judicial reform, and elections – can be meaningfully implemented. More international engagement across the country – in the form of both security contributions and economic assistance – remains the essential ingredient.

In late October 2003, the United Nations plans to initiate the Afghanistan New Beginnings Program (ANBP), a U.S.\$41 million DR fund, with a pilot project that will target 1,000 soldiers in the northeastern town of Kunduz. This will be followed by similar pilot projects in Gardez and Bamiyan and then rolled out on a larger scale over the rest of the country, with priority to the faction-ridden city of Mazar-i Sharif in the north and Parwan province, which is home to many of the troops now stationed in Kabul. The process is intended to remove the support structure beneath senior commanders by disengaging lower-level commanders and troops through individualised counselling, vocational training, and jobs creation and placement.

The ANBP, however, has been negotiated in the absence of either an international or a non-factional Afghan force that can project its authority throughout the country. As a result, the ministry of defence – still dominated despite recent reforms by

Tajik commanders from the Panjshir Valley – has emerged as a key player in the DR process. Teams of 70 officers and soldiers assigned and trained by the ministry will be responsible for compiling data on the militia units and personnel in each district to be covered by the DR program. Regional Verification Committees (RVCs), consisting of five independent individuals for each region, plus two additional individuals from each province, will then review that data.

While the ANBP is based on a sound understanding of Afghan militia structures, the heavy ministerial footprint on the process creates a high risk of co-option. The spontaneous demobilisation of many former combatants that has already taken place as a result of low and irregular pay means that relatively few troops who retain links to commanders are likely to be found at the bases of the Afghan Military Forces (AMF). The task of identifying militia personnel, particularly the low-level commanders who are the key agents of troop mobilisation, requires independent data collection at the village level – a task for which UN or ANBP staff would be better suited. Without a more robust verification mechanism than the RVCs to cross-check the data, especially where UN profiling is unavailable, there is a serious risk that the process will be misused by powerful figures either to strengthen patronage networks or to demobilise only their opponents.

Recent attempts at disarmament and security sector reform in Afghanistan offer valuable lessons for implementation of the ANBP. In the north, since May 2002, the inter-party Security Commission has mediated factional disputes at a local level and

carried out regional disarmament agreements. The failure to address larger factional rivalries in the region, however, has limited its effectiveness. In the northeast, arms collection under the authority of the ministry of defence has put significant quantities of light and heavy weapons into provincial and district depots, but the growing estrangement of local Uzbek commanders from the Panjshiri Tajik-dominated *Shura-yi Nazar* has reduced the prospect of their being transferred to a central authority.

In the southeastern provinces of Khost and Paktia, by contrast, the presence of the U.S., British and French-trained Afghan National Army (ANA) as well as Coalition troops has allowed some meaningful security sector reforms to take place, both by exerting pressure on recalcitrant commanders to leave office when directed to by the Kabul government and by helping fill the security vacuum while new provincial security institutions are assembled. Equally meaningful has been the appointment, by the central government and centrally-appointed governors, of professional officers to take over the provincial police and military divisions. However, circumstances and context must be carefully examined in order to assess the real significance of personnel changes.

In Kandahar, for example, the reassignment of the provincial governor, Gul Agha Sherzai, has improved somewhat the prospects for an overhaul of the security sector but rather than creating non-tribal governance and security institutions, the measures that have been taken are likely simply to shift the balance of power between the two major Kandahari tribes. Moreover, troops that should be covered by the DR process, notably Gul Agha's *Nazmi Khas* ("Special Order") force, may be excluded.

The experience of Paktia and Khost indicates that having a credible deterrent to non-compliance and a means of ensuring that Karzai administration directives are enforced are important for DR prospects. However, training of the ANA and of the national police has proceeded at a pace that is unlikely to allow either to play a major role in nation-wide DR in the near future. Moreover, the predominance of Tajiks in its ranks will limit the ANA's potential for long-term deployment in many non-Tajik areas. An expanded international security presence now that NATO has taken over the ISAF function will, therefore, be essential for successful DR.

There is also an important economic prerequisite. The international community needs to support the DR process by creating sustainable employment opportunities for demobilising troops. This should be part of a larger development strategy for the different regions, targeting in particular the rehabilitation of industrial facilities and the revival of long-dormant agricultural projects such as cotton production in Kunduz and forestry in Khost. With careful planning and focused investment, structured environments can be created that minimise the risk of recidivism among former combatants and provide viable alternatives to poppy cultivation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To the Afghan Transitional Administration:

1. Establish and implement criteria for appointment to senior posts within the ministry of defence that emphasise higher education, graduation from the military academy or other formal military training.
2. Create at both the central and provincial levels a non-partisan, multiethnic committee to review and refer candidates for recruitment into the Afghan National Army that is independent of the AMF structure and includes an appeals procedure for rejected candidates.

To the UN Security Council:

3. Authorise NATO to expand the international security presence to Afghanistan's major regional centres and to assist in the implementation of the Afghanistan New Beginnings Program (ANBP).

To the United Nations and the Afghanistan New Beginnings Program (ANBP):

4. Conduct detailed profiling of militia command structures in all districts in the country, identifying as far as possible commanders in each village and town, whether presently incorporated in a regular unit of the AMF or not, and placing commanders within the context of their past and present affiliations.
5. Monitor implementation of the DR process for its impact on factional and ethnic rivalries within each targeted region and verify the lists of candidates for DR proposed by the ministry

- of defence against district profiles produced by UN or ANBP staff.
6. Develop more robust, expanded verification committees, with at least two representatives from each district (representing, wherever applicable, different ethnic or sub-ethnic groups within the local population).
 7. Ensure that the DR process covers any border brigade that is to be dismantled as part of the interior ministry's planned reform of the border security forces.
 8. Monitor the reassignment of individual AMF units to ensure that militias are not deliberately removed from the scope of the ANBP.
 9. Request the deployment of ANA battalions or companies where possible and useful as a stabilising force during implementation of the DR process.
- To donor countries:**
10. Identify and support the creation of sustainable economic opportunities for demobilised combatants as part of long-term regional development strategies that cover, inter alia, rehabilitation and development of Afghan industries, mining, forest management, and cotton production.

Kabul/Brussels, 30 September 2003

DISARMAMENT AND REINTEGRATION IN AFGHANISTAN

I. INTRODUCTION

Discussions with Afghans about governance and security eventually come down to one point: the need to disarm the commanders currently holding power in most of the country. Without this, virtually all the key elements of the political process set out in the December 2001 Bonn agreement – including a new constitution, judicial reform and elections – will continue to be viewed with justifiable scepticism. If political space and much of the economy remain monopolised by individuals and parties with the threat of force behind them, the possibility for ordinary citizens to express their will through political institutions and to pursue justice through legal institutions will remain virtually nil.

The formal process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DR)¹ agreed upon by Afghanistan's Ministry of Defence and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) is scheduled to commence with a pilot project in Kunduz during the third week of October 2003 and to be extended over the rest of the country in succeeding months. This process, however, has been negotiated by UNAMA without the benefit of a credible deterrent force behind it. Despite repeated calls from Afghan President Hamid Karzai and UN Special Representative Lakhdar Brahimi, the UN Security Council has thus far refused to expand the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)

beyond Kabul. The Afghan National Army (ANA), which is being trained by the United States, the United Kingdom, and France to supplant the militias currently in power in Afghanistan, remains a long way from being able to exercise authority throughout the country.

As a result, the ministry of defence has emerged as a key player in the DR process, a factor that has contributed to repeated delays in its implementation. Chief among the concerns raised by UNAMA and donors to the Afghanistan New Beginnings Program (ANBP), the UNDP-managed DR fund, has been the domination of the ministry by commanders belonging to one faction, *Shura-yi Nazar* (Supervisory Council),² and hailing largely from the Panjshir Valley. Long anticipated reforms of the ministry, upon which the start of the DR process had been conditioned, were finally announced on 20 September 2003. While these reforms provide for induction of larger numbers of professionals and non-Tajiks into the upper ranks of the ministry, they leave *Shura-yi Nazar* with two of the top three positions. As such, the reforms are likely to be regarded sceptically by many would-be participants.

Implementing DR in a post-conflict environment where neither the international force nor the Afghan Transitional Administration can project their authority across the country carries numerous security risks. Perceptions that the process is being manipulated in a way that promotes the interests of

¹ For greater simplicity and in the hope that the usage will become more common, ICG employs in its reporting the abbreviation DR, to include, as appropriate to individual situations, the concepts of disarmament, demobilisation, repatriation, resettlement, and reintegration that are elsewhere often abbreviated as DDRR or DDR.

² The *Shura-yi Nazar-i Shamali* was a regional military and political structure founded by Ahmad Shah Massoud. Its core leaders were Panjshiris associated with the *Jamiat-i Islami* party of former President Burhanuddin Rabbani. Many key figures in the *Shura-yi Nazar* now support a political party known as *Nizhat-i Milli* that is distinct from, but maintains links with, *Jamiat-i Islami*.

one faction, ethnic group, or tribe – within a given region or at the centre – could promote renewed conflict. To minimise such a risk and to help ensure that DR disengages local commanders from their command structure, the UN will need to carry out extensive local mapping prior to commencement in a given district. It will also need to create more robust verification mechanisms than the ANBP presently provides.

There are recent lessons to be drawn upon in implementing DR in Afghanistan, including the experience of the inter-party Security Commission for the North, which has attempted since May 2002 to enforce regional disarmament initiatives. In the northeast, arms collection was carried out by the ministry of defence following the collapse of the Taliban, but arms were left in district and provincial depots. In the southeast, the ANA and the U.S.-led Coalition played a key role in allowing administrative and security sector reforms to take place.

This report is based on extensive fieldwork by ICG in the aforementioned regions, as well as in Kandahar, where the Transitional Administration recently replaced the provincial governor, Gul Agha Sherzai. These areas also include three of the sites – Kunduz, Gardez, and Mazar-i Sharif – that will be targeted during the first phase of the DR process. The report draws upon interviews with local government officials, commanders and police chiefs, as well as local and international nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), UN staff, and others whose views should help inform DR implementation.

II. THE AFGHAN MILITARY FORCES

After the Coalition toppled the Taliban in November and December 2001, militias that had collaborated with it or taken advantage of a security vacuum assumed power. Most were led by commanders who had exercised power locally in the pre-Taliban period until 1996, although often the party structures with which they had once been associated – for example, the Gulbuddin Hikmatyar and Yunis Khalis factions of *Hizb-i Islami*, and Maulavi Mohammad Nabi's *Harakat-i Islami* – had long since collapsed. This was particularly true in Pashtun areas, where Taliban rule had been the most enduring and the student militia's chief foreign backer, Pakistan, had decisively shifted its support from other factions, particularly Hikmatyar's *Hizb-i Islami*. In a few areas,³ the newly dominant forces represented the resistance to the Taliban, and as such had governed through rudimentary administrations for periods ranging from a few months to years.

The force with the most clearly delineated command structure was *Shura-yi Nazar*, a northeastern military coordination body organised by Ahmad Shah Massoud in 1986 and led by him until his assassination on 9 September 2001. But even *Shura-yi Nazar* was quite porous on the margins of its territory (which at the time of Massoud's death consisted of Badakhshan, eastern Takhar, and the Panjshir Valley), with the loyalty of many frontline commanders turning on the financial support proffered by Massoud or the Taliban.

What emerged in the aftermath of the Coalition intervention, then, was a patchwork of militia fiefdoms, with varying levels of internal organisation. The creation of the Afghan Interim Administration during the December 2001 Bonn conference and the appointment of the senior *Shura-yi Nazar* commander, Mohammad Qasim Fahim, as defence minister prompted reorganisation of these forces into a semblance of the pre-mujahidin military hierarchy (see fig. 1, below). A variety of factors influenced the assignment of posts to individual commanders: level and quality of armament, capacity to mobilise and maintain troops, relationship with factions in the

³ Badakhshan, Eastern Takhar, the Panjshir Valley (Parwan), Balkhab district (Sar-i Pul), Dara-yi Suf district (Samangan), Chahar Burak district (Nimruz), and by September 2001, most of Ghor and part of western Bamiyan.

United Front (the alliance of forces fighting the Taliban at the time of the Coalition's intervention), and support from local stakeholders, such as tribal leaders.

Name of unit	Rank of officer in command	Minimum number of soldiers in unit
<i>Dalgai</i>	<i>Dalgai Mishr</i> (a soldier)	10
<i>Blook</i>	<i>Blook Mishr</i> (an officer)	30
<i>Tolai</i>	<i>Tolai Mishr</i>	90
<i>Kandak</i>	<i>Kandak Mishr</i>	300-400
<i>Ghoond</i>	<i>Dagarwal</i> (Colonel)	900-1,200
<i>Firqah</i> (Division)	<i>Firqah Mishr</i> (General)	7,000-12,000
<i>Qol-e Urdu</i> (Corps)	Corps Commander	45,000

Fig. 1: Afghan Military Structure⁴

There was, however, no consistently applied set of criteria for military rank – a circumstance reflected in the now ubiquitous title of general within the Afghan Military Forces (AMF), as the officially recognised former militias are known. New divisions and even army corps were created to recognise factional realities or undermine the power base of individual commanders, often without regard to the troop levels normally associated with such units. For example, the ministry in July 2002 recognised a 25th Division in Khost province, formed by the Karzai-appointed governor, Hakim Taniwal, to unseat a local warlord, Padshah Khan Zadran, who was then occupying the governor's residence. At its inception, however, the division had only 700 men – the size of a battalion.⁵

⁴ Information based on an ICG interview with an Afghan military historian and analyst, Kabul, 27 September 2003.

⁵ Antonio Giustozzi, "Re-building the Afghan Army", paper presented during a joint seminar on "State Reconstruction and International Engagement in Afghanistan" of the Centre for

Similarly, separate army corps, the 7th Corps and 8th Corps, were recognised at Mazar and Shiberghan respectively – although there was previously only one corps for the northern military zone, based in Mazar. Rivalries between Junbish-i Milli leader Abdul Rashid Dostum and the Mazar-based Jamiat-i Islami commander Atta Mohammad, prevented the integration of their two forces under one corps.⁶

The command structure within the various army corps is, in most cases, purely notional. The Jamiat-controlled 7th Corps has, at least on paper, authority over the 19th Division in Samangan. That division, however, is headed by Ahmad Khan, the Junbish commander whose forces also controlled the province prior to the emergence of the Taliban. As such, it remains a pillar of the Junbish presence in the north and functions effectively as an extension of the Junbish-controlled 8th Corps. Even within a particular division, individual commanders often operate outside its formal command structure, aligning themselves instead along factional, ethnic or sub-ethnic lines with commanders heading other divisions or corps.

Shifts in the allegiance of local commanders have become endemic, in response either to a commander's perceived marginalisation from a faction's power centre, or more commonly, offers of better remuneration from other factions. Very often, commanders within a particular district or province accept money and arms from rival factions. "No mujahidin commander ever cuts his links to other parties or countries", an Afghan analyst observed. "All have relationships with all parties".⁷ The flexibility in alignments offered by these competing patrons means that relationships between commanders rarely exist strictly along vertical axes. Loyalties of individual soldiers and low-level commanders are generally highly personalised.

Development Research, University of Bonn, and the Crisis States Program, Development Research Centre, London School of Economics and Political Science, 30 May-1 June 2003, Bonn.

⁶ Jamiat-i Islami ("Jamiat") is a predominantly Tajik Islamic party, founded and led by former President Burhaniddin Rabbani. Junbish-i Milli ("Junbish") is a mainly Uzbek party that evolved out of a Soviet-backed militia but absorbed many professional officers. It favors a federal and essentially secular form of government.

⁷ ICG interview with an Afghan military and political affairs analyst, Kabul, 15 July 2003.

Low and irregular pay within the AMF – currently 800 Afghanis per month for soldiers (U.S.\$17) often arriving up to three months late, plus food rations equal to 13 Afghanis a day – has fuelled criminal activity by troops and high rates of absenteeism. At the headquarters of the 6th Corps in Kunduz, ICG observed that few soldiers were present. A senior division officer explained that low wages had compelled those stationed at the base to work in shifts and seek work in the city or as agricultural labourers at other times. The problem is particularly acute for those corps and divisions that lack political support within the ministry of defence. “Since most officers at the 8th Corps haven’t received their salary, the majority have deserted and are working in private businesses”, a senior commander in the Junbish-controlled corps told ICG. “What has been officially recognised are 5,500 officers and soldiers, but since they have not been paid most have gone”.⁸

The absence of troops, however, does not preclude a commander’s capacity to mobilise them. The key instrument of mobilisation is the lowest rung of the mujahidin command structure, the *sargroup*, or “team leader”. Commanding anywhere from ten to twenty men, they are relied upon by district-level commanders to assemble troops and can do so within 24 hours, whether to maintain a checkpoint or engage in combat. “*Sargroups* have generally been appointed because of their activities or services during the jihad”, said a senior provincial official in Kunduz. “Or a village that’s homogeneous may choose one to be its leader”.⁹

As elsewhere in the mujahidin structure, personal loyalty is paramount: each *sargroup* has men in the village that he knows he can muster when called upon, or at least connections to families that can be counted on to provide men. “Primary attention should be focused on the commanders”, said the provincial official. “If you disarm 100 [such] commanders, you disarm 1000 men”.¹⁰ Above the level of *sargroup* in the mujahidin hierarchy is the commandant, with at least four or five *sargroups* under him. Commanding several commandants is the *amir*. This simple and flexible structure, which was revived during the Coalition intervention, explains in large measure the facility with which militia leaders such as Ismail Khan and Abdul

Rashid Dostum were able to reassemble forces once they had sufficient funds.

An effective DR program, then, requires preliminary mapping of the command structure in each district, including the *sargroups* in each village and the commanders with whom they are affiliated. It also requires knowledge of each region’s history over the past 23 years of armed conflict. Summarising the factors that should be part of such a district profile, a UN security officer recommended the names of all surviving commanders in the district dating back to the last years of Zahir Shah’s rule, and a brief on each, including:

- ❑ whether and when they ceased to exercise command over armed forces or groups;
- ❑ whether they retained weapons; and
- ❑ whom they are covertly influencing, or influenced by.¹¹

⁸ ICG interview, 26 August 2003.

⁹ ICG interview with a provincial government official, Kunduz, 29 July 2003.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ ICG interview with a UN security officer, 7 September 2003.

III. SECURITY SECTOR REFORM

A. THE AFGHAN NATIONAL ARMY

At the end of May 2003, training had begun or was completed for nine army and one national guard battalions, each containing approximately 600 soldiers.¹² Attrition rates, which peaked at approximately 50 per cent early in the ANA's life, have fallen to 30 per cent.¹³ New units, nonetheless, lacked weaponry, armour, and communication equipment.¹⁴ Recruitment plans call for provincial governors to identify and send troops from divisions within their province, but because recruits typically object to being stationed far from their homes, attrition rates have been higher for those from more distant provinces.¹⁵ Despite these obstacles, new ANA divisions with embedded U.S. advisors have been deployed on one-month tours of duty in Bamiyan and other areas outside Kabul since early 2003.

The U.S.-trained ANA battalions have not been representative of the country's ethnic mix, with a disproportionate number of Tajiks recruited.¹⁶ This pattern is interpreted as reinforcing Tajik control of the ministry of defence, and has raised concerns among Afghans that the new ANA will be merely another factional tool. The problem is less acute among the officers and non-commissioned officers (NCOs) being trained by Britain and France respectively, where an emphasis on prior professional experience has resulted in a higher proportion of Pashtuns, who dominated the pre-1992 officer corps.¹⁷

¹² ICG interview with an Afghan military historian and analyst, Kabul, May 2003. The ninth battalion began training on 5 April 2003.

¹³ ICG telephone interview with a senior UN military advisor, 19 May 2003.

¹⁴ Ibid. The units also lacked training in the use of armour.

¹⁵ This is an old pattern. During the rule of President Najibullah, Afghanistan's final national communist leader, high desertion rates prompted the army to rely more on locally-based units. ICG interview with an Afghan military historian and analyst, Kabul, May 2003.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Ibid.

B. POLICE FORCES

Ali Ahmad Jalali, a former lecturer at Afghanistan's Military College and secretary to the defence minister prior to the Soviet invasion, replaced Taj Mohammad Wardak as interior minister on 28 January 2003. Diplomats describe Jalali, who has already removed several provincial and district police commanders,¹⁸ as "proactive" but say that a middle tier of "unqualified and unmotivated" staff within the ministry impedes reform. Jalali's efforts have received President Karzai's endorsement, in the form of a 6 April 2003 presidential decree that set a five-year framework for restructuring the command and control hierarchy and established training protocols and payroll mechanisms. Given the lack of control over local and provincial police, the envisaged structure wisely creates a line of command that reaches from Kabul down to the district level.

Efforts to reconstitute the force of approximately 70,000 police officers on government payrolls, many of whom are former soldiers and mujahidin still loyal to local commanders, have, on the whole, had limited effect, and police remain a potential source of violence and insecurity for the near future.¹⁹

Retraining of police has been led by the German government, which has instituted a multi-year program, the German Police Support Project. Approximately 450 new recruits are enrolled in a one-year NCO course, and 100 in a three-year course for commissioned officers.²⁰ The project's timeline means it will not address immediate security problems outside Kabul. Indeed, German efforts have

¹⁸ For example, Jalali replaced the police commander for Kunar and supported the new police chief when the replaced officer declined to leave. ICG interview with NGO staff, Jalalabad, April 2003. Efforts are also underway to establish communication systems that would permit orders to be dispatched in a timely fashion from Kabul to provincial centres. ICG interview with UN staff, May 2003.

¹⁹ See generally Amnesty International, "Afghanistan: Police reconstruction essential for the protection of human rights", London, 12 March 2003. As noted below, however, Jalali has had notable local successes in overhauling the security sector in Khost and Paktia.

²⁰ Ibid., p. 18. According to Amnesty International researchers, up to 80 per cent of new police recruits are Tajiks, an ethnic make-up that will exacerbate the perception of bias among the police. ICG interview with Amnesty International staff, Kabul, April 2003.

been hindered by the fact that work outside Kabul is often pre-empted by security concerns.

On 18 May 2003, the U.S. began training 40 police trainers from Bamyan, Kunduz, and Gardez so that basic instruction can be available outside Kabul.²¹ Even this, however, is unlikely to impact the loyalties tying local police forces with regional and local commanders rather than the central government.

A final constraint on police reform is financial. As a consequence of donor restrictions, funds designated for policing must be channelled through an independent trust fund, called the Law and Order Trust Fund. Donors have thus far pledged less than half of the U.S.\$120 million the Transitional Administration has requested.²² “There is no money for running costs, which means that police can be bought off or are unable to do their jobs”, noted a senior Afghan Finance Ministry official.²³

C. DEFENCE MINISTRY REFORM AND THE ANBP

President Karzai announced on 6 April 2003 the establishment of the Afghanistan New Beginnings Program (ANBP), the UNDP-managed fund for DR. The scope and timing of the process, as well as the degree of involvement of the ministry in the program’s implementation, were revised several times in the following months. The key obstacle to start-up was ministry resistance to internal reforms that were intended to diminish *Shura-yi Nazar* control and provide greater ethnic diversity within its ranks. Japan, by far the largest donor to the ANBP’s U.S.\$41 million three-year budget,²⁴ insisted on reforms as a precondition to the release of money. According to individuals close to the negotiations, the U.S. was simultaneously pushing for a restructuring of the ministry to provide a clear delineation of responsibilities between the chief of staff and the deputy minister.

The reforms announced on 20 September 2003, however, fell short of these aspirations. Marshal Fahim, as expected, remained minister. Deputy Minister Bismillah Khan, a fellow Tajik and *Shura-yi Nazar* member, was simply shifted to chief of staff – an assignment that in the pre-mujahidin period could only have been held by a professional officer, as in fact it was until the latest reforms. However, its occupant – Asif Dilawar, a career military officer who had been retained by Ahmad Shah Massoud as chief of staff following the resignation of President Najibullah – exercised little power within the ministry.

Rahim Wardak, a Pashtun and former army officer, was appointed first deputy minister. Gul Zarak Zadrán, a Pashtun and ally of Abd al-Rabb al-Rasul Sayyaf, the leader of the Saudi-backed fundamentalist party *Ittihad-i Islami*, retained his post as an additional deputy minister, but was given the portfolio of managing the “reserve forces” – an institution on which there has been no agreement between the ministry and the UN and which would appear to run counter to the spirit of the DR process.

The other eighteen appointments raised the number of career officers and non-Panjshiris in the ministry, and in that sense represented a certain measure of progress, but the continued *Shura-yi Nazar* dominance at the top raised questions about the seriousness of the reforms.

Indeed, the UN reserved judgement in the days that followed the announcement. Sultan Aziz, its Senior Adviser on Disarmament and Reintegration, argued that “it is the people of Afghanistan who should judge finally whether they are satisfied with the reforms done in the ministry of defence rather than the international community and organisations”.²⁵

The DR is scheduled to commence in the third week of October 2003 with a pilot project in Kunduz, to be followed by two more pilot projects in Bamian and Gardez. In each of these areas – selected on the basis of the political climate and the need to strike a rough ethnic balance in the targeted populations – the pilot projects will be limited to 1,000 combatants. DR will then be implemented on a larger scale in Mazar-i Sharif and Parwan. Implementation in Parwan – which includes the Panjshir Valley – may prove to be decisive in convincing other commanders outside the *Shura-yi*

²¹ ICG e-mail communication with U.S. police trainer, June 2003.

²² As of 29 September 2003, donor pledges totalled U.S.\$57,149,935. ICG interview with Deputy Finance Minister Abdul Salaam Rahimi, May 2003. ICG interview with Foreign Minister Abdullah Abdullah, Brussels, 16 July 2003. ICG interview, Kabul, September 2003.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ ICG interview with Sultan Aziz, Senior Adviser to the Special Representative on Disarmament and Reintegration, 28 September 2003.

²⁵ Ibid.

Nazar network to participate. According to Aziz, this phase of the program will target troops from Parwan who are stationed in Kabul and account for the bulk of the *Shura-yi Nazar* forces in the capital.²⁶ The program will then be extended on a phased basis to the rest of the country.

The concept behind the ANBP is to “dismantle existing pyramids of power”. This approach seeks to target for inclusion the middle and low-level commanders, as well as soldiers, in militias that are formally recognised by the ministry of defence as units of the AMF, and thereby to remove the structure that supports the senior and top-level commanders. The approach itself is built on a sound understanding of the militia structures. Its primary defects lie in the presumption that the individuals who should be included in the process, particularly the low and mid-level commanders, can be identified with a weak verification mechanism and disengaged from their command structure with a limited range of economic incentives.

The agreement between the UN and the ministry leaves the latter responsible for providing a “comprehensive list of AMF military personnel” and proposing candidates for inclusion in the pilot projects. This aspect of the process will be carried out by 70-member regional ministry teams, members of a DR Corps organised by former Deputy Minister General Atiqullah Bariyalai and trained by officers appointed by him. According to Aziz, the teams “will go to the target areas and evaluate the size and number of the armed men existing in the units and divisions”. The names of the candidates for DR thus compiled will then be verified by Regional Verification Committees (RVC), seven-member teams composed of five regional representatives and two additional representatives for each province. The members of the RVC are supposed to be “independent, non-political and impartial”.²⁷

Each UN field office has been requested by the ANBP to provide a list of candidates from its region. In one region visited by ICG, however, a UN employee said that the office’s suggestions were disregarded, and RVC members were chosen who were not considered strong or, in one case, credible locally.²⁸ Although this may be an isolated

instance, it points to the need to utilise the available resources of the UN field offices fully. It also suggests that a public verification mechanism will invariably be open to allegations of bias and corruption, whether justified or not, that can be used to discredit the entire process. Even presuming an unassailable RVC for each region, it is a doubtful that the RVC would have a sufficient knowledge base from which to review the lists produced by the ministry. For such a mechanism to verify the components of militia command structures effectively, it would have to be constituted on a district, rather than regional or even provincial level.

Once approved by the RVC, each candidate will be expected to surrender his gun to a twenty-member Mobile Disarmament Unit (MDU), which will have “responsibility for collecting, storing, and transporting weapons from the regions to Kabul”.²⁹ According to Aziz, the MDU’s will also collect heavy weapons, though their capacity to do so is clearly contingent on securing the cooperation of commanders. DR planners freely acknowledge that while the Coalition’s Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) will not be part of the DR process, their presence may provide at least a modest incentive for commanders to cooperate.³⁰

Combatants surrendering arms are entitled a one-time cash grant of U.S.\$200 in Afghan currency and 130 kilograms of food. They will also be given a voucher entitling them to individualised career counselling with a case worker within two weeks of demobilisation, an interim job, if necessary, and one of the following:

- an assistance package, such as livestock or farming implements, aimed at reintegrating the ex-combatant into rural life;
- vocational training based on the results of labour market surveys conducted by ANBP;
- assistance in establishing a small business, to be run by mid-level officers and staffed by soldiers;

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ ICG interview, 2002.

²⁹ Official Meeting Notes from ISAF Information Operations Meeting, 25 August 2003.

³⁰ ICG interview with a UN official, Kabul, May 2003. The presence of PRTs in Kunduz, Gardez, and Bamiyan were factored into the selection of these towns as sites for the pilot projects.

- ❑ de-mining employment;
- ❑ assistance in establishing agribusiness activities, such as rice milling and cotton production; or
- ❑ wage labour with an implementation partner, such as an international development agency or a PRT.³¹

The ANBP estimates that some 70 per cent of the demobilised combatants will be covered by the first two options – rural assistance and vocational training. These solutions, however, are susceptible to a variety of other factors that may interfere with their sustainability, including the climatic conditions affecting agricultural productivity or infrastructure weaknesses, such as the irrigation systems that have been destroyed in many parts of Afghanistan. Sustainable employment will require international attention to the larger development needs of the communities in which the demobilised combatants will be reintegrated.

Aziz told ICG:

Unemployment is not the problem of the former combatants who will be disarmed. It is rather a problem of the country and the responsibility of the government to address it...The aid given to Afghanistan by the international community should be translated into real economic opportunities and potentials for the people of Afghanistan.³²

Structurally, the UN can begin to address this deficit by incorporating the reintegration phase of the DR process into larger development planning for the various regions of the country, without foregoing the vocational training and other facilities that can be afforded by the ANBP.

D. THE SECURITY COMMISSION FOR THE NORTH

The Security Commission for the North was established under an agreement brokered by UN Deputy Special Representative Jean Arnault on 5

May 2002, following a massive build-up of troops and artillery in Mazar-i Sharif. Composed of representatives from Junbish, Jamiat, and three Shiite parties, as well as the UN Political Affairs Officer, the Commission was tasked initially with disarming the Jamiat and Junbish commanders in Sholgara and demilitarising Sar-i Pul town, and subsequently with demilitarising Mazar as well. It has also become the main vehicle for resolving local disputes.

The Commission's effectiveness has been limited. Demilitarisation has not been attempted in Sar-i Pul or Mazar, although all the heavy artillery and most of the troops that had been deployed in Mazar in late April 2002 were subsequently withdrawn. The Sholgara disarmament effort in June 2002 netted 400 to 500 light weapons, but these were stored in factional depots rather than turned over to an independent authority. Moreover, both Junbish and Jamiat generals on the commission concede that the factions subsequently rearmed their commanders.³³ A second attempt to carry out a disarmament campaign in Sar-i Pul, which started on 2 November 2002, was even less successful: by the end of the week, only 117 weapons had been collected. On 22 November 2002 a third disarmament effort, this time in Dara-yi Suf and with Dostum himself participating as a representative of the central government, collected and registered about 1,000 weapons,³⁴ but these, too, have been stored in depots belonging to each faction; one batch was sent to the 7th Army Corps in Mazar and the other to the 8th Army Corps in Shibergan. As such, there are no guarantees against rearmament.

The Security Commission's effectiveness is limited in part by the background of the party representatives serving on it; most, such as 7th Corps Chief of Staff General Saboor, were chosen for their background as professional Afghan army officers or because they were otherwise seen as having broad-based credibility. They do not, however, include the most powerful commanders in the two main parties and consequently are constrained by factional pressures from above and below.

³¹ "Afghanistan's New Beginnings Program," Power Point presentation produced by ANBP, 13 August 2003.

³² ICG interview with Sultan Aziz, Senior Adviser to the Special Representative on Disarmament and Reintegration, 28 September 2003.

³³ ICG interviews with members of the Security Commission for the North, November 2002.

³⁴ The bulk were light weapons of the following types: Pika's, AK-47's, RPG's, 40mm mortars, and a smaller quantity of recoilless rifles. About 100 of the total were rusty, vintage weapons, such as Enfields. ICG interview with an observer of the arms collection, Mazar-i Sharif, November 2002.

A proposal to reorganise the Mazar municipal police, which during November 2002 numbered 450 officers – the bulk from Jamiat, with smaller contributions from the three Shiite parties (Junbish had withdrawn from the force) – along non-factional lines was approved in principal by the leaders of all of the northern parties. Fida Mohammad, Atta's brother, yielded control of the police in September 2002 to General Zarif. Though Zarif is also a Jamiat commander, UN sources see him as much more committed to police accountability. Most armed robberies that had taken place during the first half of the year in Mazar were traceable to the police, and Fida's removal was seen as essential for reforms.³⁵

Nevertheless, the Balkh province police chief, General Iftikhari, a member of the Shia Hazara *Hizb-i Wahdat* party led by Vice President Karim Khalili, complained that the parties maintain effective control of the troops they contributed to the Mazar police force, and directly provide their uniforms and vehicles.

The British government began in May 2003 to staff a 70-member PRT in Mazar-i Sharif. Much like the American PRTs, it contains both combat personnel and civilian aid workers employed by the British government.³⁶ It is designed, however, to have a more explicit security mandate than those established by the U.S. and so has the potential to revitalise the moribund police reforms and add weight to local disarmament efforts.

The planned restructuring of the Afghan military entails reducing the number of army corps to four (there are presently at least eight). It will not be possible to integrate the 7th Army Corps and the 8th Army Corps in Mazar and Shibergan, which are respectively controlled by Jamiat and Junbish, without an alternate security arrangement for the north or a broad based peace settlement that satisfies the minimum administrative and military aspirations of each party.³⁷ It will in any event entail a far greater degree of international engagement than has been the case so far with the limited disarmament efforts in the north.

IV. THE NORTHEAST: KUNDUZ AND TAKHAR

The northeastern provinces of Kunduz and Takhar were, together with Baghlan province, known until 1964 as Qataghan, after the Uzbek tribe that historically dominated the area. The two provinces remain heavily Uzbek, with a large Pashtun community in Kunduz and a Tajik one in Takhar. Although ethnicity was not the sole factor in the alignment of commanders in the region during the resistance to the Soviet occupation – regional ties and religious networks played an equally important role – the polarising impact of Taliban rule and the post-Taliban allocation of power in Kabul have brought ethnicity to the fore in each province.

In Kunduz, a division of control along ethnic lines over the provincial security institutions has helped maintain a certain peace (albeit at the price of effective command and control), and created conditions in which a carefully balanced DR program can succeed. In Takhar, by contrast, perceptions of marginalisation from the centre among Uzbek commanders have spurred resistance to DR and provided fertile ground for factional politics. While Kunduz remains a promising candidate for DR, the potential impact upon it of tensions in Takhar must be addressed if a durable security arrangement for the northeastern region is to be established.

A. POST-TALIBAN ARMS COLLECTION

Along with the provinces of Badakhshan and Baghlan, Kunduz and Takhar fall under the authority of the 6th Army Corps, based in Kunduz city and headed by a *Shura-yi Nazar* commander, Daud Khan. The dominance of the *Shura-yi Nazar* and its allied forces over most of the northeast following the defeat of the Taliban, and subsequently of the Baghlan-based Ismaili leader Sayyid Jaffar, paved the way for a coordinated and partly successful arms collection effort by the ministry of defence. It was initiated in late November and early December 2001 by Gen. Atiqullah Bariyalai, who briefly headed the 6th Army Corps before becoming deputy defence minister in 2002. It was implemented by a commission composed of the deputies of the corps commander, division chiefs, police chiefs, and governors in all four northeastern provinces.

³⁵ ICG interviews with UN officials, Mazar-i Sharif, 2002.

³⁶ ICG interview with British Embassy staff, May 2003.

³⁷ Such aspirations are susceptible to amendment, however; at the beginning of 2002, Atta indicated no interest in Faryab; a share of the administrative posts in the province was added to his list of his demands only after he had consolidated authority over most of Balkh.

Over a period of two to three months, the commission collected weapons from local commanders in the provinces, beginning in the provincial capitals, and then moving to outlying districts.³⁸ There was a strong inducement for commanders to comply, for military rank was given out in accordance with the levels of armament they controlled. “At that time, the ministry of defence had announced that they would approve provincial structures on the basis of the number of weapons produced, so commanders were inclined to do so”, General Hasham, political advisor to the 6th Corps, explained to ICG.³⁹

Most of the arms collected by the commission were stored in depots set up in each district and placed under the authority of a local commander. In Kunduz and Takhar, most heavy weaponry was brought to the provincial capital and stored in the division headquarters. ICG inspected the 54th division depot, on a hilltop overlooking the city of Kunduz, where about two dozen Soviet-made T-54 and T-62 tanks were lined up, and machine guns, ammunition and RPGs stockpiled. The precise quantities and types of weapons in the depots remain subject to speculation, however, as the ministry of defence has not shared the official registries with the UN.⁴⁰ The figures cited by the division commanders – 25,000 heavy and light weapons in Kunduz, over 10,000 light weapons in Takhar, and 8,000 heavy and light weapons in Badakhshan – exceed most informed estimates. According to an international observer, only about 4,000 weapons are stored in the depots in Kunduz and several hundred in Badakhshan. Independent assessments of the arms caches in Takhar were unavailable.⁴¹

Other factors cloud the picture of an effective arms collection considerably. During the annual observance on 28 April 2003 of the mujahidin’s 1992 entry into Kabul, the 6th Corps rearmed its forces for the military parade in Kunduz with weapons that had been stored in the depots. “The troops were supposed to march with their arms, but they were not returned to the main depot of the Corps”, said a government official in Kunduz,

adding, “It happened with all of the units of the 6th Corps”. He added: “Every commander has a lot of arms buried under hills – they can bring them out if there are tensions between commanders”.⁴²

Mistrust and rivalries among members of the former United Front (Northern Alliance) have also placed limits on the extent of the arms collection. In Takhar, the 55th Division chief, General Subhan Qul, an ethnic Uzbek, was unable to collect arms held by the Tajik commander in Farkhar district – a task that was subsequently left to the 6th Corps commander, General Daud Khan, who is also a Tajik from Farkhar.⁴³ And an attempt by the disarmament commission to set up district-level sub-commissions, comprised of local police chiefs and elders, to collect private arms from villages ended in failure. “It didn’t work because the disarmament commission and [General] Daud weren’t strong enough”, said an international observer.⁴⁴

The biggest concession may have been the formal recognition of a separate border force at Imam Sahib, equipped with its own tanks, under the command of General Haji Abdur Rauf, an ethnic Uzbek and one-time *Hizb-i Islami* commander (later allied with *Shura-yi Nazar* leader Ahmad Shah Massoud). According to a knowledgeable source, renewed rivalries within the United Front immediately after the collapse of the Taliban, and the unwitting involvement of the Coalition, led to the establishment of the border force. A high-ranking Tajik commander, the source said, reported to the Coalition that there were Taliban holdouts on the hilltop where the 54th division is now based. The Coalition responded by bombing the hill – which was occupied not by the Taliban, but by Rauf’s forces. Rauf subsequently fled to Imam Sahib, where he organised a border force that was nominally part of the 6th Corps, but effectively linked to his brother, Kunduz Governor Amir Latif.⁴⁵

Despite these qualifications, the arms collection in Kunduz and Takhar has yielded some significant results. The presence of arms and the maintenance of illegal checkpoints are far less apparent in the two provinces than in most other parts of the country. And even if the light arms stored in the

³⁸ ICG interviews with AMF commanders, police officials, and international staff, Kunduz and Takhar, 27 July-2 August 2003.

³⁹ ICG interview with Gen. Hasham, head of Political Section, 6th Army Corps, Kunduz, 28 July 2003.

⁴⁰ ICG interview with a UN official, July 2003.

⁴¹ ICG interview, July 2003.

⁴² ICG interview with a government official, Kunduz, July 2003.

⁴³ ICG interview with an AMF commander, Takhar, August 2003.

⁴⁴ ICG interview, July 2003.

⁴⁵ ICG interview, Kunduz, July 2003.

depots represent only a portion of the total in the provinces, the storage of the provincial commanders' heavy artillery as well as a portion of their light weaponry provides a valuable starting point for a comprehensive DR program.

B. ETHNIC AND FACTIONAL TENSIONS

Ethnicity, as noted earlier, has been accommodated differently in Kunduz and Takhar, but in both cases is a key factor in the principal commanders' power bases as well as their alignments. A DR strategy that is not based on a proper understanding of the ethnic factor in the security framework of the two provinces could be dangerously destabilising, particularly in Takhar and the Imam Sahib district of Kunduz.

During the war against the Soviet occupation, most leading Uzbek commanders in Kunduz were members of Gulbuddin Hikmatyar's *Hizb-i Islami* party. Although the alignment may seem unlikely now, in view of Hikmatyar's current community of interest with the Taliban, it is readily explained by his roots in Imam Sahib and the increasingly Tajik character of the region's dominant *Jamiat-i Islami* party during the 1980s. Following the Taliban's expansion across the north between 1998 and 2000, however, those Uzbek commanders who continued to resist did so under the Jamiat banner.

The Coalition intervention and the collapse of the Taliban ushered in a new political order in the northeast, which quickly shook up the tentative alignment between Uzbek and Tajik commanders. In Dasht-e Archi, in northeastern Kunduz, Pashtun civilians fell victim to targeted violence by mainly Uzbek forces, prompting a mass exodus from the district. In the central part of the province, where the bulk of the Pashtun population was concentrated, a modus vivendi was struck, and Kunduz emerged with an unusual power sharing arrangement among the province's main commanders.

The governor, Amir Latif, is an Uzbek from Imam Sahib, and retains the backing of Abdur Rauf's forces in that district, as well as those in Qala-e Zal. The commander of the 54th division, General Mir Alam, is a Tajik backed by *Shura-yi Nazar*, and the provincial police chief, General Ghulam, is a Pashtun. The absence of a decisive majority for any of the population groups, as well as the apparent conviction among the principal commanders that their stake in the administration of the province is

assured, has maintained the status quo with remarkably little conflict.

In Takhar, by contrast, the Uzbeks have a clear majority, with Tajiks concentrated mainly in Farkhar and in Chah Ab, near Badakhshan. This distribution is reflected as well in the ethnic backgrounds of the provincial commanders, with Uzbeks predominating and leading the most experienced forces. The 55th Division commander, General Subhan Qul, is an Uzbek from Rostaq in the north of the province. A sense of entitlement to a share of power in Kabul following the collapse of the Taliban is felt by all the main Uzbek commanders in the province, who contend that they maintained the frontline against the Taliban only to see the defence ministry and other key security institutions at the centre taken over by commanders from the Panjshir Valley:

The Panjshiris entered Kabul through Shomali, while we were busy fighting in Kunduz. Then they announced the ministers [at Bonn], and the UN confirmed it without asking us. Our central government isn't a fair one. Too many ministers, managers, and directors of departments are from Panjshir. From Takhar, Badakhshan, Baghlan and Kunduz, we don't see any minister. These four provinces, as any other, should have representation.⁴⁶

In meetings with UN representatives, Uzbek commanders in Takhar have expressed their unwillingness to cooperate with a DR process carried out under the aegis of a Panjshiri-dominated ministry of defence. One senior Uzbek commander in Takhar expressed this succinctly to ICG:

If there is any law to be implemented, it should first be done in Kabul, then in the provinces, and then in the districts. If you don't disarm the defence ministry, which is dominated by Panjshiris, people will ask, "Why are you disarming this province, or that province"? If the top four commanders [in Kabul] place their arms in the hands of the central government, people like us will have no problems placing our arms in the centre.⁴⁷

⁴⁶ ICG interview with an AMF commander, Takhar, August 2003.

⁴⁷ ICG interview with an AMF commander, Takhar, August 2003.

This concern is felt, albeit less acutely, by some Uzbeks commanders in Kunduz as well. While affirming his willingness to implement DR and to abide by other decisions taken by the centre and the international community, a commander in Imam Sahib pointedly told ICG, “What I have said so far is dependent on each ethnic group getting its due share of power”.⁴⁸

The reforms of the defence ministry announced on 20 September 2003 are unlikely to persuade most Uzbek commanders in the northeast that their interests have been duly considered. Of the 22 new appointments and reassignments, only two involved Uzbeks (both, however, had the rank of deputy minister).⁴⁹

Although Dostum has historically had a weak presence in the northeast, in recent months he has poised himself to capitalise on the growing disaffection among Uzbek commanders in the region. Earlier in the year, he opened an office of his *Junbish-i Milli* party in the provincial capital, Taloqan – the seat of former President Rabbani’s government from 1996 to 2000. Although the bulk of the Uzbek commanders in Takhar remain loosely affiliated with *Shura-yi Nazar* – only one former Massoud ally, Mamur Hassan in Dasht-e Qala district, has openly defected to Junbish – the Junbish presence in Taloqan has given them greater leverage with the *Shura-yi Nazar*-led ministry, including over the DR program. Barring further personnel changes in the ministry that afford better representation to northeastern Uzbeks, there is a fair likelihood of an ethnic dispute within one faction (*Shura-yi Nazar*) being transformed into an outright factional conflict.

Daud Khan presides over the unwieldy structure of the 6th Corps. Still only in his thirties, he is believed by many international observers to have his sights set on a political career at the centre – a factor that has undoubtedly influenced his support for the DR process, and the ANBP’s decision to select Kunduz as the pilot project for the program. But Daud also has a very narrow support base among his fellow commanders in the northeast. Most veteran mujahidin commanders in the region reportedly view him as militarily inexperienced, responsible for the fall of Taloqan to the Taliban in September

2000, and as having risen to corps commander mainly because of his personal ties to Massoud.⁵⁰ The precariousness of Daud’s standing among other commanders means that even his fellow Tajiks, including 54th Division commander General Mir Alam, in Kunduz, and the 29th Division commander General Sardar Khan, in Badakhshan, resist his authority to a significant degree. Apart from the backing he receives from the ministry, Daud’s strength derives from the troops attached directly to the 2nd Corps, a disproportionate number of whom come from his home district of Farkhar, in southern Takhar.

Diplomats privately state that to minimise the risk of destabilisation, the pilot DR project in Kunduz will have to target an even number of troops loyal to Daud Khan and Mir Alam – that is from the 2nd Corps and 54th Division respectively. And as the DR program is rolled out to other districts in Kunduz and the northeast, careful verification will be required to ensure that the selection of candidates for it is not determined unilaterally by the corps commander, but reflects the input also of the division commanders.

C. REINTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

The entrenchment of warlordism in northeastern Afghanistan and a corruptible border security regime in Tajikistan have fuelled an explosive growth in poppy cultivation in Badakhshan province. According to independent sources, small-scale refineries have been established inside Badakhshan itself, although the bulk of the province’s poppy exports are unrefined and therefore command a lower price.

The transformation of the local labour market has, nevertheless, been profound. During the August 2003 harvest, agricultural wage labour costs in Badakhshan more than doubled to U.S.\$10 to \$11 per day. By contrast, wheat, the major staple of the regional economy, sustained a massive blow, as a bumper harvest in the north competed on the market with subsidised wheat purchased outside Afghanistan by the World Food Programme (WFP). The price paid to farmers for wheat plummeted to a level well below its production costs. According to a UN official, the production

⁴⁸ ICG interview with an AMF commander, Imam Sahib, Kunduz, 31 July 2003.

⁴⁹ Commentary by Zahir Tanin on BBC Persian Service, 22 September 2003.

⁵⁰ ICG interviews with Afghan and international analysts, Kabul and Kunduz, 29 September 2003.

cost of one *ser* (seven kilograms) of wheat in Kunduz was 65 Afghanis (U.S.\$1.35), whereas farmers received only 45 Afghanis (\$0.94) per *ser* on the market.⁵¹

For commanders and farmers in Takhar, the wealth that has come with the poppy boom in Badakhshan has an inescapable allure. According to development workers, the limited poppy cultivation in Takhar this year served as demonstration of its viability to potential producers. “This is the first year that commanders have planted [poppy]”, said a local UN employee. “They have collected taxes [on the crop] and are involved in trafficking. Next year, I foresee that none of the people will plant wheat”.⁵²

Without the creation of sustainable income earning opportunities, poppy is likely to act as a magnet for newly demobilised combatants – particularly where they have continued ties to commanders who are directly or indirectly profiting from the trade. Unfortunately, the promotion of legitimate economic activities in the northeast has received little attention from the international community, which continues to prioritise relief work at the expense of development. “The irrigation channels are destroyed, the roads are destroyed – there is tremendous frustration among all of the people”, said a senior UN official. “The international community has built wells, schools, and clinics, but nothing else”.⁵³

One dormant sector of the economy that could provide sustainable employment for demobilised combatants is cotton farming and ginning. Prior to 1979 cotton farming was a mainstay of the rural economy in central Kunduz, and gins owned and operated by the Spinzar Corporation in Kunduz, Takhar, and Baghlan commonly processed 90,000 tons per season. This year, by contrast, only 300 tons of cotton were purchased by Spinzar for processing at its sole operable gin, in Kunduz city. Employment in the various Spinzar gins was approximately 2,200 at the time of the Saur Revolution, the April 1978 military coup that installed a communist government in Kabul, but has dropped to 575, of whom only 178 are in production related work, while many others appear to have no real jobs.

According to a former Spinzar employee, some 100 individuals joined the company after the collapse of the Taliban, most of whom were associated with the current director of the Kunduz Department of Light Industries, a mujahidin commander named Qari Rahmatullah. “They are not always on the job”, the engineer said. “They just collect their salaries. Most of the very good mechanics [in the firm] left, to work for the UN or international agencies”.⁵⁴

Surprisingly, the main Spinzar gin in Kunduz emerged from the past two decades of armed conflict relatively unscathed. A recent assessment produced for UNDP by the Central Asia Development Group found that:

The main gin in Kunduz has full processing capabilities. This includes the ability to process lint cotton, edible oil, hull, seedcake for animal feed and soap....Recent inspections by international and national engineers have concluded that the main gin equipment is in good operation condition. Some of the by-product processing equipment requires spare parts, which can be produced in the foundry located next to the gin.⁵⁵

The former Spinzar employee affirmed that most of the equipment in the gin was fully functional, with the exception of a German-built oil mill, which, he said, was about 40 years old and in need of replacement.⁵⁶ Although two of the six generators need repair,⁵⁷ Kunduz has since July 2003 been receiving electricity from Tajikistan.

The key obstacle to reviving the Kunduz gin is the need to recruit professional management and qualified engineers for Spinzar, at salaries that are at least competitive with the private sector. The ministry of light industries in Kabul has, however, apparently been reluctant to implement those reforms. The Spinzar employee, who travelled to Kabul to complain about mismanagement of

⁵¹ ICG interview with a UN official, Kunduz, 27 July 2003.

⁵² ICG interview with a UN official, Kunduz, 30 July 2003.

⁵³ ICG interview with a UN official, Kunduz, 27 July 2003.

⁵⁴ ICG interview with a former Spinzar employee, Kunduz, 30 July 2003. Current employment figures for Spinzar are from “Spinzar Corporation: An Economic Analysis of the Spinzar Cotton Gin in Kunduz Province, Afghanistan”, prepared for UNDP Afghanistan by the Central Asia Development Group, 2003, Sec. I.

⁵⁵ “Spinzar Corporation”, op. cit.

⁵⁶ ICG interview with a former Spinzar employee, Kunduz, 30 July 2003.

⁵⁷ “Spinzar Corporation”, op. cit.

Spinzar under Qari Rahmatullah, said he was advised by the minister that “the time is not right for your work”.⁵⁸

Privatisation, which could facilitate investment in new equipment and salaries for professional staff, would first require resolving the question of ownership of Spinzar Corporation. According to current and former provincial government officials in Kunduz, the government has a majority stake in the corporation, while a group of private investors has a minority stake. The private shareholders, one official said, briefly returned from Germany after the collapse of the Taliban but were unsuccessful in exercising their rights as shareholders.⁵⁹

Reviving the cotton sector in Kunduz also involves the identification of strategies to boost cotton production. According to an Afghan agronomist with the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the cotton seed varieties used in Afghanistan have “degenerated genetically” and would need to be replaced by new varieties for productive yields to be realised. He suggested two alternatives: test new seed varieties, which would require about two years, or look for varieties that have been tested and approved for use in agroclimatic conditions similar to those of Kunduz. Once specific seed varieties were determined to be suitable, training courses would be required for agricultural extension service providers.⁶⁰ To minimise the risk of crop disease through the uncontrolled introduction of new seed varieties, particularly if cotton farming were successfully revived, a quarantine regime, similar to those existing in other countries, should be established for Afghanistan.⁶¹

V. THE SOUTHEAST: KHOST AND PAKTIA

Khost and Paktia, together with Paktika to their south, constituted one administrative division until 1979 and are still collectively known as Loya Paktia, or Greater Paktia. From a security standpoint, Paktika stands apart. Its governor, Mohammad Ali Jalali, is the former Taliban police chief of Ghazni province and is believed to maintain ties with radical jihadi elements as well as senior Taliban figures inside and outside the country. UN officials currently restrict their movement to a corridor of territory in the north of the province that connects the provincial capital of Sharan and the principal town of Urgun to Khost. Khost and Paktia, on the other hand, are relatively stable – particularly with the recent deployment of an ANA battalion in Paktia’s troubled Zurmat district – and the key security institutions in both provinces are now under the authority of professional army and police officers. The effectiveness of one of these institutions, the 25th Division in Khost, in fact raises the question of whether DR in the province would under the present circumstance give rise to a dangerous security vacuum. In Paktia, by contrast, most of the troops that made up the 12th Division have dispersed since the reassignment of the previous division chief, making it hard to know just who will be demobilised in Gardez when the DR process begins there in late October or early November 2003.

A. BACKGROUND

Loya Paktia is one of the most ethnically homogeneous regions of Afghanistan. With the exception of a small Shiite Tajik minority concentrated in the town of Gardez, virtually the entire population is Pashtun. It is also marked by a tradition of tribal self-government, a legacy of the region’s remoteness from centres of governance, and even more so, of its state-sanctioned autonomy. In recognition of the support provided by local tribes for the restoration of the Mohammadzai monarchy under Nadir Shah in 1929, the population of Loya Paktia received a blanket exemption from compulsory military service. Nevertheless, a large proportion of communist military officers, particularly those belonging to the *Khalq* (“masses”) faction of the People’s

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ ICG interviews with current and former Afghan government employees, Kunduz, July 2003.

⁶⁰ The extension services themselves would require increased assistance, particularly transportation, the lack of which currently hinders their utility.

⁶¹ ICG interview with Assadullah Habibi, Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), Kunduz, 31 July 2003.

Democratic Party of Afghanistan, hailed from this region. The mujahidin resistance was relatively slow to emerge, though eventually it produced several significant figures, including *Hizb-i Islami* (and later Taliban) commander Jalaluddin Haqqani.

The Coalition intervention briefly brought back to power Padshah Khan Zadran, a prominent commander in Loya Paktia during the Soviet occupation and an avowed royalist. Initially supported by the U.S. troops, Zadran's aspirations to be the dominant figure in the entire Loya Paktia region soon outstripped both his own support base among the Zadran tribe and the indulgence afforded him by the Coalition. Although he was recognised by President Karzai as governor of Paktia in the wake of the Bonn agreement, a coalition of tribal leaders resisted his assumption of office. Karzai subsequently replaced him with Raz Mohammad Dalili, a former judge, and Zadran retreated to the hills surrounding Gardez, from which he periodically shelled the city during 2002. Meanwhile in Khost, Zadran's brother, Kamal Khan, occupied the governor's residence, temporarily preventing a Karzai appointee, Hakim Taniwal, from exercising authority.

After taking up a post overlooking the Special Forces base near Gardez in September 2002, Zadran prompted a strike by a Coalition-backed 3rd Corps force that compelled him to withdraw with 300 fighters to Waza, along the road between Khost and Gardez. The months that followed saw Zadran further weakened.⁶² In March 2003, Special Forces killed his eldest son while targeting one of Zadran's checkpoints. And in June, another son was detained during a Coalition cordon and search operation. By August, Zadran was reportedly in negotiations with Karzai to find a face-saving role at the centre for his brother.⁶³

While Taniwal moved rapidly to consolidate control of the security institutions in Khost, the consolidation of the Karzai administration's authority in Paktia was a more drawn out process. Until May 2003, power in the provincial government was concentrated in the hands of four commanders, all Dari-speakers backed by Defence Minister Fahim: Ziauddin, the 12th Division

commander; Matin, the commander of the tank brigade; Abdullah, the police chief; and Momin, a commander who remains in place but with diminished power. Their actual sphere of control, however, was limited to a twenty-kilometre radius around Gardez, roughly coterminous with the area of Tajik settlement. Through the strategic deployment of the ANA, described below, that lock on the seat of government was decisively broken.⁶⁴

B. AMF DIVISIONS

The 25th Division in Khost is a new unit, created after the formation of the Interim Administration. In an interview with ICG, Governor Taniwal described how it was formed:

I spent two months in Kabul after coming from Australia. While I was in Kabul, General Khelbaz came to me and said, "We have about 800 officers [from the southeast] here." I collected the tribal elders, and asked them to provide good people – at least twenty from each district. Altogether, they raised 700 soldiers. All of the officers were professionals; I didn't care if they were communists – I'm still under criticism for that. It took only two-and-a-half months to raise and train the army [division].⁶⁵

The 25th Division is one of the few AMF units in which a majority of officers are military academy graduates, mostly veterans of Najibullah's army from the years at the end of and immediately after the Soviet period. According to international observers in the southeast, it has proven remarkably effective at ensuring security within the province and limiting cross-border infiltration.⁶⁶ The division is headed by General Khelbaz, a Najibullah-era officer from the border district of Jaji Maidan, and now officially numbers some 300 officers and 1,400 soldiers, organised into five regiments.⁶⁷ Although about two-thirds of the officers are career professionals, Khelbaz told ICG that the division has "48 jihadi officers – we

⁶² Carlotta Gall, "Holdout Afghan Warlord May Join Karzai Camp", *International Herald Tribune*, 18 January 2003.

⁶³ ICG interview, Gardez, 17 August 2003.

⁶⁴ ICG interviews, Gardez, 17-19 August 2003.

⁶⁵ ICG interview with Governor Hakim Taniwal, Khost, 20 August 2003.

⁶⁶ ICG interviews, Gardez, 17-19 August 2003.

⁶⁷ ICG interviews with Governor Hakim Taniwal and General Azizullah, Commander, Regiment 933, Khost, 20-21 August 2003.

are providing for them short-term and long-term training, and if they are not old, they adapt".⁶⁸

The 25th division has collected some 50 artillery pieces and 54 tanks from different parts of the province, Khelbaz said. Like the Uzbek commanders in Takhar, however, he expressed grave reservations about handing over his division's heavy weaponry to the present ministry of defence. "We are prepared to hand it over to the Afghan National Army, when it comes here," Khelbaz said, "but we are not prepared to have it be depoted in Panjshir".⁶⁹

Low and irregular payment from the ministry of defence has, as in the case of other divisions, contributed to a steady attrition of the 25th Division – one attested to by several officials in Khost. According to both Taniwal and division commanders, the ministry presently provides food rations for only 500 personnel. And Khost province, says Taniwal, is ill-prepared to make up the deficit:

The public expenditure for Khost was much more than the income. It was mainly spent on the army [division] and districts, and for some departments...I have to provide at least food [to the division], but still soldiers are leaving because they can earn four times as much when they work on the road.⁷⁰

Khelbaz, interviewed separately, concurred:

We are now in a very difficult situation. A soldier is being paid U.S.\$15 per month. We have spoken on this issue to Karzai and the ministry of defence, but nothing is happening. The soldiers [in this division] have not been paid for the last three months.⁷¹

The 12th Division in Paktia has, since early August 2003, been headed by Gen. Abdul Wasai, an ethnic Pashtun from Kandahar, but raised in Kabul and primarily Persian-speaking. Like Khelbaz, he is a professional army officer. At the time of ICG's visit, Wasai had been in his post for ten days. In stark contrast to its counterpart in Khost, the 12th Division

was remarkable mainly for the absence of visible personnel. Apart from ten ANA soldiers assigned to provide security for Wasai, ICG counted only about twenty at division headquarters in the Bala Hissar fort overlooking Gardez. Wasai himself frankly acknowledged his division's parlous state. "This is a division in name only", he said. "We have weapons, artillery, but no human capacity – those who are committed to the values of nations".⁷²

Officially, Wasai said, there were 100 officers and 300 soldiers in the division at the time of his appointment, but they "were on paper only".⁷³ ICG's interviews with several of the remaining soldiers at Bala Hissar indicated that the division's ranks had been swollen about three months earlier, following the appointment of a new police chief, General Haigul Sulaimankhel, and his largely successful attempts to root out corruption in the force. As one 29-year-old soldier, out of uniform but living at the base, said, "When there was no more money to make at the police, I was told there would be more to make at the division".⁷⁴ The financial opportunities available at the division would, however, prove to be short-lived.

In June 2003, an ANA battalion was deployed on the outskirts of Gardez, initially to maintain checkpoints around town, but it then rather abruptly took on the role of assisting the new police chief in law enforcement in the town itself. The 12th division, which was associated primarily with extortion of local businessmen, withdrew. After reappearing in town and resuming criminal activities during a brief absence of the ANA battalion, the 12th Division was decisively forced off the streets by the ANA in late July. Then, in early August, its commander, General Ziauddin, announced that he was assuming a post in the logistics department of the ministry of defence, and Wasai was appointed in his place.

In retrospect, the ANA deployment in Gardez can be seen as part of a calibrated strategy by the centre and the Coalition to reform the provincial security sector. The deployment met minimal resistance and stands as a model of what the ANA could accomplish for the formal DR process. The only

⁶⁸ ICG interview with General Khelbaz, Commander, 25th Division, Khost, 21 August 2003.

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ ICG interview with Governor Hakim Taniwal, Khost, 20 August 2003.

⁷¹ ICG interview with General Khelbaz, Commander, 25th Division, Khost, 21 August 2003.

⁷² ICG interview with General Abdul Wasai, Commander, 12th Division, Gardez, 18 August 2003.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ ICG interview with a soldier, 12th Division, Gardez, 18 August 2003.

shortcoming to the operation in Gardez – but a very significant one – is that neither disarmament nor demobilisation occurred under international auspices; indeed, much of the useful heavy and light weaponry and the bulk of the troops are unaccounted for.⁷⁵

At the end of July, the ministry of defence, at the direction of then Deputy Defence Minister Bariyalai, transferred 24 tanks from the division to Kabul, ostensibly for the Central Corps. And in a three-day period before leaving for Kabul in early August, Ziauddin emptied out much of his stockpiled weaponry, with no apparent interference from the Coalition or the ANA. The troops themselves, both those originally with the 12th Division and others who had recently joined from the police force, rapidly dispersed. Many were from Badakhshan and other northeastern provinces, and had arrived in Paktia after the collapse of the Taliban.⁷⁶ Indeed, of the approximately twenty soldiers who remain with the division, at least five were from Badakhshan.⁷⁷ These troops, mostly Tajiks and Uzbeks, would face great difficulty assimilating into the Pashtun hinterland of Gardez.

Wasai himself is doubtful that they would all be able to return to their homes. “Some cannot return because they have had enmities with people in Badakhshan”, he said, citing the case of one northeasterner remaining with the division.⁷⁸ General Sulaimankhel concurred, saying those who had previously been with the 12th Division were “men who couldn’t return to their areas of origin; they were using it [the division] as a form of security. Now that people are filing [criminal] cases against them, they are in hiding”.⁷⁹

ICG inspected two of the ten depots in Bala Hissar, where some 500 tons of arms, including rocket launchers, anti-aircraft weapons, and one BMP tank, have been collected and stored. Much of the light weaponry, however, appeared antiquated.

Wasai himself observed that some of the items “belong in a museum”.⁸⁰

C. POLICE FORCES

Abdul Saboor Allahyar was appointed police chief of Khost by Interior Minister Jalali in April 2003. A former law lecturer at the police academy in Kabul, he served as a commander during the Soviet occupation with Sibghatullah Mojaddedi’s *Nejat-i Milli* – the traditionalist Islamic party with which both President Karzai and Jalali were also associated. According to Allahyar, he inherited the shell of a force after his predecessor was removed and disarmed with the help of the Coalition:

When I came here, there was nothing. No money or cars. Everything had been looted. The first thing that I did was study who was in the force and their capacities. Those who were working decently, I have promoted. In other cases, I have dismissed them.⁸¹

Allahyar said he also persuaded the interior ministry to pay salaries on a regular basis. “The police forces had not been given their salaries for the past year. Therefore, they were involved in bribes”.⁸²

The promised transfer of the border brigade in Khost, which numbers about 150 men and is widely considered to be involved in smuggling, to the interior ministry has yet to take place. According to Governor Taniwal:

The border brigade will be reduced from 12,000 throughout the country. It will be mechanised and trained well...It’s not organised on this basis yet, though. It’s still under the ministry of defence, at present.⁸³

In Khost, the border brigade functions autonomously from the 25th Division but its inclusion in the DR program will help accelerate the process of border security reform.

⁷⁵ ICG interview, Gardez, 17 August 2003.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ ICG interviews with soldiers, 12th Division, Gardez, 18 August 2003.

⁷⁸ ICG interview with General Abdul Wasai, Commander, 12th Division, Gardez, 18 August 2003.

⁷⁹ ICG interview with General Haigul Sulaimankhel, Paktia Police Chief, Gardez, 18 August 2003.

⁸⁰ ICG interview with General Abdul Wasai, Commander, 12th Division, Gardez, 18 August 2003.

⁸¹ ICG interview with Abdul Saboor Allahyar, Police Chief, Khost, 21 August 2003.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ ICG interview with Governor Hakim Taniwal, Khost, 20 August 2003.

The removal of Abdullah, the self-appointed police chief in Paktia, involved events similar to those in Khost. After briefly resisting his transfer to Kabul ordered by the interior minister in May 2003, Abdullah left with 80 men and most of the police department's weapons. In early August, Special Forces troops arrested him at his house near Gardez, from which he was suspected of having organised RPG attacks on the Coalition base. He was transferred to Coalition custody at Bagram.⁸⁴

Abdullah's replacement, General Sulaimankhel, is a professional policeman from Sayyid Karam district, Paktia, and like Allahyar, a former lecturer at the police academy in Kabul. Upon assuming his post in Gardez, he began a purge of what he considered corrupt abusive elements in the force – prompting the exodus to the 12th Division discussed above. "They were purged in a technical way", Sulaimankhel told ICG. "I kept them in rotation, moved them from post to post each week and gradually restricted their activities. When they found there was no place to loot, they joined the [12th] Division."⁸⁵

Sulaimankhel then set about assembling a new police force. At the beginning of August, he visited seven districts of Paktia to encourage the tribal leaders to provide recruits. "Now there are 50 to 70 from each district who are prepared to receive training, and whose names we have registered", he said.⁸⁶ This approach, as one international observer noted, promises to give the tribes a greater sense of representation in the police as well as Sulaimankhel a presence in each district.⁸⁷ According to Sulaimankhel, his plan will not, however, produce tribally-based police in each district: "The idea is to mix them, to have Jajis serving in Chamkanni, for example".⁸⁸

However, Sulaimankhel's police force remains a work in progress. Most of the officers who first defected to the 12th Division and then dispersed took their guns with them. On 17 August, an announcement was made on the local radio station that they faced arrest if they did not return the weapons to the police.⁸⁹ Enforcement of that order, however, required the ANA battalion – which was engaged in a combat operation in Zurmat district.

Apart from the need to rearm the police, training the new recruits – who were still in their home districts when ICG visited for lack of a training facility – is the other priority. Sulaimankhel said that a regional training centre for the south eastern region – Paktia, Paktika, Khost, Logar, and Gardez – would shortly be opened in Gardez.⁹⁰

D. REINTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

The Loya Paktia region was, during the 1960s, the site of one of the largest rural development programs in Afghanistan: the German-funded Paktia Development Authority. Today, however, there is little international reconstruction and development activity there. This is attributed by international staff working in Gardez to a perception within the international community of continued insecurity, despite the deployment of the ANA in Paktia and the credible security sector reforms that have been implemented in both provinces. Few international agencies appear to visit the two provinces to do their own assessments of development potential or security conditions.

The region does have considerable agricultural and industrial development potential, which could receive a valuable boost from the reintegration phase of the ANBP. Governor Taniwal and the Khost Chamber of Commerce have ambitious plans to develop the provincial capital into a commercial centre for the region. A very high proportion of the male working age population of Khost is employed or engaged in trade in the Gulf and Europe,⁹¹ and

⁸⁴ ICG interview, Gardez, 17 August 2003.

⁸⁵ ICG interview with General Haigul Sulaimankhel, Police Chief, Gardez, 18 August 2003.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ ICG interview with Abdul Saboor Allahyar, Police Chief, Khost, 21 August 2003.

⁸⁸ ICG interview with General Haigul Sulaimankhel, Police Chief, Gardez, 18 August 2003. Most districts in southeastern Afghanistan are named after the locally dominant tribe. Thus, Jajis are settled primarily in Jaji Maidan district in Khost and Aryub Jaji district in Paktia, while Chamkannis reside mainly in the Chamkanni district of Paktia.

⁸⁹ ICG interviews with General Abdul Wasai and General Haigul Sulaimankhel, Gardez, 18 August 2003.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Estimates provided to ICG ranged from "over 100,000" to 250,000. The total population resident in Khost, according to the results of a polio vaccination campaign by the World Health Organisation (WHO), is 679,803. ICG interviews with government officials and Nawab Amirzai, President, Khost Chamber of Commerce, August 2002.

the province subsists in large part on their remittances. However, a growing number of businessmen from Khost who have amassed savings abroad are preparing to invest in the province itself. According to Nawab Amirzai, President of the Chamber of Commerce, four businessmen have recently returned with separate proposals – currently pending approval from the ministry of trade and commerce – to reconstruct a flour mill and mechanised bakery, a factory to produce wood products using local timber, and a factory to manufacture plastic slippers. According to Amirzai, the machinery for the flour mill and bakery has already been brought to Khost by the investor, and the factory could be operational within six months of Kabul's approval.⁹² Light industrial projects such as these, which could generate long-term employment for demobilised combatants, could be facilitated by an anticipated government contract with Pakistan to purchase electricity for the province.⁹³

Khost also has extensive forest cover, particularly in the border district of Jaji Maidan, which is currently subject to indiscriminate logging and smuggling to Pakistan. Sustainable forest management could, therefore, also provide employment for demobilised combatants. Finally, according to Amirzai, there are plans underway to begin reconstruction in 2004 of the road connecting Ghulam Khan, on the border with Pakistan, to Khost and Gardez, at a cost of U.S.\$50 million. The road would be vital to the development of the region, both as a trade corridor to Pakistan and other Asian countries and for reintegrating the economies of the Loya Paktia region.

VI. KANDAHAR

President Karzai's announcement on 13 August 2003 of an exchange of positions between Kandahar Governor Gul Agha Sherzai and Urban Development Minister Yusuf Pashtun was widely reported as a dramatic extension of the central government's authority to the provinces. Certainly Gul Agha, whose appointment to a post in Kabul had been under discussion since at least late 2002, is the most prominent regional figure whom Karzai has succeeded in replacing. He assumed his new post with mild protests, claiming at first, and with refreshing candour, that he was unqualified to manage the urban development portfolio. But the significance of the move was less than it might have appeared.

The new governor, Yusuf Pashtun, arrived in Kandahar with Gul Agha following the collapse of Taliban rule and remained with him for six months as an advisor until he was made minister in 2002. He is, moreover, a member of the same sub-tribe of the Barakzai tribe as Gul Agha – a fact of considerable importance given the tribal breakdown of governance institutions in the province. According to local sources in Kandahar, influential Barakzai elders advised Gul Agha to abide by Karzai's directive and avoid a potentially damaging conflict.⁹⁴

It is also not entirely certain that Gul Agha has withdrawn from the Kandahar political scene. On 11 September 2003, he made a return visit to the city, arriving at the airport to a reception from provincial officials, tribal elders, and militiamen that easily exceeded the protocol normally accorded a cabinet minister.⁹⁵ Gul Agha's ministerial appointment is also viewed by many as a stopgap measure; he has publicly expressed a desire to stand for election to the national assembly in 2004 from Kandahar,⁹⁶ and some observers even expect him to mount a challenge to Karzai, however slim his prospects.

⁹² ICG interview with Nawab Amirzai, President, Khost Chamber of Commerce, 22 August 2003.

⁹³ ICG interview with Governor Hakim Taniwal, Khost, 20 August 2003.

⁹⁴ ICG interviews, Kandahar, September 2003.

⁹⁵ Personal observation by ICG analyst, Kandahar, 11 September 2003.

⁹⁶ Ian MacWilliam, "New Afghan Governor Takes Up Post", BBC News, 16 August 2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/go/pr/ft/-/1/hi/world/south_asia/3157393.stm.

Yusuf Pashtun's appointment as governor is not without consequence, however. Gul Agha's authority was circumscribed by that of several provincial officials who exploited his limitations as an administrator to amass personal power. This included, most notably, his spokesperson, Khalid Pashtun, who effectively determined even those members of the international community with whom the governor could have contact.⁹⁷ There have been numerous reports, from inside and outside the provincial government, about abuse of authority by some of these officials, including the confinement of individuals in private jails. Yusuf Pashtun, by all accounts a far more capable administrator than his predecessor, has the potential to limit the influence of these officials if he asserts himself. This already appears to have happened with Khalid Pashtun, who no longer acts as gatekeeper for the governor, but others, such as the deputy governor and the deputy head of administration, reportedly continue to exercise undue authority within the governor's office.⁹⁸

Pashtun's appointment has been accompanied by several changes in Kandahar's security sector, including the appointment of a new police and border security chiefs. While a case can be made for the increased professionalism of the provincial government under the new dispensation, the impact on the aforementioned tribal balance of power should also be considered. The major Pashtun tribes in Kandahar are the Alikozai, Barakzai, and Popalzai. Under Gul Agha, the Barakzai had most of the posts in the governor's office, while the Alikozai dominated the police and military. The Popalzai held few official posts, apart from the mayor, Abdullah Popal. However, the current head of that tribe, Ahmad Wali Karzai, a younger brother of the president, is an influential figure in Kandahar. Although Pashtun's appointment has had no adverse impact on Barakzai domination of the governor's office, the Alikozai have lost leadership of the police with the removal of the previous department chief, Zaved Akram.

A. AMF AND UNOFFICIAL FORCES

The principal armed force in the province is the 2nd Corps, headed by General Khan Mohammad, an

Alikozai who is backed by Mullah Naqibullah, the leader of the Alikozai tribe and a long-time associate of former President Rabbani's *Jamiat-i Islami* party. It claims a strength of 7,000 in the five south western provinces, including 5,500 in Kandahar province.⁹⁹ Khan Mohammad asserted to ICG that carrying out DR before the ANA is deployed in Kandahar would create a security vacuum that could be exploited by opposition forces. Although Taliban operations against international and government targets have mainly been carried out in the north of Kandahar, government officials warn that Taliban supporters have been holding anti-government meetings near and inside the city itself.¹⁰⁰

The 2nd Corps includes an autonomous force called *Nazmi Khas* [Special Order], composed of troops who fought directly with Gul Agha at the time of the Coalition intervention. Instead of being fully amalgamated into the 2nd Corps, however, they were garrisoned in a new building near Kandahar airport, and paid and armed directly – and, relative to the rest of the 2nd Corps, generously – by Gul Agha himself. With an estimated strength of 1,500, *Nazmi Khas* is predominantly Barakzai Pashtun but includes some Shia Hazaras and Farsiwans.¹⁰¹ An estimated 100 *Nazmi Khas* troops are with Gul Agha in Kabul, but the rest remain in Kandahar. Khan Mohammad, who freely acknowledged having had little authority over *Nazmi Khas* in the past, said he now exercises operational command over the unit and has deployed part of it in Shah Wali Kot district, in northern Kandahar¹⁰² (where a *Nazmi Khas* force was ambushed by the Taliban in early September and sustained five fatalities).¹⁰³

Governor Pashtun, however, has requested the formal reassignment of *Nazmi Khas* to the provincial police department. Though he says the force is multi-ethnic and disciplined, and the transfer itself would be in keeping with his goal of

⁹⁷ ICG interviews with correspondents for international media, Kabul, September 2003.

⁹⁸ ICG interviews, Kabul and Kandahar, September 2003.

⁹⁹ ICG interview with General Khan Mohammad, Commander, 2nd Corps, Kandahar, 10 September 2003.

¹⁰⁰ ICG interview with a provincial government official, Kandahar, 9 September 2003.

¹⁰¹ ICG interviews, Kandahar, September 2003. Farsiwans (literally, "Persian-speakers") are ethnically Iranian Shiite Muslims and form a significant minority in Kandahar city and its environs.

¹⁰² ICG interview with General Khan Mohammad, Commander, 2nd Corps, Kandahar, 10 September 2003.

¹⁰³ ICG interviews, Kandahar, September 2003.

substantially increasing the size of the police,¹⁰⁴ this would have an immediate impact on the tribal balance of power in Kandahar. By excluding it from the DR process, which in Kandahar is to cover only the 2nd Corps, the Alikozai would bear the brunt of disarmament and also see their presence in the police force diluted.

While tribal diversity in the security sector is a desirable goal in and of itself, it should be achieved within the context of diversification of the provincial government apparatus as a whole. Without simultaneous diversification of the mainly Barakzai governor's office, a significant reduction of the Alikozai dominance in the armed forces and police could be a destabilising development.

In addition to the 2nd Corps, there are other armed forces that are either unofficial or of disputed status. In the former category is a force of about 100 to 150 men led by the former deputy police chief, Nazar Jan. According to a provincial government official, Nazar Jan was removed from his post by the interior minister seven months ago for non-professionalism and involvement in criminal activities; his forces, according to the same source, are implicated in about half the registered criminal cases in Kandahar.¹⁰⁵

A second militia, also about 100 to 150 men, is led by Zhar ("Yellow") Gulalai, an ethnic Baluch commander. He reportedly operates a private prison in Hissarat, where people have been detained for up to ten days for extortion and to settle tribal disputes forcibly.¹⁰⁶ Governor Pashtun told ICG that Gulalai's militia is part of *Nazmi Khas* but other official and unofficial sources said it is private.¹⁰⁷ In either circumstance, any DR process in Kandahar should make it a priority to include Gulalai's force, along with Nazar Jan's.

B. POLICE

The provincial police department is headed by Mohammad Hashim, a professional officer

appointed by Interior Minister Jalali in August 2003. Originally from Ghazni and a member of the Andar Ghilzai tribe, Hashim was living in Kabul at the time. In an interview with ICG, he said he plans to identify and employ professional officers to replace those already in the force, and where possible, to reassign non-professionals to posts for which they are suited. He also maintained that the recruitment of professionals would take the tribal balance into account.¹⁰⁸

Other sources in Kandahar said that Hashim was reorganising the police without having first acquired an understanding of the local political landscape and that officials in the governor's office who had been close to Gul Agha were using his appointment as an opportunity to promote their own representatives within the force. Actual operational control, they said, was being exercised by Salim Jan, the new deputy. Originally from Logar, he was a commander during the Soviet occupation with Maulavi Mohammad Nabi's *Harakat-i Inqilab* faction.¹⁰⁹

The intended size of the force is unclear. Hashim told ICG that the target established by the interior ministry for the province is 1,250, and that this is fewer police than there now are. Governor Pashtun, on the other hand, told ICG that the current force is 300 in Kandahar city, and 80 to 90 in each of the surrounding districts – a total between 1,340 and 1,470. His target, he said, is a force of 2,000, half based in the city, and six to twelve months would be needed to realise this goal.

According to Hashim, the police do not have "time and capacity" to train either new or current officers themselves. However, he and the governor separately said the interior ministry has agreed on a plan whereby groups of policemen will be rotated between three months of training and active duty until they complete a full course. Training cycles could begin almost immediately.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁴ ICG interview with Governor Yusuf Pashtun, 9 September 2003.

¹⁰⁵ ICG interview with a provincial government official, Kandahar, 9 September 2003.

¹⁰⁶ ICG interview, Kabul, 8 September 2003.

¹⁰⁷ ICG interview with Governor Yusuf Pashtun, 9 September 2003, and ICG interviews, September 2003.

¹⁰⁸ ICG interview with Mohammad Hashim, police chief, Kandahar, 8 September 2003.

¹⁰⁹ ICG interviews, Kandahar, 7-9 September 2003.

¹¹⁰ ICG interviews with Governor Yusuf Pashtun and Police Chief Mohammad Hashim, 8-9 September 2003.

C. REINTEGRATION OPPORTUNITIES

Prior to his appointment as governor, Yusuf Pashtun also served as vice-chairperson of the central government's Demobilisation and Reintegration Commission – a background that gives him unique perspective from which to assess reintegration prospects in Kandahar. Pashtun suggested two areas for emphasis when seeking to create employment opportunities for former combatants: agricultural employment, dam construction and rural road development; and establishment of technical vocational training centres around the country within 60 days of the commencement of the DR process in each area.¹¹¹

Both Kandahar and the neighbouring province of Helmand, according to local NGO directors, suffer from an acute lack of skilled labour that has led to the large-scale importation of Pakistani workers. According to Naimullah Naimi, the director of the South-Western Afghanistan and Balochistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC), a vocational training centre should be established in conjunction with the DR process to prepare demobilised soldiers to be painters, carpenters, masons, welders, and plumbers – all skills in demand locally. Kandahar lacks such a facility, he said, because Kandahar Technical High School, which was established during the mujahidin period (1992-94) with funding from the German technical cooperation agency GTZ, shut down after six months and was subsequently looted.¹¹²

Ismatullah Nasarzai, Director of the Provincial Department of Mines and Industries, identified several areas that could, if developed, provide employment for demobilised fighters. The countryside around Kandahar has abundant resources for manufacturing cement, he said, but the provincial government lacked the financial means to develop them. At the time of the coup that deposed President Daud Khan in April 1978, the government had been on the verge of signing a contract to establish a cement factory in Kandahar, but the deal – which involved an American partner – was abandoned. A private businessperson in

Kandahar has recently sought authorisation from the ministry of mines and industries in Kabul to establish a cement factory, Nasarzai noted, but there was plenty of space for other entrants: “There is a high demand for cement in the south western region. Most of it was imported from Russia in the past, and now Pakistan”.¹¹³

Deposits of aragonite, a mineral resembling marble when polished, are found in several parts of Kandahar and Helmand. According to Nasarzai, there are functioning mines in the districts of Maiwand, Shah Wali Kot, and Nish. The current contractors, however, are operating unprofessionally, using explosives to break the aragonite and so destroying much of it. The provincial governments of Kandahar and Helmand, Nasarzai said, have recently solicited new contractors in announcements on the local radio in both provinces.¹¹⁴

The third potential development area cited by Nasarzai involved rehabilitation of the Kajaki dam in Hilmand province, which supplies power to Kandahar. It operates with two turbines, he said, but more are needed, and there has not yet been an international response to government appeals.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ ICG interview with Governor Yusuf Pashtun, 9 September 2003. He spoke of eight such technical training centres.

¹¹² ICG interview with Naimullah Naimi, Director, South-Western Afghanistan and Balochistan Association for Coordination (SWABAC), 7 September 2003.

¹¹³ ICG interview with Ismatullah Nasarzai, Director, Department of Mines and Industries, 9 September 2003.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

VII. CONCLUSION

Reversing the process of mobilisation will require three important elements: the active involvement of an international armed force, significant economic incentives, and an understanding of Afghan militia command structures.

For DR to be implemented successfully on a nation-wide scale, the presence of a neutral armed force is critical. In its absence, the timing and scope of the process are limited by the willingness of the ministry of defence to carry out internal reforms that will make it credible in the eyes of commanders around the country. The measures announced on 20 September 2003, however, leave the top rung of the ministry largely intact – a fact that is not lost on commanders who were looking for signs of genuine power-sharing.

Deployment of ANA battalions in areas where there is a need for a deterrent, or where a security vacuum needs to be filled pending the retraining and reorganisation of a local police force, is one solution that has proven effective in Paktia. But the number of battalions trained is not yet adequate for the implementation of the entire DR process, and the present lack of ethnic balance in the ANA will also limit its utility for long-term field assignments. The UN Security Council should, therefore, authorise NATO, which has taken over responsibility for the International Security and Assistance Force in Kabul, to move out to the main provincial centres and assist in DR implementation.

Reintegration of troops now affiliated with corps and divisions that have been formally recognised by the ministry of defence is complicated by several factors, including the fact that low and irregular pay have already led to the partial demobilisation of many. Drawing them decisively out of their command structures means providing them means and opportunities for sustainable employment. Careful attention needs to be paid to market demand for particular skills in different regions, as well as the potential for industrial and rural development in the various regions. For low-level commanders with a longer history of involvement in armed groups, a structured work environment such as a factory will be a far better guarantee of demobilisation than self-employment.

Understanding militia structures is perhaps the most critical element of all. Effective demobilisation in Afghanistan means identifying, as far as possible, who the *individual* targets of demobilisation should be. Without detailed knowledge of the local command structures in each district, including the commanders who are responsible for mobilising troops at the village level, there is a great likelihood that the process will be co-opted from within the ministry of defence and the army corps command – either by using economic incentives and employment opportunities associated with DR as a vehicle for patronage, or by selectively disarming and demobilising rivals. The ANBP can only be insured against such an outcome through extensive prior field research that allows it to compare its own data against the lists of candidates for DR proposed by the ministry.

Kabul/Brussels, 30 September 2003

APPENDIX B

ABOUT THE INTERNATIONAL CRISIS GROUP

The International Crisis Group (ICG) is an independent, non-profit, multinational organisation, with over 90 staff members on five continents, working through field-based analysis and high-level advocacy to prevent and resolve deadly conflict.

ICG's approach is grounded in field research. Teams of political analysts are located within or close by countries at risk of outbreak, escalation or recurrence of violent conflict. Based on information and assessments from the field, ICG produces regular analytical reports containing practical recommendations targeted at key international decision-takers. ICG also publishes *CrisisWatch*, a 12-page monthly bulletin, providing a succinct regular update on the state of play in all the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict around the world.

ICG's reports and briefing papers are distributed widely by email and printed copy to officials in foreign ministries and international organisations and made generally available at the same time via the organisation's Internet site, www.crisisweb.org. ICG works closely with governments and those who influence them, including the media, to highlight its crisis analyses and to generate support for its policy prescriptions.

The ICG Board – which includes prominent figures from the fields of politics, diplomacy, business and the media – is directly involved in helping to bring ICG reports and recommendations to the attention of senior policy-makers around the world. ICG is chaired by former Finnish President Martti Ahtisaari; and its President and Chief Executive since January 2000 has been former Australian Foreign Minister Gareth Evans.

ICG's international headquarters are in Brussels, with advocacy offices in Washington DC, New York and Moscow and a media liaison office in London. The organisation currently operates twelve field offices (in Amman, Belgrade, Bogota, Islamabad, Jakarta, Nairobi, Osh, Pristina, Sarajevo, Freetown, Skopje and Tbilisi) with analysts working in over 30 crisis-affected countries and territories across four continents.

In *Africa*, those countries include Burundi, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sierra Leone-Liberia-Guinea, Somalia, Sudan and Zimbabwe; in *Asia*, Indonesia, Myanmar, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, Pakistan, Afghanistan and Kashmir; in *Europe*, Albania, Bosnia, Georgia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro and Serbia; in the *Middle East*, the whole region from North Africa to Iran; and in *Latin America*, Colombia.

ICG raises funds from governments, charitable foundations, companies and individual donors. The following governmental departments and agencies currently provide funding: the Australian International Development Agency, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, the Canadian International Development Agency, the Royal Danish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the German Foreign Office, the Irish Department of Foreign Affairs, the Japanese International Cooperation Agency, the Luxembourgian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs, the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, the Republic of China Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Taiwan), the Turkish Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the United Kingdom Foreign and Commonwealth Office, the United Kingdom Department for International Development, the United States International Development Agency.

Foundation and private sector donors include Atlantic Philanthropies, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Ford Foundation, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, William & Flora Hewlett Foundation, Henry Luce Foundation Inc., John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, John Merck Fund, Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, Open Society Institute, Ploughshares Fund, Sigrid Rausing Trust, Sasakawa Peace Foundation, Sarlo Foundation of the Jewish Community Endowment Fund, the United States Institute of Peace and the Fundacao Oriente.

September 2003

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