



Australian Government
Australian Civil-Military Centre



AFGHANISTAN:

Lessons from Australia's
Whole-of-Government Mission



Acknowledgments

The Australian Civil-Military Centre would like to offer gratitude and recognition to Mr Richard C Smith AO PSM for his expertise in leading the review that informed this report. As well, we are grateful to a number of Australian government departments and agencies for their support and guidance during the development of this report, in particular the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Department of Defence and the Australian Federal Police, who shared their experiences and knowledge and were generous with their time. Special thanks go to Ms Amanda Coghlan of the Australian Civil-Military Centre for her role in crafting and producing this report.

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ISBN: 978-1-921933-21-9

Published in November 2016

Provincial Reconstruction Team Uruzgan and the Other Government Agency Platoon, including representatives from Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, AusAID and the US and Australian military, 2013
Photo Credit: LTJG Rory O'Boyle, U.S. Navy



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Foreword

Over the past two decades, Australia has accumulated considerable experience with whole-of-government missions in complex environments, including in the Solomon Islands and Timor-Leste. Developed to meet the particular circumstances and context of each crisis; these responses required different approaches to coordination and have brought together expertise from across Australian public service departments and agencies; the Australian Federal Police; and the Australian Defence Force. Australia's response to Afghanistan was no different.

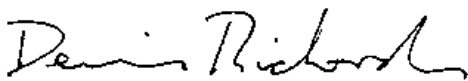
While Australia has made a substantial commitment to international operations in Afghanistan since 2001, it was not until April 2009 that we adopted a whole-of-government approach that saw a significant field deployment of civilian and policing expertise, alongside military personnel. This was the most *war-like* environment in which an Australian whole-of-government team had operated together in the field in the modern era.

As our mission in Afghanistan matured, the partnership between agencies, to deliver security, governance and development assistance, came to be highly regarded by Australian government civilian, police and defence force personnel alike. This experience fostered closer cooperation between government departments and agencies, and has given rise to new approaches to facilitate collaboration in response to international crises.

With the closure of the Provincial Reconstruction Team and Multinational Base Tarin Kowt at the end of 2013, we have had the opportunity to reflect on what departments and agencies learned from the way Australia managed its whole-of-government involvement in Afghanistan.

This report highlights the strengths, good practices and challenges of Australia's whole-of-government approach to Afghanistan and associated lessons.

As we consider these lessons, it needs to be acknowledged that the experience has been very particular, and in many ways unique. Even so, it is possible to distil lessons that can build on previous experience and that will assist decision-makers, policy experts, planners and practitioners, amongst others, in considering future whole-of-government responses to complex contingencies.



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Introduction

Over more than a decade, Australia has made a substantial commitment to international operations in Afghanistan. Australia's whole-of-government approach to the Afghanistan conflict fostered close cooperation between government agency stakeholders, including the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the broader Defence Department, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID¹) and Australian Federal Police (AFP), to deliver security, governance and development assistance. New mechanisms and approaches were developed and adopted across government departments to facilitate this collaborative approach to an operation that saw a significant field deployment of civilian and policing expertise from April 2009 into a complex security environment.

In considering what might be learned from the way Australia managed its involvement in Afghanistan, it needs to be acknowledged that the experience has been very particular, and in many ways unique. The environment in which the Australian mission has worked throughout its 13 years has been the most *war-like* in which a whole-of-government mission has been attempted by Australia in the modern era.

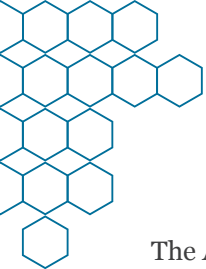
Nor can the nature of the challenge of Afghanistan be easily pigeon-holed. There is contention still about how to characterise it. The international military intervention, which began as a counter-terrorism campaign increasingly took on the characteristics of a counter-insurgency campaign and, in significant parts of the country, stabilisation operations of the kind usually seen in post-conflict situations were not possible. Perhaps the best that can be said is that stabilisation-type activities were undertaken in parallel with continuing conflict.

As well, the intervention was managed in a very particular way. Initially a United States-led operation, it acquired a United Nations mandate, from which a broad based international coalition emerged.

Australia's national objectives have remained constant over the 13 years that span our involvement in Afghanistan. The terms in which these objectives were expressed have, however, varied over that time, and the means by which the objectives were pursued also changed.

These changes were driven by the evolution of US and International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) concepts; requests from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the United States, United Kingdom and Afghan governments; decisions made by Coalition partners; and assessments of progress being made in Uruzgan Province in Afghanistan.

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1. On 1 November 2013, AusAID was integrated into the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and ceased to exist as an Executive Agency. DFAT now administers the Australian Aid program.



The Australian Government at the highest level maintained an appropriately close interest in Australia's role in Afghanistan from the outset. Interdepartmental involvement was relatively light in the early period, but intensified from 2006 and gradually acquired a more genuinely whole-of-government character by 2009. This was reflected in, among other things, the creation of the high-level Afghanistan-Pakistan Steering Group, the enhanced resourcing of the Australian Embassy in Kabul, and the establishment of joint civilian and military leadership through Combined Team-Uruzgan (CT-U) and the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Tarin Kowt.

These developments were underpinned by the government's acceptance of increasing levels of policy, personnel and cost risk. The evolution of a more complete whole-of-government model was facilitated by the extension of funding provisions to DFAT and AusAID, which enabled those agencies to commit more resources to the support of Australia's role in Afghanistan; and on the ground in Uruzgan, by the ADF's role in providing force protection and, effectively, a platform for the civilian agency presence.

Alliance and coalition management has been demanding throughout the mission, requiring concentrated effort especially in Washington, Brussels and The Hague, as well as in Kabul and on the ground in Tarin Kowt.

Both the ADF and AusAID were responsible for aid delivery, working in different ways and at different levels. Mission preparation among civilian agencies, and in the whole-of-government sense, improved considerably as the mission matured.

As Australia's commitment to Afghanistan has drawn down, and consideration has been given to the nature of the ongoing relationship between the two nations, it is appropriate to reflect on what lessons have been learned on strengthening whole-of-government cooperation.

This report examines the Australian Government's approach to the management of its commitments in Afghanistan in the period 2001–2013 at the whole-of-government level.

It considers how government departments and agencies with roles in Afghanistan policy-making and in the field worked together in advising government and responding to its directions, and how those with personnel deployed in the theatre or posted in Afghanistan related to each other. Its aim is to establish what lessons might be drawn from these experiences to inform any future operations of this kind.

The report does not seek to evaluate the effectiveness of either Australia's military role in Afghanistan or the police, diplomatic or aid contributions. Nor is this report intended as a history of Australia's role in the international intervention in Afghanistan. The purpose of Annex A, which traces major statements made by Australian government leaders, is simply to chart the changes in Australia's presence, highlight the national objectives that drove Australia's commitment to Afghanistan, and the evolution of the terms in which government leaders have spoken about our role in Afghanistan.

Rather, the Australian experience in Afghanistan offers lessons about how Australian government departments and agencies might work together effectively—both in Canberra and in the field—in any future international intervention to which Australia commits.

Drawing on this experience, the report identifies 17 lessons that might guide our approach to any future stabilisation missions.

The application of particular lessons will of course vary according to the precise nature of the mission: what level of conflict is ongoing at the point of our intervention; whether the intervention is based around a coalition (as would generally be preferable), and if so whether Australia is the mission leader or simply a member of a coalition; and which agency is in the lead in the field—the ADF, the AFP or DFAT—and if the latter, is it policy or development leadership. As such, these lessons do not provide a blueprint for future whole-of-government missions, rather they identify a number of areas worthy of consideration when planning and responding to future contingencies.



Afghan women and an ADF patrol on the streets of Tarin Kowt in 2011. Photo Credit: Sergeant Neil Ruskin

The following 17 lessons include a number of parts.

Lesson 1: Assessment And Risk

An understanding of risk in all its dimensions—policy, cost and personnel—should be factored into advice to government from the outset of a proposed mission. As recommended by the 2004 *Report of the Inquiry into Australian Intelligence Agencies* (the Flood Report),² a National Assessment should be a precursor to government decision-making for an offshore deployment or mission. Risk should be assessed against the objectives of the mission. In the case of coalitions, the expectations and practices of other members should also be factored into these assessments.

Lesson 2: Civilian Force Protection

In considering the appointment of public servants (or AFP units or members) to missions of this kind:

- I. The level of risk to which they are exposed should be kept under review (as it is for the ADF) and government advised promptly of any adverse changes.
- II. The ADF should be regarded as the force protection provider of choice and the default provider, and should assume that, unless the Australian Government decides otherwise after considering risk assessments, it will be required to provide force protection for public servants in the field.

Lesson 3: Policy Settings

All relevant departments and agencies should be involved in whole-of-government policy development and planning from the outset of a proposed cross-border intervention. This approach is premised in the reality that all military actions have policy consequences, and thus any offshore deployment of the ADF should be seen as a matter that engages a full range of Australia's international policy interests.

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². Phillip Flood, *Report of the Inquiry into Australian Intelligence Agencies*, 2004.



Lesson 4: A Policy Base

International interventions will require a strong policy base from which to maintain a strategic level of analysis:

- I. This base should develop and provide robust advice to inform operational decisions and enable the government to assess the progress of a mission against policy objectives.
- II. Depending on the size of the mission, the policy base could be founded either, for a small mission, in an interagency task force that meets as required; or, in a bigger mission (or one in which Australia takes the lead), in an interagency policy unit established for the purpose and sustained for the duration of Australia's commitment.
- III. While Defence and the ADF should be integral to this policy base, it should be led by an officer from a civilian agency, that should be prepared to take a lead-agency role in regard to policy on the issue and to staff the task with senior and experienced people from appropriate departments and agencies.

Lesson 5: Senior Interagency Leadership

The policy base should be overseen by a senior level interagency group that can provide a high-level nexus with the National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSC)³ and the Secretaries' Committee on National Security (SCNS).⁴ The group should be *bespoke*, that is, set up for the purpose and duration of the mission, rather than based in any existing interdepartmental group or committee, with its composition and level determined by the nature and scale of the mission. While not in itself a decision-making body, this group should nevertheless provide broad guidance and should cut through the kind of static and misunderstanding that can become part of lower-level interaction between agencies.

Lesson 6: Planning

Whenever a whole-of-government mission is considered, all departments and agencies involved should participate in an interagency planning team to plan the mission. In most cases, Headquarters Joint Operations Command (HQJOC) will be the appropriate platform to support this planning team. The whole-of-government planning approach should be tailored to accommodate all participating agencies. When the involvement of non-Defence agencies is not certain, those agencies would benefit from at least the opportunity to contribute to the early stages of ADF planning. When non-Defence involvement is significant, a whole-of-government planning unit could be established, subordinate to the structures proposed in lessons 4 and 5.

Lesson 7: Diplomatic Roles

- I. When the ADF is deployed to a country in which Australia has a diplomatic or consular presence, DFAT should, where practicable, ensure that its presence is commensurate in size and credibility with the operational mission. When there is no existing mission in-country, DFAT should endeavour to establish a presence as a matter of priority, collocated if possible with the ADF command headquarters.
- II. The standing of the Head of Mission/Post should be recognised from the outset, commensurate with the Prime Minister's Directive;⁵ he or she should be kept briefed on operational as well as policy issues and should maintain a *country team* coordinating role, for example through regular meetings of senior agency representatives in-country.

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3. The National Security Committee of Cabinet (NSC) is chaired by the Prime Minister and is the Australian Government's highest decision-making body on national security.

4. The Secretaries' Committee on National Security consists of Secretaries and Heads of agencies with responsibility for national security and provides advice to the Australian Government through the NSC on matters of national security.

5. Prime Minister's Directive, 'Guidelines for Management of the Australian Government's Presence Overseas', 2007.

Lesson 8: Detainee Management

Where the circumstances and nature of the mission are likely to require the detention and subsequent management of hostile or potentially hostile actors, a detainee policy and management regime should be developed in consultation between the detaining force (ADF or the AFP) and other relevant agencies (Defence, Attorney-General's Department (AGD) and DFAT) before the mission deploys. It should draw on the experience gained in Afghanistan, acknowledging that a number of government agencies have a role in managing detainees.

Lesson 9: Fit for Purpose

The role of each department and agency contributing to a whole-of-government mission in the field should be fit for purpose; that is, expectations should be matched to capability and expertise. Advice on how best a contribution can be made, and the associated resources, should be sought in the planning and pre-deployment phase of the proposed mission.

Lesson 10: Field Team Leadership

While leadership of a field team such as a PRT will depend on the nature of the mission and the extent of any conflict around it, the merits of co-equal leadership, shared by military or police on the one hand and a civilian agency on the other, should be recognised.

Lesson 11: Working Agreements or Guidelines

Recognising that different agencies and services have different cultures and command structures, underpinned often by different legislative or machinery of government requirements:

- I. Agreed *principles and protocols* guidelines should be drafted at the outset of a whole-of-government mission.
- II. These should define the working relationships and responsibilities and expectations of the different services and agencies, and be as clear as possible on the chain of command and management responsibilities of the respective agencies in the field.
- III. In a protracted mission, the guidelines should be reviewed at least annually and revised as necessary on the basis of experience and changing circumstances in the field.

Lesson 12: Alliance and Coalition Management

Whether Australia is the leader or a member of a coalition, the demands of coalition management should be acknowledged at the outset of any mission and adequately resourced. In addition to liaison, what is required is likely to be a detailed understanding of the policy-making dynamics in the capitals of coalition partners and persistent diplomatic efforts to influence them and manage differences.

Lesson 13: Aid

Where aid delivery is likely to be a requirement of the mission:

- I. Aid objectives should be defined clearly from the outset and advice provided to government on whether the aid is most appropriately delivered by DFAT or the ADF, or a combination of both, and in the case of DFAT aid which agencies (including the AFP) would be best placed to deliver it.
- II. Whichever agencies are responsible for delivering the aid program, it should be regarded as a whole-of-government program from its outset and be planned and coordinated by an interagency group, supported where possible by a parallel group in the field, which includes representation from the resident diplomatic mission.



Lesson 14: Mission Preparation

In preparation for specific whole-of-government overseas missions, consideration should be given to:

- I. Synchronising posting and deployment cycles for civilian, military and police personnel.
- II. Collective mission preparation training that is designed to meet the needs of all participants. This training should include both security and safety training (with force protection elements if appropriate) and medical training, as well as exercises and/or simulations focused on developing cross-agency relationships, working practices and a broad understanding of the mandates, roles, responsibilities and expertise of contributing departments and agencies. Consideration should be given to elements of mission preparation training being mandatory.
- III. Language training should be made available to personnel posting and deploying to an overseas mission, whether that mission is in the Asia Pacific region or further afield.

Departments and agencies should invest in maintaining and strengthening cross-agency understanding and familiarity in working in a whole-of-government environment. This could be done through the development of a whole-of-government exercise program, agency exchanges and appropriate educational opportunities.

Lesson 15: Service Conditions

- I. Just as prior to any ADF offshore deployment the government determines conditions for ADF personnel, on advice from the Chief of the Defence Force (CDF), so the conditions applying to public servants should also be pre-determined—and should be uniform across agencies, including for Defence civilians. This is important in ensuring a coherent whole-of-government effort.
- II. Posting cycles for public servants from different departments and agencies should be aligned.
- III. Issues relating to public service managers' duty of care obligations, in particular those arising from the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, should also be resolved explicitly.

Lesson 16: Public Affairs

While not constraining the ADF's own effective approach to managing media coverage of its presence in the field, any whole-of-government mission should have a joint public affairs capability that presents the mission as a whole-of-government effort. This is important both to supporting a whole-of-government culture in the mission, and to ensuring that the full extent of the government's investment is understood in the community.

Lesson 17: Learning Lessons

The Australian Civil-Military Centre (ACMC) should be tasked to provide a standing whole-of-government, civil-military-police lessons capability for overseas missions, including developing, storing and disseminating lessons to maintain whole-of-government institutional memory. The principles derived from Australia's experience in Afghanistan should be addressed as well in civil-military-police exercises and in ADF and appropriate public service training and education programs.

The Australian Mission

Australia's involvement in Afghanistan began with ADF deployments in November 2001 and has continued to this day. During this period both the scale and nature of the Australian role and the terms in which it has been described have undergone considerable change. The force structure and titles of the ADF's deployed elements changed a number of times; the scale of DFAT's presence in Afghanistan and our diplomatic role grew significantly from a low base; the aid program also grew and the means by which it was delivered changed considerably; and the AFP's role and the nature of its presence on the ground underwent several changes.

Annex A provides a summary of major government statements and announcements since 2001. It traces not only the changes in Australia's presence but also the evolution of the terms in which government leaders have spoken about our presence and role in Afghanistan.

Notwithstanding these changes, it is clear that the national objectives of Australia's commitment as reflected in statements by prime ministers and ministers, have remained consistent: to support our US Alliance interests, and to fight terrorism. These objectives were stated at the outset, and reiterated throughout the period 2001–13. The changes in the roles of Australia's agencies on the ground and the terms in which they were described should thus not be seen as changes to the national objectives. What changed was not the objectives but rather the means by which they were pursued and described as the initial focus on counter-terrorism increasingly took on the characteristics of counter-insurgency.

Not surprisingly, in the course of a mission that developed over such a long period and with such a broad range of participants, there were changes in the way the conflict was characterised, the anticipated duration of Australian involvement, and the methods employed to prosecute operations.

The changing characterisation of the nature of the conflict was notable. Language about the war-on-terrorism was common before 2008, but fell from use after the US Administration changed in January 2009. The debate in the United States between proponents of counter-terrorism and counter-insurgency was not replicated, but Australian statements referred increasingly to 'our support of' and 'our part in' counter-insurgency.

The preferred military view (reflected for instance in the principles of the Weinberger-Powell doctrine) is that a decision to commit forces to an offshore operation must be clear about what is being committed, how it is committed and for how long, and must include a clear articulation of the end-state or of what *success* will look like.⁶

While this remains the ideal, it rarely reflects the reality of policy choices for recent deployments. This is so in regards to the nature of the task and thus to timelines for commitments. As well, in interventions that involve coalitions it has been impossible to know the staying power of coalition partners, and how their domestic politics will affect their commitments, and also to know how the attitudes of the authorities in the country in which the intervention is taking place will evolve.

6. The Weinberger-Powell doctrine suggested that all political, economic and diplomatic means should be tried prior to resorting to military force. The doctrine emerged in the lead up to the 1990-1991 Gulf War with General Colin Powell's expansion of the Weinberger doctrine, devised by former Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, to incorporate a series of questions that should be addressed before the United States takes military action. It is relevant to this review in that the doctrine was itself a result of lessons drawn from US decision-making during the Vietnam War.



Australian Special Forces soldiers prepare at dawn in Afghanistan to depart on a joint Australian and Afghan patrol, 2005.
Photo Credit: Captain Alan Green

The Alliance interest was presented initially in terms of the decision to invoke the ANZUS Treaty, and later in terms of our national interest in supporting the US Alliance. Increasingly after 2006 government statements linked security and development. From 2008, there was a steadily increasing emphasis on our role in Uruzgan Province, in particular in training and mentoring the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in the province. In 2008, there was also a growing emphasis on preparing Afghanistan to take responsibility for its own security and development.

Australia's whole-of-government approach to Afghanistan evolved slowly, and in short, the changes to which Australia responded both in the language of policy and in the nature of our commitments on the ground were driven by four factors:

- I. The evolution of US and ISAF concepts, driven in large part by circumstances on the ground in Afghanistan. This included the transition over time from a counter-terrorism approach to more of a counter-insurgency campaign. The changes that occurred in 2009/10—the surge, the commitment to a greater civilian role, and the announced commitments to a drawdown and to transition—were particularly significant in this regard. Australia's increased focus on Uruzgan Province from 2009 can be seen partly in this light.
- II. Requests from NATO and the United States, United Kingdom and Afghan governments, and the need to make an active and effective contribution within the growing ISAF coalition and the broader international community.
- III. Decisions made by coalition partners, in particular the Netherlands concerning its withdrawal from Uruzgan in 2010, and the United States in relation to its presence and assets (enablers) in the province.
- IV. Judgements about progress being made in Uruzgan; for instance, in regard to the development of the Afghan National Army (ANA) 4th Brigade, and about where Australia should be positioned in light of coalition planning for transition.

In contrast, Box 1 below highlights the more deliberate Canadian approach in moving from a military to a whole-of-government mission in Afghanistan.

Box 1 – The Canadian Approach

In October 2007, the Government of Canada commissioned an Independent Panel to review Canada's ongoing mission in Afghanistan and to make recommendations on its future. The panel consisted of five eminent persons, led by John Manley, supported by a ten-person secretariat, and reported to government through the Privy Council Office. The panel undertook extensive consultations, including with the Government of Afghanistan and Afghan civil society, the United Nations, academics, non-government organisations, NATO representatives and military and public sector personnel, as well as undertaking a public submission process.

In January 2008, the Manley Report was delivered to the Canadian Parliament. The report recommended that the expanded Canadian mission in Afghanistan be whole-of-government, with a three-fold increase in civilian personnel, adopt six priority focus areas and three signature projects, and include the armed forces and police. It also recommended that quarterly reports outlining progress against clear benchmarks be tabled in Parliament, that investment in alliance management be strengthened, and that Canada's commitment to Afghanistan should not be open-ended.

In June 2008, the Canadian Parliament endorsed the report, accepting all recommendations. The report laid the foundation for an integrated whole-of-government approach to its implementation both through a Privy Council Task Force of approximately sixty staff overseen by a Band 3 equivalent and in Afghanistan where dual civil-military leadership was established from the outset.⁷

Approach to Risk

An understanding of risk and its mitigation is essential to government decision-making and thus to policy advice. In this context, robust National Assessments are a necessary part of the decision-making process and would normally be provided at an early stage in the consideration of an overseas mission, and at any critical points in the course of the mission, as was proposed in Recommendation 9 of the Flood Report.⁸

As reflected in Annex A, public statements by Australian government leaders since 2001 have reflected their awareness of the risks arising from our presence in Afghanistan. They suggest continuing wariness about policy and cost risk as well as the risk to personnel, and a strong focus on mitigating that risk. There was a progressive increase in government acceptance of risk from 2001, reflected in the decisions in 2005 to recommit to Afghanistan, and in 2006 to commit to a PRT in Uruzgan; to commit civilians to Uruzgan in 2008 (AusAID) and 2009 (DFAT); to commit the AFP to police training and mentoring in Uruzgan in 2009; and to take on the leadership of the PRT in 2010 and the CT-U in 2012.

7. John Manley, Derek H Burney, Jake Epp, Paul Tellier, and Pamela Wallin, *Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan*, Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Canada, 2008.

8. Phillip Flood, *Report of the Inquiry into Australian Intelligence Agencies*, 2004, p. 182.



The Australian Other Government Agency Platoon interacts with locals in Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan, 2013. Photo Credit: Captain Jesse Platz

Responding to the factors that drove changes in the form, focus and design of Australia's presence and role in Afghanistan led the Australian Government to successive decisions not only about the size and nature of the ADF presence but also, in time, about the need for a stronger diplomatic and civil aid presence in Afghanistan. This in turn required the implicit acceptance of higher levels of risk for civilian and ADF personnel (as well as decisions about funding the civilian effort).

The government's willingness to accept higher levels of risk for its non-military personnel on the ground in Afghanistan was critical in enabling some of the changes in Australia's role after 2009. Essential to this, in turn, was the requirement for force protection for its civilians in Uruzgan to be provided by the ADF or another tier-one partner, in practice US forces. This was a very firmly stated precursor for civilian involvement on the ground.

The greater involvement of Australian civilian agencies after 2009 had followed the practice adopted by coalition partners rather earlier, in part because of understandable concerns regarding this higher risk. Once accepted, the risk was monitored closely in Canberra and further conditioned by the refusal to allow the AFP to take on a mentoring role *outside-the-wire* in Uruzgan.

Overall, the decisions to provide an enhanced civilian role in the PRT and then to take leadership first of the PRT then of the CT-U, and thus to move to a more genuine civil-military role in Afghanistan, nevertheless amounted to a notable step up in acceptance of policy, personnel and cost risk.



LESSON 1: ASSESSMENT AND RISK

An understanding of risk in all its dimensions—policy, cost and personnel—should be factored into advice to government from the outset of a proposed mission. As recommended by the 2004 *Report of the Inquiry into Australian Intelligence Agencies* (the Flood Report), a National Assessment should be a precursor to government decision-making for an offshore deployment or mission. Risk should be assessed against the objectives of the mission. In the case of coalitions, the expectations and practices of other members should also be factored into these assessments.

LESSON 2: CIVILIAN FORCE PROTECTION

In considering the appointment of public servants (or AFP units or members) to missions of this kind:

- I. The level of risk to which they are exposed should be kept under review (as it is for the ADF) and government advised promptly of any adverse changes.
- II. The ADF should be regarded as the force protection provider of choice and the default provider, and should assume that, unless the Australian Government decides otherwise after considering risk assessments, it will be required to provide force protection for public servants in the field.

Chapter 2: Government Machinery: Canberra

The NSC supported by SCNS, was the paramount policy setting and decision-making organ of government from the outset of Australia's commitment in 2001.

Beneath the NSC, interagency arrangements went through three broad stages.

- I. From October 2001 until the withdrawal of the Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) in November 2002, the mission was seen as essentially Defence business and, while an interdepartmental group met from time to time, its touch can best be described as light. The Strategic Policy Coordination Group (SPCG) had a role, but it too seems to have been limited.
- II. With the government's decision in 2005 to make a renewed commitment to the coalition effort in Afghanistan, interagency involvement grew. An Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) chaired by DFAT and known as the Tange Group was established at the Senior Executive Service (SES) Band 1 level and, though participation by agencies and departments was often below that level, it was more robust and inclusive than the earlier arrangements. The Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (PM&C) also managed an interdepartmental group, known as the Afghanistan-Pakistan Task Force, which had a particular role in managing and supporting processes that led into NSC.
- III. Following the government's decisions in April 2009 to further enhance Australia's commitment, including through greater civilian agency and AFP roles, interagency work took on more of a whole-of-government nature. It did so through more frequent meetings of the Tange Group and its wider agenda, and by the creation, in July 2009, of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Steering Group, or *Shura*, which met at agency head/CDF level, initially with a rotating chair but later with the then National Security Adviser (NSA), PM&C, as chair and convener.

The need for this *bespoke* higher-level arrangement had become urgent as the Australian commitment moved towards a more whole-of-government mode after the 2006 decisions, to commit to the Netherlands-led PRT and reconstruction efforts in Uruzgan province,⁹ and the risk management issues, among others, became more acute. It also served a purpose in providing guidance to agencies in preparing briefs and submissions for government and in *clearing decks*, which often became cluttered at lower levels. It also provided valuable support for the Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan appointed in 2009 who, in responding to the Prime Minister's mandate to 'coordinate and drive [Australia's] new level of effort'¹⁰ and attend frequent international meetings, needed to have as broad and complete a view of Australia's activities and policy considerations as possible and a higher-level body to report back to.

9. For a detailed discussion of the 2006 Australian Government decisions refer to Annex A, pp. 40–42.

10. Prime Minister the Hon Kevin Rudd, 'Press Conference', Parliament House, Canberra, 29 April 2009.

The Nature of Policy Advising

The deliberations of these groups had a consistent focus on operational aspects of Australia's presence and role in Afghanistan. At the level of higher policy, there were times in which the approach to policy formulation may have been weighted unduly towards operational matters. This reflects two factors. In the first instance, it followed from the strong focus on supporting the US Alliance; in effect, the Alliance was operationalised.

Secondly, consideration of policy interests and issues extending beyond operational needs would always have been dependent on the capacity of departments and agencies to produce policy work that was timely and at the level and quality required. In the policy-making processes, the ADF, with its institutional weight and its robust culture, was dominant—with *skin in the game* from the outset.

Beyond these considerations, it is also the case that until 2009 civilian departments and agencies had limited visibility of what was happening on the ground in Uruzgan, including, for instance, relationships with key leaders in the province and the different tribal groups, and the delivery of aid. The ADF's operational reporting was aimed primarily at serving Defence's needs; information was provided to other areas of government, but it was summary in nature and naturally had an operational bias.

While agencies, including Defence, DFAT and AusAID, maintained reasonable contact on Afghanistan issues with Australian National University academics and some international non-government organisations, a more structured involvement with subject or area experts might also have strengthened policy development.

Australian soldiers from the Special Operations Task Group prepare to board a U.S. Army CH-47 Chinook helicopter at Multinational Base – Tarin Kowt, as they head out on another mission, 2012.
Photo Credit: Special Operations Task Group





LESSON 3: POLICY SETTINGS

All relevant departments and agencies should be involved in whole-of-government policy development and planning from the outset of any proposed cross-border intervention. This approach is premised in the reality that all military actions have policy consequences, and thus an offshore deployment of the ADF should be seen as a matter that engages a full range of Australia's international policy interests.

LESSON 4: A POLICY BASE

International interventions will require a strong policy base from which to maintain a strategic level of analysis:

- I. This base should develop and provide robust advice to inform operational decisions and enable the government to assess the progress of a mission against policy objectives.
- II. Depending on the size of the mission, the policy base could be founded either, for a small mission, in an interagency task force that meets as required; or, in a bigger mission (or one in which Australia takes the lead), in an interagency policy unit established for the purpose and sustained for the duration of Australia's commitment.
- III. While Defence and the ADF should be integral to this policy base, it should be led by an officer from a civilian agency that should be prepared to take a lead-agency role in regard to policy on the issue and to staff the task with senior and experienced people from appropriate departments and agencies.



LESSON 5: SENIOR INTERAGENCY LEADERSHIP


The policy base should be overseen by a senior level interagency group that can provide a high-level nexus with the NSC and SCNS. The group should be *bespoke*, that is, set up for the purpose and duration of the mission, rather than based in any existing interdepartmental group or committee, with its composition and level determined by the nature and scale of the mission. While not in itself a decision-making body, this group should nevertheless provide broad guidance and should cut through the kind of static and misunderstanding that can become part of lower-level interaction between agencies.

Planning

The relationship between Defence planners in HQJOC and other departments and agencies was slight in the early period of the ADF's commitment in Afghanistan. In 2007 the AFP placed two liaison officers in to HQJOC, followed by AusAID in 2009 and eventually DFAT. This planning relationship developed over time as Australia's presence and role in Uruzgan grew and then drew down. Agencies acknowledge, however, that there would have been benefit in placing liaison officers in HQJOC earlier and positioning themselves to contribute to collaborative whole-of-government planning rather than just observing the ADF process.

LESSON 6: PLANNING

Whenever a whole-of-government mission is considered, all departments and agencies involved should participate in an interagency planning team to plan the mission. In most cases, HQJOC will be the appropriate platform to support this planning team. The whole-of-government planning approach should be tailored to accommodate all participating agencies. When the involvement of non-Defence agencies is not certain, those agencies would benefit from at least the opportunity to contribute to the early stages of ADF planning. When non-Defence involvement is significant, a whole-of-government planning unit could be established, subordinate to the structures proposed in lessons 4 and 5.



Chapter 3: Government Machinery: Afghanistan

In the period 2001-2006, Australia's presence in Afghanistan was solely that of the ADF. After the decisions of 2005 and 2006, we had a military presence in Kabul, Kandahar and Tarin Kowt, including officers embedded in ISAF headquarters as well as operational units and a Deputy Commander of Headquarters Joint Task Force (JTF) 633 in Kabul. From 2006, we had a resident Embassy in Kabul, enhanced after 2009; from 2008 an AusAID presence in Tarin Kowt, joined by DFAT in 2009; and an AFP presence in Afghanistan from 2007, first in Kabul, then rotating through Kandahar and Tarin Kowt (to provide counter-narcotics intelligence support), and from 2009 with a greater focus on training and advising the Afghan National Police (ANP) in Uruzgan Province.



Corporal Daniel Bone deployed with the Reconstruction Task Force to Uruzgan Province chats with an Afghan man during a patrol to conduct village assessments and quick impact projects, 2007. Photo Credit: Corporal Ricky Fuller

The professionalism and agility of ADF senior officers in working, for example, with the Dutch and the Gulf States, and with other coalition members (including the United Kingdom), supported by DFAT, was a significant strength. In the field, the professionalism and adaptability of the ADF, at all levels, was of course an underlying strength for Australia, as was the work of civilian agencies once they were appointed in the field.

Kabul

The ADF's presence in Afghanistan was structured around JTF633. Initially established in Iraq in 2002 and commanded by a two-star officer, the headquarters (Australian National Headquarters – Middle East Area of Operations) relocated to the United Arab Emirates at the conclusion of ADF operations in Iraq. Commander JTF633 held national command authority for Australian forces in Afghanistan. The Deputy Commander-Afghanistan was located in Kabul. This position was initially staffed at the Colonel level but was elevated to Brigadier, and held no command authority for operational forces within the country. The Special Forces units in Afghanistan were under command of Commander JTF633, as were the ADF officers embedded with ISAF who had no authority to represent Australia on behalf of Commander JTF633.¹¹

11. These arrangements changed on 1 November 2014 when JTF636 assumed national command authority for ADF personnel in Afghanistan from JTF633, with JTF633 retaining responsibility for Australian military operations in the broader Middle East Area of Operations. JTF633 regained national command of ADF personnel in Afghanistan on 6 June 2015. On 7 June 2015, Task Group Afghanistan (JTF633.6) was established. Initially commanded at the O-6 level it was elevated to a one-star command in July 2015.



United States Assistant Chief of Mission to Kabul, Ambassador Mr Hugo Llorens, and Australian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Mr Jon Philp, speak to civilian and military personnel from Provincial Reconstruction Team – Uruzgan, 2013. Photo Credit: WO2 Andrew Hetherington

This structure has had its merits given that Commander JTF633 also commanded Australian forces in Iraq (from 2003 to 2009 during Operation Catalyst) and the Gulf and, over time, has acquired responsibility for the ADF operations in parts of the Indian Ocean.¹²

Nevertheless, the Australian command and control structure in Afghanistan was unique as all other coalition forces had their headquarters in the country, many of whom double-hatted their senior-most officer embedded with ISAF as their national commander. The ADF command arrangements were thus not only cumbersome but also risked confusing Australian and coalition partners.

Decisions about where to locate an ADF joint task force headquarters will of course be primarily determined by operational requirements and national command considerations. From a whole-of-government point of view and in the interests of effective civil-military-police cooperation, that headquarters would, however, generally be best located in-country and in the same place as the embassy and any other senior level Australian agency presence.

As noted earlier, a small Australian Embassy comprising two DFAT officers was established in Kabul in September 2006. It was located at first in the Serena Hotel, but following a Taliban attack on the Serena in January 2008 it temporarily relocated to ADF House and then moved to the US Embassy compound, where it remained until 2010.

This represented a bare minimum diplomatic presence, light by comparison with those of other governments, including some whose commitments were less than ours, and barely adequate given the demands on it from AusAID and the Department of Immigration (in relation to refugee matters), among others.

As the Australian commitment grew, it became necessary to grow DFAT's presence commensurately to ensure that the department could play an appropriate country-team coordination role and offer a civilian leadership presence outside the military chain of command that could provide balance to the whole-of-government mission.

12. JTF633 continues to command Australian forces deployed to the Middle East, excluding Afghanistan, and since 31 August 2014 has commanded Operation Okra in Iraq.



After its enhancement in 2009, the Embassy was able to play more of a role in Kabul. In particular, the Ambassador hosted a weekly meeting of the senior officers of all agencies in Kabul, including ADF, and thus ensured not only a clear picture for all of the Australian policy and operational developments but also to identify any whole-of-government issues that needed resolution.

The effectiveness of the Embassy was further improved after funding was provided in 2010 for the charter of an aircraft. In particular, the Ambassador and his staff from all agencies were able to plan their own movements without having to depend on the varying availability of ADF or other coalition aircraft. This was especially important in planning movements to and from Tarin Kowt.

DFAT officers were assigned to Regional Command-Kabul (RC-South) in Kandahar in 2009. The secondment of a DFAT officer to ISAF Headquarters in 2010, following the creation of the ISAF Senior Civilian Representative position, provided further opportunities to represent Australia's position, and also gave civilian agencies a window into events at that level in the ISAF headquarters.

The AFP deployed personnel to several Kabul based roles between 2007 and 2014. Of particular note, it had SES level representation in Kabul from June 2011 until September 2013. Their initial role was both Senior Advisor to the NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) Deputy Commander-Police and Executive Police Advisor to the Afghan Government's Deputy Minister for Security. In 2012, the officer occupied a lead role on the International Police Coordination Board, the main coordination body for police reform in Afghanistan. Other experienced AFP officers undertook advisory roles with either NATO or Afghan authorities, or assisted the European Union Police training mission in Kabul.

LESSON 7: DIPLOMATIC ROLES

- I. When the ADF is deployed to a country in which Australia has a diplomatic or consular presence, DFAT should, where practicable, ensure that its presence is commensurate in size and credibility with the operational mission. When there is no existing mission in-country, DFAT should endeavour to establish a presence as a matter of priority, collocated if possible with the ADF command headquarters.
- II. The standing of the Head of Mission/Post should be recognised from the outset, commensurate with the Prime Minister's Directive; he or she should be kept briefed on operational as well as policy issues and should maintain a country team coordinating role, for example through regular meetings of senior agency representatives in-country.



Detainee Management

Following the withdrawal of the Dutch from Afghanistan in August 2010, Australia took responsibility for the detention facility at Multinational Base Tarin Kowt in Uruzgan Province. As part of Australia's detainee management framework, Australian officials monitored the treatment, welfare and conditions of all detainees transferred from ADF custody to Afghan custody, establishing a whole-of-government detainee monitoring team comprised of officials from DFAT and Defence, including the ADF. The team visited each detainee shortly after transfer, and approximately every four weeks until the detainee was sentenced or released. Between 1 August 2010 and 15 May 2013, the monitoring team conducted 140 monitoring visits.¹³ Australia also worked closely with the International Committee of the Red Cross to develop and implement the detainee management framework, conducted regular audits and reported assiduously to Parliament on detainee management. The whole-of-government detainee management arrangements developed and implemented after 2011 should be counted as one of the strengths of Australia's work in Afghanistan.



LESSON 8: DETAINEE MANAGEMENT

Where the circumstances and nature of the mission are likely to require the detention and subsequent management of hostile or potentially hostile actors, a detainee policy and management regime should be developed in consultation between the detaining force (ADF or the AFP) and other relevant agencies (Defence, AGD and DFAT) before the mission deploys. It should draw on the experience gained in Afghanistan, acknowledging that a number of government agencies have a role in managing detainees.

.....
13. Minister for Defence the Hon Stephen Smith, 'Paper presented on Afghanistan-Detainee Management', Debates, House of Representatives, *Hansard*, 16 May 2013.

Tarin Kowt

The situation on the ground in Tarin Kowt was complicated from the outset, and became more so as our commitment evolved in size, composition and role. At different times six coalition partners had a presence there, all dependent to a greater or lesser degree on the US armed forces for enablers, and there were three changes in leadership in the coalition presence over the period of Australia's mission.

The Dutch, as the ISAF lead nation in the province until 2010, had a joint civil-military leadership model. They were guided by their judgement about the need to maintain balanced relationships with the different tribes in Uruzgan (and made good use of Afghan cultural advisers in this), and emphasised a *three Ds strategy* (defence, diplomacy and development).

The Australian presence was a military one until the arrival of AusAID staff in 2008. DFAT and the AFP training and advisory teams followed in 2009, and the Australian Civilian Corps (ACC) in 2011.

The civilian presence led to an additional role for the ADF in providing force protection for civilians travelling *outside-the-wire*. DFAT and AusAID visits *outside-the-wire* into Tarin Kowt during the latter months of 2009 were mostly supported by US forces; the first ADF supported visit outside Tarin Kowt to Chora that included DFAT and AusAID personnel took place in January 2010.

Following on from the Australian Government's decision in 2009, the AFP was tasked to take responsibility for the Police Training Centre that the Dutch had established in Tarin Kowt. The AFP expertise in building the capacity of community police overseas was well suited to the training and mentoring of the ANP at the centre, where they delivered programs on values, ethics, general police duties and human rights. For all their professionalism and experience, however, the AFP is not set up, trained or equipped as the sort of paramilitary force that would have been required to undertake joint counter-insurgency training patrols with the ANP and some of what was expected of the AFP went beyond what it is trained, prepared and equipped for, which led to some frustration.

LESSON 9: FIT FOR PURPOSE

The role of each department and agency contributing to a whole-of-government mission in the field should be fit for purpose; that is, expectations should be matched to capability and expertise. Advice on how best a contribution can be made, and the associated resources, should be sought in the planning and pre-deployment phase of the proposed mission.



An Australian Federal Police officer, Afghan police officer and Australian soldiers, await the arrival of new recruits at the Police Training Centre in Tarin Kowt. Photo Credit: AFP

With the departure of the Dutch in August 2010, Australia's role changed as we took leadership first of the PRT and then later, in 2012, of the CT-U, effectively taking on responsibility for Uruzgan Province. Tarin Kowt was of course the place where whole-of-government and civil-military-police rubber hit the road, and where different management and cultural approaches were always likely to be most sharply tested.

On the cultural issue, a paper prepared for NATO in 2009 by a Canadian military officer made the point succinctly:

[T]here are fundamental differences between the civilian and military operational and business practices. For example, where civilians refer to business routine ... and coordinating meetings, the military refers to battle rhythm ... the military deals in operational plans which become increasingly more detailed as they are elaborated throughout the levels of command and control. ... [o]ur civilian partners deal in high level action plans ... when people lack a common understanding it is natural to fall back on what they know, which reinforces differences rather than mitigating them.¹⁴

The arrival of the AusAID and DFAT officers in Tarin Kowt in 2008 and 2009 respectively was met with some initial concern about what value the civilian agencies would add to the mission and the additional burden placed on the ADF for force protection, logistics, administrative and *life support* requirements. These initial concerns were overcome as incoming ADF commanders increasingly embraced the whole-of-government nature of the mission and accepted the ADF's role as a *platform* for it, and civilian staff demonstrated the value of their presence. In bridging the cultural differences, it may nevertheless have been helpful had the civilian agencies been introduced with a clear statement of what their roles were and what they were seeking to achieve, perhaps as an addendum to the 'Principles and Protocols', as outlined in the next section.

14. COL J C R Lacroix, 'Preliminary Report: Application of Whole-of-Government (WoG) Approach', Theatre Lessons Report (TLR) 03/09, 2009, p. 6.



Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Political Advisor, Fred Smith, speaks to Afghan tribal leaders at the opening of the Sar Sekleigh Shura building in Tarin Kowt, 2013. Photo credit: Corporal Mark Doran

Two lessons from the Tarin Kowt experience are worth highlighting:

- I. The first is that managing the Australian presence became easier once Australia took on the leadership role—it was better for us once we were in charge.
- II. The second is that the command structure, with the senior ADF and DFAT officers established as co-equals, worked well. This view is shared by the ADF and DFAT officers involved, who emphasised the importance of open and frequent communication with each other.

Beyond these lessons, there is another: personalities matter, especially in a situation in which some ambiguity is inevitable. This could well be a continuing theme through this report, but suffice to say that in Tarin Kowt it mattered more to the effectiveness of the whole-of-government effort than anywhere else. Agencies took care in the choice of individuals for particular positions, and mostly got it right.

LESSON 10: FIELD TEAM LEADERSHIP

While leadership of a field team such as a PRT will depend on the nature of the mission and the extent of any conflict around it, the merits of co-equal leadership, shared by military or police on the one hand and a civilian agency on the other, should be recognised.



Principles and Protocols

As Australia's presence moved into a more genuinely whole-of-government mode after 2008, departments and agencies recognised the need to establish guidelines for working together in the very particular circumstances on the ground in Afghanistan.

A statement of 'Principles and Protocols' was negotiated in 2009 under six broad headings: Force Protection, Lodging and Life Support, Communications and agreed lines of reporting, Media Management, Incident Management, and Official Visits. The statement was drafted through the agency of the Afghanistan-Pakistan Steering Group and was seen as critical in, among other things, addressing matters relating to the chain of command—that is, in seeking to reconcile Defence's understandable concerns about the integrity of command with the legitimate concerns of civilian agency heads for their management accountability and, especially, their duty of care responsibilities.

The 'Principles and Protocols' generally worked well, and can be regarded as one of the strengths of the whole-of-government effort, but they were tested by experience and changing circumstances.

The revised version, titled *Implementing Australia's Whole-of-Government Effort in Afghanistan Statement of Principles*, and the associated Protocols, were completed in late 2012. Among other things, it espoused that 'our agencies and their personnel form the Australian Team', and clarified the reporting requirements associated with non-Defence civilians and their proximity to significant incidents.

Ms Richelle Tickle, Development Advisor with Provincial Reconstruction Team – Uruzgan, and Mr Tariq Ismati, Executive Director of the National Solidarity Program, visit the village of Charmgar on the outskirts of Tarin Kowt with members of the Other Government Agency Platoon. Photo Credit: Petty Officer Damian Pawlenko.





LESSON 11: WORKING AGREEMENTS OR GUIDELINES

Recognising that different agencies and services have different cultures and command structures, underpinned often by different legislative or machinery of government requirements:

- I. Agreed *principles and protocols* guidelines should be drafted at the outset of a whole-of-government mission.
- II. These should define the working relationships and responsibilities, and expectations of the different services and agencies, and be as clear as possible on the chain of command and management responsibilities of the respective agencies in the field.
- III. In a protracted mission, the guidelines should be reviewed at least annually and revised as necessary on the basis of experience and changing circumstances in the field.



Chapter 4: Alliance and Coalition Management

This chapter considers matters relating to the management of Australia's international relationships at four levels: with the United States, with other coalition partners within the NATO/ISAF construct, with an *outer ring* of non-coalition countries, and with the Afghan Government.

Supporting the Alliance after invoking the ANZUS Treaty was one of the two national strategic objectives underpinning the decision to join the intervention. The existence from an early stage of the international intervention of a clear rationale and, particularly, of an unambiguous position in international law through the relevant United Nations Security Council Resolutions (UNSCR) was an underlying strength of the international intervention in Afghanistan, not least because it facilitated the building of a substantial international coalition. Being part of a coalition whose number reached 50 in an endeavour underwritten by UNSCRs was a less directly stated but nevertheless important national policy consideration.

As well, beyond the NATO/ISAF military coalition was an outer ring of countries—Japan, India and China among them—with interests in Afghanistan with whom we needed to be able to work productively, including in the aid field. It was also increasingly necessary to be cognisant of the interests and views of the Afghan Government.

In all four areas, useful lessons can be drawn.

The US Alliance

While the ISAF coalition provided the formal decision-making framework for the international military intervention, with an appropriate United Nations mandate, the US Administration remained the critical determinant of coalition policies and operational concepts. The environment in which US policy was made and decisions about Afghanistan taken was clearly dynamic, and indeed at times hotly contested, in Washington.

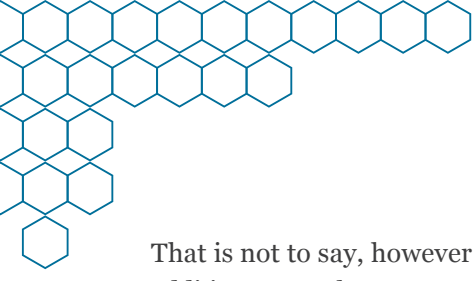
In this context, Australia, like the other members of the ISAF Coalition, needed to work closely with US interlocutors and maintain visibility of evolving US policy and strategy in Afghanistan. A requirement underscored by our reliance on the United States for some of the critical military enablers in the field as a result of Australian Government limits on the size and scale of our military deployment. This required us to have a close understanding of US interagency interactions and the inputs to White House decision-making.

The Australian Embassy in Washington and liaison staff monitored all this closely and reported well on it. Subsequent public accounts, in particular those in the memoir published recently by former US Secretary of Defense, Robert M Gates, have offered even more detail about the need to have access to a wide range of sources for advice on the likely direction of US policy and decision-making during this period.¹⁵



Prime Minister Rudd meets with President Obama, accompanied by US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, and Australian Ambassador to the United States, Mr Dennis Richardson AO, Washington, 2009. Photo Credit: DFAT

15. Robert M. Gates, *Duty: Memoirs of a Secretary at War*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 2014.



That is not to say, however, that the situation was one in which Australia could only follow US policy. In addition to our close engagement with US interlocutors:

- Australia maintained national command authority with national rules of engagement, as we traditionally have.
- As well as opportunities for communication between the Prime Minister and the US President, the Defence and Foreign Ministers had frequent access to their US counterparts both in bilateral contexts (including annual Australia-United States Ministerial Consultations (AUSMIN)) and in the margins of other events, including NATO/ISAF meetings.
- CDF and the most senior levels of the ADF maintained very close relationships with their US counterparts, and enjoyed excellent access both in Washington and to the ISAF commander in Kabul.
- There were many ADF embedded officers in key positions throughout ISAF, and in liaison and embed positions in the Pentagon and Central Command (CENTCOM), and Australian government civilians in the ISAF headquarters in Kandahar after 2009 and in the NATO Senior Civilian Representative's office within ISAF after 2010.



President of Afghanistan Hamid Karzai and United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon prepare to open proceedings at the Tokyo Conference on Afghanistan, July 2012. Photo Credit: Chris Kiggell, Department for International Development, UK

These points of contact were used successfully to resolve issues relating, for example, to access to enablers, and also to the matter of *red lines* (or *red cards*) around aspects of the ADF's operations at different times. As always when serving as a member of a military coalition, Australia took a strong position on the importance of national command.

Australia's operational contribution was appreciated by the US military leadership. Decision-making in response to particular requests for additional support became part of the higher-level policy process, with consideration shaped largely by the ADF's operational role and Australia's desire to make a valuable alliance commitment.

The NATO/ISAF Coalition

Working with the NATO/ISAF coalition both in Brussels and on the ground in Afghanistan was at times demanding.

In Brussels it required:

- Working closely with NATO Headquarters, which meant not simply attending relevant meetings but contributing to agendas, taking the pen at times to help shape meeting outcomes, and generally working the corridors in the traditional way of multilateral diplomacy. Again we got better at this over time. Especially after appropriate Defence and DFAT resources were added to the Brussels Embassy in 2009.
- Understanding that NATO is not just a military organisation—its governance derives from the North Atlantic Council, a civilian body, and the Operations Policy Committee, for instance, includes civilian as well as military members.
- Maintaining close relationships with the ambassadors to NATO of key coalition members, especially the United States and the United Kingdom.



In other coalition capitals, it required us to ensure a good understanding of the domestic dynamics that drove the approaches of the different coalition members with whom we had to work most closely, especially the Dutch. This required continuing contact at the level of the CDF and senior ADF officers, and also with civilian officials in capitals. For Australia, the access and credibility that the government and the ADF leadership enjoyed with successive US Administrations and the US Armed Forces, respectively, were clearly assets. The relationship with NATO was built up over time, and provided impetus for the Australia-NATO strategic partnership.

On the ground in Afghanistan there was a continuing need to manage relationships at several levels:

- With the ISAF Commander and his headquarters in Kabul. This was done through frequent contact by the CDF and through Commander JTF633 from the Australian National Headquarters – Middle East Area of Operations.
- With the Combined Air and Space Operations Centre located at the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar and responsible for managing all coalition air assets operating in Afghanistan, and the wider Middle East, including those deployed by Australia. By assigning these assets to the Combined Air and Space Operations Centre, instead of managing them at a national level, Australia had an increased capacity to draw on the breadth of coalition air assets to support operational requirements.
- With RC-South in Kandahar, through visits from Commander JTF633 and other senior ADF officers, and the placement of ADF officers and civilian advisers in positions in ISAF Headquarters (Kabul).
- In Tarin Kowt, where Australian relationship management evolved through three stages:
 - I. From 2006 to 2010, when the Dutch were in the leadership role in the PRT. Their leadership was joint military and civilian from the outset, and there were other differences of approach that had to be managed.
 - II. From 2010, when the United States took over the leadership of the newly formed CT-U and Australia took over the leadership of the PRT after the Dutch left.
 - III. From 2012, when Australia took over leadership of the CT-U, to the end of 2013 when the whole-of-government mission drew to a close.

Managing these major relationships with the United States and the Netherlands on the ground was demanding at times. As well, it was necessary to work with the other three coalition members who had roles in Uruzgan,¹⁶ and with ISAF Headquarters—including the NATO Senior Civilian Representative for whom the Australian civilian head of the PRT was the senior ISAF civilian representative in Uruzgan. Relationship management was supported actively as necessary by interventions by Ministers as well as the CDF, Commander JTF633 and other senior ADF officers, and the Ambassador and other senior officials.

16. The three additional coalition members operating in Uruzgan province were Singapore and Slovakia, and for a brief time New Zealand.



Flag bearers representing all the nations that make up Multinational Base, Tarin Kowt, at the Transfer of Authority parade marking the transition of command from the United States to Australia, 2012. Photo Credit Sergeant W Guthrie

Beyond the Coalition

In 2009, a further level of international relationship management emerged in the form of the Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan (SRAP) network. This was a United States initiative, though the group was chaired by Germany.

Meetings of the SRAP group added value in that they ensured greater involvement by foreign ministries and aid agencies and, through 2009–11 at least, ensured a close level of attention to policy issues such as reconciliation, reintegration and transition, and to matters relating to aid and the conduct of elections.

The SRAP group grew to include representatives of an outer ring of countries with a close interest in the Afghanistan issue but who were not members of the military coalition. These included Japan (a major aid donor), India, China, Russia, the countries of central Asia and, later, Iran. As the number of participants grew the dynamic changed. Notwithstanding, the group remained useful, facilitating communication with non-coalition governments about coalition approaches and enabling them to expand their views and interests.

Again, it was appropriate for Australia to be an active participant of this network, which at times broke into working groups on particular issues, one of which Australia led. Australian delegations to these meetings usually included, in addition to the Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, representatives of both DFAT and AusAID and in that sense contributed to the whole-of-government effort.

By 2011, aid donors had also come together in a forum known as the Sidewater Group. Australia through AusAID helped drive the creation and work of this group. AusAID took a leading role on a number of aspects of the international aid effort, notably the review of the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund (ARTF)¹⁷ and the development of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework in 2012.¹⁸

17. The ARTF was established in 2002 to provide a coordinated funding mechanism for the Afghan Government's budget and priority investment projects. Additional information on the ARTF, including external reviews is available at <http://www.artf.af>.

18. The Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, agreed on 8 July 2012, set out the partnership agreement between the Afghan government and the international community for economic growth and development in Afghanistan. <http://www.dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/Tokyo-mutual-accountability-framework.aspx>.



Australian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Paul Foley, and Uruzgan Governor, Khoday Rahim, at the Governor's compound in Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan Province, 2010. Photo Credit: DFAT

Government of Afghanistan

Before the resident Embassy was established in Kabul in 2006, Australia's working relationship with the Afghan Government was limited. After 2006, and especially after 2009, the Embassy, with a more complete complement of DFAT, AusAID and Department of Immigration staff, among others, was able to develop working relationships more appropriate to the role we were playing in Afghanistan by that time. This was particularly important in supporting the greater frequency of visits and other contacts by prime ministers and ministers and enabled the Government to outline Australian views and to improve our understanding of the dynamics of the Afghan Government and society.

LESSON 12: ALLIANCE AND COALITION MANAGEMENT

Whether Australia is the leader or a member of a coalition, the demands of coalition management should be acknowledged at the outset of any mission and adequately resourced. In addition to liaison, what is required is likely to be a detailed understanding of the policy-making dynamics in the capitals of coalition partners and persistent diplomatic efforts to influence them and manage differences.

Chapter 5: Development Assistance and Aid

Development assistance and aid were a significant part of Australia's commitment to Afghanistan, important at both the national level and in Tarin Kowt, and involved cross-agency interests.

The evolution of Australian agencies' approach to aid over the period of our involvement in Afghanistan since 2001 is reflected in Annex A. Details of the aid programs are also set out in the report prepared by the Senate in May 2013, *Australia's overseas development programs in Afghanistan*.¹⁹

Both nationally and in the provinces, international donors faced significant challenges, some of which were caused by the novel and unanticipated problems unique to the country and the complex operating environment.

The United Nations and the World Bank were either unable or not mandated to coordinate the international effort in this area, nor did ISAF have a mandate to do so, not least because significant donors were not in the coalition.

The Afghan Government formally approved the Afghanistan National Development Strategy (ANDS) in April 2008 outlining its strategies for security, governance, economic growth and poverty reduction.²⁰ The ANDS was the product of intensive consultations between the Afghan Government and a wide array of stakeholders including tribal and religious leaders, international donors, the private sector and non-government organisations. A key feature of the ANDS was a strong preference for aid to be channelled through the central government rather than directed to provinces according to the interests of donors.



Provincial Reconstruction Team - Uruzgan advisors speak with the Uruzgan Provincial Director of Education Sediqullah Haand at the Malalai Girls School in Tarin Kowt, 2013. Photo Credit: Captain Jesse Platz

19. Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade References Committee, *Australia's overseas development programs in Afghanistan*, Senate Printing Unit, Parliament House, Canberra, 2013.

20. Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, 'Afghanistan National Development Strategy: A Strategy for Security, Governance, Economic Growth and Poverty Reduction', 2008, http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/IMG/pdf/Afghanistan_National_Development_Strategy_eng.pdf.

At the same time, military forces were spending enormous sums of money on local roads, bridges and so on, which were outside the purview of normal aid processes. Indeed national governments had great difficulty in determining how much was being spent, and on what, by their forces. Not surprisingly, corruption amongst local government officials and power brokers became an issue.

There were serious development issues to be addressed in Afghanistan, and in Uruzgan in particular, and there was also a need to try to improve the reach and credibility of the legitimate Afghan Government as part of the strategy to marginalise the insurgent groups. In pursuing these ends it was important to try to build local relationships and establish ISAF's (and Australia's) reputation. In short, development and security goals sat side-by-side in Uruzgan, and they were not incompatible.

One of the key issues for aid relates to the relationship between aid projects delivered by the official AusAID programs, including by the ACC, the AFP and others, and those delivered by the ADF. Our approach to aid delivery—again, a factor of the evolutionary and changing nature of our roles—was fragmented.



Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Political Adviser Kali Graham and AusAID Development Adviser Jeremy Guthrie conduct a shura with local Afghan tribal leaders in West Dorafshan, Uruzgan Province, 2011 Photo Credit: Cass Morgan, DFAT

The ADF's approach to aid in the period 2006 to 2009 was driven primarily by the need to establish relationships in the province, and to deliver results that could be seen by the population as benefits of the Australian military presence—a hearts and minds-like approach. To this end the concept of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) was developed, with implementation made possible by the availability of ADF engineers and equipment. The strength of this approach was that projects were delivered; its weaknesses were in the area of community consultation (with the risk of serving the interests of one tribe or group over another), and the absence of provision for recurrent costs and assessment of long-term viability.



An Australian Federal Police officer awards a female member of the Afghan National Police her certificate upon completion of a training course in Kabul. Photo Credit: AFP

AusAID programs were delivered initially at the national level, with funds channelled through international mechanisms, in particular the ARTF. From 2008, AusAID directed more of its effort to Uruzgan, including through deployment of ACC Stabilisation Advisers, while retaining a significant national reach. AusAID's approach in Uruzgan was more development driven and therefore longer term in its aspirations, geared to the extent possible to the ANDS, and based on detailed needs assessments. It sought to ensure *inter alia* the provision of ongoing costs for projects and transition to local Afghan ownership. The strength of this approach was that it met AusAID's governance requirements and the tenets of the Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States;²¹ its weakness was that the Australian presence in Uruzgan was unlikely to be long enough to enable the implementation of any but the shorter-term projects.

The AFP's role in aid delivery, that is, training the ANP in Uruzgan, should be seen both as part of the post 2009 Uruzgan focus and in the context of the longer term approach to better governance and rule of law for the province.

Assessing the different approaches to aid delivery is beyond the scope of this report. Suffice to make two points:

- I. First, the balance between the short and long term aid needs will always vary from one stabilisation mission to another, according for instance to the security situation and the level of violence in the field, the level of development, and the extent to which governance is being restored or (as in Afghanistan) created *ab initio*. Nevertheless, the objectives of the aid effort can be aligned across different time frames.
- II. Second, these issues of alignment and balance should be worked through and overall objectives agreed between the respective agencies prior to any mission going into the field.

21. At the 2007 OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) High Level Meeting, Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States were agreed. The principles are intended to compliment the commitments set out in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness.



LESSON 13: AID

Where aid delivery is likely to be a requirement of the mission:

- I. Aid objectives should be defined clearly from the outset and advice provided to government on whether the aid is most appropriately delivered by DFAT or the ADF, or a combination of both, and in the case of DFAT aid which agencies (including the AFP) would be best placed to deliver it.
- II. Whichever agencies are responsible for delivering the aid program, it should be regarded as a whole-of-government program from its outset and be planned and coordinated by an interagency group, supported where possible by a parallel group in the field, which includes representation from the resident diplomatic mission.



Provincial Reconstruction Teams

It is beyond the scope of this report—and probably too early—to offer any evaluation of PRTs in the light of Australia’s experience in Tarin Kowt. Evaluation on an Afghanistan-wide basis is also made difficult by the fact that PRTs operated in very different ways according to their location and which coalition partners were involved.

Prima facie, an integrated model for aid and security is preferable to a fragmented one, but any model should be as uniform as possible across a country and subject to common governance mechanisms and development aims. Ensuring this would normally be the role of the lead country, possibly working through an international agency. In Afghanistan there was no lead country for aid management. The attempts by the ISAF Senior Civilian Representative to play such a role had only limited success, not least because by the time the position was created in 2010 PRTs had been long established, and the Afghan Government had become anxious to establish its authority in relation to PRTs.

Australian Civilian Corps

The ACC was new when its members were deployed, and the mission in Afghanistan was its first. A number of lessons have been learned from the experience. In short, while the justice advisers at Parwan were seen to be valuable and were well regarded, filling a clear capacity gap in the Australian mission, more challenges were encountered in relation to the role and work of the stabilisation advisers in Tarin Kowt, whose relationship to the broader whole-of-government mission was less clearly defined.

Significant work has been undertaken to implement recommendations for the ACC emerging from the Afghanistan mission and subsequent deployments. Clear resolution of the role and place of the ACC within DFAT, and implementation of the lessons learned in this context, have further resolved these issues, clarifying the expertise delivered by the ACC in whole-of-government responses to offshore crises.

Personnel from Combined Team-Uruzgan and an AusAID member of the Provincial Reconstruction Team inspect a culvert on the newly completed Mirabad Valley road, an Australian funded project in Uruzgan Province, Afghanistan, 2013. Photo Credit: Major Chris Linden

Chapter 6: Other Matters

Mission Preparation

The ADF and AFP prepare their personnel carefully for their roles in complex overseas missions. Civilian agencies, with limited resources, can generally afford to do less of this.

Prior to the Australian whole-of-government mission in Afghanistan, civilian agencies had limited capacity or redundancy to invest in preparedness activities designed to strengthen cross-agency collaboration, through exercises, education and training, and mission specific activities. The need for mission preparation grew as the police and civilian roles increased after 2008. AFP personnel participated in a month-long training program that included a six-day field course. Preparation for civilian personnel posting to Afghanistan in the early stages of the mission was limited to self-directed briefings and participation in ADF-focused pre-deployment briefings delivered in Kuwait, which included security and first aid training. Civilian personnel sometimes found it difficult to obtain release to participate in pre-deployment training.

None of the agencies concerned were fully satisfied with these early mission preparation efforts, but they improved significantly overtime to include not only training in security and *survival skills* but also an element of cross-agency familiarisation, particularly at the CT-U Headquarters – PRT level. This included the ADF's decision to involve civilian agency representatives in their pre-deployment Mission Rehearsal Activities (a headquarters level simulation or command post exercise) and in their Mission Rehearsal Exercises (a field deployment activity that included the opportunity to work with the ADF force protection element, the Other Government Agency (OGA) Platoon). This decision was a welcome enhancement to the programs.

Box 2 – In Together-Out Together

In an effort to strengthen the civil-military cooperation of their PRTs, Canada and the Netherlands both adopted the practice of collective mission preparation and synchronised deployments – *in together-out together*. Civilian and military personnel participated in mission preparation activities together, including security and safety training, as well as headquarters level exercises and simulations designed to strengthen relationships and understanding between participating agencies.

They then deployed to the field together as a team. In the case of Canada, elements of mission preparation were mandatory for all agencies, including the final simulation exercise. Canada also provided a level of language training for all personnel deploying or posting to Afghanistan.²²

22. John Manley, Derek H Burney, Jake Epp, Paul Tellier, and Pamela Wallin, *Independent Panel on Canada's Future Role in Afghanistan*, Minister of Public Works and Government Services, Canada, 2008.



Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade personnel from Provincial Reconstruction Team Uruzgan prepare for a training exercise that simulates the detonation of improvised explosive devices during convoy operations, 2013. Photo credit: LT Rory O'Boyle

In September 2012, the incoming Commander of the CT-U, Head of the PRT and United States Deputy Commander of the CT-U participated in the Mission Rehearsal Activity together for the first time. This provided an opportunity to develop a sense of partnership between the leadership team for Uruzgan Province prior to deploying to Afghanistan and gave the new Head of the PRT the opportunity to review CT-U working practices, participate in civil-military key leadership engagement activities and build relationships with key ADF personnel, including the PRT military coordinating officer.

Civilian personnel who had the opportunity to participate in non-mission specific exercises, such as TALISMAN SABRE, prior to posting to Tarin Kowt benefitted from the experience of working in a robust and demanding civil-military environment alongside the US military and the ADF.

The ADF had a limited capacity in Afghan languages, but DFAT, AusAID and AFP personnel had almost none. Over time agencies made more effort to provide basic language skills, but overall remained deficient in this area and dependent on interpreters. (This of course is likely to be less of a challenge in the event of an Australian commitment to a mission in our immediate region.)



LESSON 14: MISSION PREPARATION

In preparation for specific whole-of-government overseas missions, consideration should be given to:

- I. Synchronising posting and deployment cycles for civilian, military and police personnel.
- II. Collective mission preparation training that is designed to meet the needs of all participants. This training should include both security and safety training (with force protection elements if appropriate) and medical training, as well as exercises and/or simulations focused on developing cross-agency relationships, working practices and a broad understanding of the mandates, roles, responsibilities and expertise of contributing departments and agencies. Consideration should be given to elements of mission preparation training being mandatory.
- III. Language training should be made available to personnel posting and deploying to an overseas mission, whether that mission is in the Asia Pacific region or further afield.

Departments and agencies should invest in maintaining and strengthening cross-agency understanding and familiarity in working in a whole-of-government environment. This could be done through the development of a whole-of-government exercise program, agency exchanges and appropriate educational opportunities.

Civilian Conditions

Service conditions for personnel from civilian agencies (that is, public servants) posting to Afghanistan were quite disparate across departments and agencies, despite these staff serving alongside each other in Afghanistan. Conditions, and indeed posting or deployment cycles, it seems, were decided upon by agencies separately and with little reference to each other.

Deficiencies in relation to civilian conditions also had the potential to affect both mission cohesion and the capacity of government to accept the level of risk that would usually go with a mission of this kind. In so far as this led to different levels of remuneration it risked undermining the endeavour to grow a whole-of-government culture in the field.

Lack of clarity around compensation arrangements for public servants in the event of an incident resulting in death or injury in Afghanistan was a matter of concern. There are two aspects to this concern:

- I. There appear to be no provisions beyond those normally applying to public servants in any workplace, that is, the peculiarly hazardous nature of the duty is not recognised and the gap between public service and ADF compensation entitlements is wide.
- II. The provisions of the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* appear to make no allowance with regard to the duty of care responsibilities of Secretaries and Chief Executive Officers for staff whom they post, at government direction, to hazardous or even *war-like* situations. Other factors apart, the willingness of government to accept an appropriate level of risk in the deployment of civilians would arguably be enhanced if a suitably robust set of compensation conditions were in place.

These are issues that would need to be addressed quite deliberately in advance of the deployment of civilians in any future missions of this kind. Some of the inconsistencies in service conditions have been resolved as a result of the DFAT/AusAID merger, but it will be important to include other public servants, including those in Defence, in a package of common conditions.

LESSON 15: SERVICE CONDITIONS

- I. Just as prior to any ADF offshore deployment the government determines conditions for ADF personnel, on advice from the CDF, so the conditions applying to public servants should also be pre-determined—and should be uniform across agencies, including for Defence civilians. This is important in ensuring a coherent whole-of-government effort.
- II. Posting cycles for public servants from different departments and agencies should be aligned.
- III. Issues relating to public service managers' duty of care obligations, in particular those arising from the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011*, should also be resolved explicitly.



Major General Michael Crane and Australian Ambassador to Afghanistan Jon Philp, along with the Australian-led Artillery Training and Advisory Team, attending a ceremony to recognise the transition of the Afghan National Army's School of Artillery to full Afghan control, 2013. Photo Credit: Petty Officer Imagery Specialist Phil Cullinan

Resourcing

The government decided in 2009 to provide DFAT and AusAID with funding provisions outside of annual budget allocations to cover some costs associated with their increased commitment to the mission.²³ These are agencies that do not carry any redundant capacity, and for which *surges* of the kind required by missions like Afghanistan are particularly demanding. Having access, with Defence, and in effect the AFP, to additional funding also facilitated the whole-of-government approach that by this time had become necessary to Australia's role in Afghanistan.

In Defence's case, experience through the Afghanistan mission led to agreement with the then Department of Finance and Deregulation about refinements and improvements to the way no-win-no-loss policy is applied to operations.

Balancing budget funding cycles with the long time frames required for operational planning and execution in complex security environments like Afghanistan is challenging, as the two are not always compatible. Where the nature of a whole-of-government mission is likely to require a long-term commitment by multiple agencies at the policy level and/or to support implementation in-the-field, consideration should be given to resolving policy arrangements around financial and personnel resourcing as early as possible in line with appropriate Australian Public Sector regulatory frameworks.

23. Supplemental funding for DFAT and AusAID was managed through the New Policy Proposal process, effectively allowing these agencies to post staff to Afghanistan and associated international missions without absorbing all of the costs from within extant budget allocations. The AFP had access to its International Future Strategy (IFS) line of funding, which had been set up to fund the International Deployment Group (IDG), and which it was able to draw upon to fund its operations in Afghanistan.

Communications

The different Australian agencies in the field in Tarin Kowt used different communication systems.

This was not an ideal situation, and risked complicating working relationships and inhibiting the ability to share information. However, the issues that arose were generally worked out satisfactorily on the ground. Given DFAT's responsibility for the government's international communications network and its whole-of-government reporting role, its communications infrastructure in Tarin Kowt was especially thin.

Technology issues apart, there remained the matter of who reported what from Tarin Kowt, on what channels, and with what clearance from whom. This reflects again differences not only in organisational cultures but also in the roles of the respective organisations: the ADF communicates primarily about its own business, while DFAT has a responsibility to communicate to and for government as a whole. This matter was addressed in the 'Principles and Protocols' but, again, flexibility and agility in the field was needed to resolve issues as they arose.

Public Affairs

In tracing government decisions and statements about Australia's commitment in Afghanistan, Annex A reflects on aspects of successive Australian governments' public narratives about the mission. The overall impression is that prime ministers and ministers were assiduous in ensuring that government decisions about Australian commitments were announced quickly and explained. In particular, casualties were addressed with care and major incidents that were likely to be controversial were addressed with appropriate frankness. They also took care to achieve a balance in their public remarks between respect for the achievements of the ADF and acknowledgement of the challenges that remained. The potentially sensitive matter of detainees was also handled with particular care—openly and in detail—after Australia assumed responsibilities in that area.

That said, media coverage managed by government agencies was overwhelmingly ADF focused. This was understandable when only the ADF was in the field, and of course public interest is overwhelmingly in the ADF. As well, Defence has a public relations capability and experience that does not exist in other departments or agencies. Even after 2008, however, and with government leaders increasingly referring to the achievements of the international intervention in regard to education and health care for Afghans (as Prime Minister Abbott did in his speech in Tarin Kowt on 28 October 2013²⁴), civilian agencies were at the margins of the media coverage of Australia's contribution in Afghanistan. In short, there was little sense in the Australian media that this had become a whole-of-government mission.

24. Prime Minister the Hon Tony Abbott, 'Address at Recognition Ceremony', Transcript, Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan, 28 October 2013.





LESSON 16: PUBLIC AFFAIRS

While not constraining the ADF's own effective approach to managing media coverage of its presence in the field, any whole-of-government mission should have a joint public affairs capability that presents the mission as a whole-of-government effort. This is important both to supporting a whole-of-government culture in the mission, and to ensuring that the full extent of the government's investment is understood in the community.

Australian Reconstruction Task Force soldiers Corporal Daniel Bone (left) and Sergeant Andrew McClelland (right), engaging with Afghan residents of Uruzgan Province, 2007.
Photo Credit: Corporal Ricky Fuller



Chapter 7: Lessons from Past Missions

The mission in Afghanistan is one of several of a whole-of-government kind that Australia has undertaken since 1997. It has been different from the others in several respects. Australia was not the lead country and was instead just one member of a complex coalition; the role evolved from a military-only response in 2001 through to a whole-of-government response beginning in 2008, and throughout we have faced an unusually challenging security and governance environment. It is thus not easy to draw direct parallels between previous whole-of-government missions and Australia's approach to its role in Afghanistan.

That said, the essential difference in the government's approach is that whereas in most of the earlier cases the need for whole-of-government arrangements was recognised and arrangements put in place from the outset, in the Afghanistan case they evolved and developed over time. The explanation for this lies mainly in the narrowly defined way in which the mission began and then evolved.

The shortcomings in the whole-of-government management of Australia's involvement in Afghanistan have been noted explicitly or implicitly in earlier chapters. In the main, these derived from the evolutionary and changing nature of the international mission and its concepts and thus of the Australian mission. In short, we did not adopt a whole-of-government model at the outset of Australia's renewed commitment to Afghanistan in 2005–2006, and by the time we did in 2008–2009, we were in effect retrofitting a strong ADF/Defence-led model and, even as the new model was developing, the drawdowns and transition were being foreshadowed.

Australian experience does embrace some good examples of whole-of-government effort, including the Bougainville Peace Monitoring Group, support to Timor-Leste, the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI), the response to the 2004 tsunami in South East Asia, and the flood assistance mission in Pakistan in 2010. As noted, most of these cross-agency or whole-of-government arrangements were put in place both in Canberra and offshore from the outset. These were of course cases in which Australia was either the lead or (in the disaster relief cases) largely in control of its own commitment.



Australian Federal Police instructors deliver training to a group of Afghan police at the Police Training Centre in Tarin Kowt, 2012. Photo Credit: AFP

By 2008–2009, as the mission on the ground in Afghanistan was developing a more whole-of-government character, collaboration between agencies in both Kabul and Tarin Kowt benefited from previous experience operating together in whole-of-government environments. In particular, personal relationships built up between ADF, DFAT, AusAID and AFP personnel in these missions and through exercises such as TALISMAN SABRE strengthened cooperation. The whole-of-government effort in Afghanistan became increasingly effective as personnel became more familiar with each others' mandates and modes of operating, through both experience on the ground and better pre-deployment training.



Mr Bernard Philip, Head of the Provincial Reconstruction Team, Uruzgan, attends the opening of a new girls' school as a young Afghan girl partakes in the ribbon cutting ceremony, 2011. Photo Credit: Staff Sergeant Jocelyn Ford

In the view of senior civilian and military officers with experience in Timor-Leste and RAMSI, the whole-of-government model that developed in Uruzgan after 2009 was stronger in some ways than the models they had seen in those previous missions.

While lessons are learned by those who participate in these missions and in many cases are applied by them to future missions, a systematic approach to applying collective lessons to policy development and planning for future missions is still being developed. Achieving whole-of-government cooperation and coordination in Canberra and in the field requires officials and officers to share their institutional memory of operations. To take the next step in whole-of-government coordination for overseas operations, investment in developing this collective lessons capability is required.

Significant work is undertaken by individual agencies and departments to collect lessons from responses to conflicts and disasters overseas, including Afghanistan, but no single organisation is the custodian of developing, storing and disseminating whole-of-government lessons. The ACMC has been delivering this capability on a case-by-case basis, and could be charged with maintaining a whole-of-government lessons learned capability.

LESSON 17: LEARNING LESSONS

ACMC should be tasked to provide a standing whole-of-government, civil-military-police lessons capability for overseas missions, including developing, storing and disseminating lessons to maintain whole-of-government institutional memory. The principles derived from Australia's experience in Afghanistan should be addressed as well in civil-military-police exercises and in ADF and appropriate public service training and education programs.



Conclusion

Australia's role in Afghanistan has spanned four phases: 2001 to 2005, 2005 to 2008, 2008 to 2013, and 2014 onwards. While cross-agency cooperation commenced in phase 2, a genuine whole-of-government approach did not emerge until the third phase. By that time, the ADF had been in Uruzgan Province for three years and the task became one of retrofitting a whole-of-government mission onto an established and strong Defence model. In late 2009, the United States foreshadowed troop drawdowns, and in 2010 the NATO/ISAF coalition formalised its *Transition Strategy*,²⁵ effectively setting a horizon for the work of the whole-of-government mission in the field.

Since 1990, Australia has led and participated in offshore deployments and stabilisation missions in which whole-of-government arrangements, both in Canberra and in the field, were well developed and worked effectively from the beginning. By contrast, our whole-of-government approach in Afghanistan developed over time; the start after 2005/2006 was slow, reflecting among other things the very particular and challenging circumstances of Afghanistan and approaches taken by the international coalition. As it matured, it came to be well regarded by civilian and ADF personnel alike, including some with experience in Timor-Leste and RAMSI. The lesson to derive from this experience is thus the need to consider the likely whole-of-government nature of overseas missions, from the outset.



Australian Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Mr Ric Smith AO PSM, AusAID Director-General, Mr Peter Baxter, Australian Ambassador to Afghanistan, Mr Paul Foley, and representatives from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, AusAID, the Australian Federal Police and the Australian Defence Force, meet with Dutch colleagues in Uruzgan Province, 2009. Photo credit: DFAT

25. North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2010, 'Declaration by the Heads of State and Governments of the Nations contributing to the UN-mandated, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan', 20 November, http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/news_68722.html.



Commander, NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan, Lieutenant General Daniel P. Bolger (United States Army) briefs senior representatives from the International Security Assistance Force on the way ahead for the NATO Training Mission during a conference at Camp Eggers, Kabul, 2012. Photo Credit: Senior Airman Andrea Salazar

Beyond this, a number of principles can be drawn from the Afghanistan experience. They include the following:

- ADF offshore deployments almost invariably have implications for Australia’s broad international policy interests. Government departments and agencies beyond Defence therefore need to be closely involved in policy development, and suitably senior interdepartmental structures of a whole-of-government kind put in place from the outset.
- Even in ADF-led missions, other departments and agencies are likely to be involved on the ground with the ADF, if not at the outset then soon thereafter, and all agencies should plan and prepare for this.
- An adequately resourced and robust diplomatic or other DFAT presence in the country or territory in which the mission is operating is essential to contribute to host government/leadership engagement, to facilitate coordination between government agencies, and to provide advice of a kind that can contribute to policy deliberations.
- Alliance and coalition management will be demanding and require strong inputs from DFAT and Defence.
- Whole-of-government planning of missions and their activities, including aid delivery, is likely to enhance the effectiveness of a mission.
- Taking leadership in the field when it is on offer is generally better than not, subject to adequate risk mitigation. Co-equal leadership between the ADF and civilian officers works well, though careful selection of personalities for key positions is essential.
- Tailored mission preparation undertaken by individual departments and agencies and collectively by cross-agency teams is essential.
- Ongoing investment is required to maintain, and build on, the cross-agency understanding and familiarity with working in a whole-of-government environment developed during missions like Afghanistan.

Over the past two decades, Australia has accumulated considerable experience with whole-of-government missions in complex environments. Each response has been developed to meet the particular circumstances and context of that crisis, with different coordination mechanisms and composition. Australia’s response to Afghanistan was no different; the experience has in many ways been unique and it was the most *war-like* environment in which an Australian whole-of-government team has operated together in the field. Even so it is possible to distil lessons which can build on previous experience and assist decision-makers, policy experts, planners and practitioners, amongst others, in considering future whole-of-government responses to complex contingencies.

Annex A: Australian Mission, 2001–2014

This Annex traces the evolution of the Australian mission in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2014 through public statements by Australian government ministers and senior officers and officials. It is not a historical analysis, but identifies key decisions, language and phases in the operation, as they occurred, to assist in explaining the context in which decisions were made.

The Australian mission in Afghanistan can be characterised in a number of different ways, but from the perspective of this report there were four clear phases:

- 2001–2005
- 2005–08
- 2008–13
- 2014-Onwards

This Annex does not provide an exhaustive review of all public statements made on Australia's commitment to Afghanistan. Rather it highlights those that indicate the emphasis the Australian Government placed on the means by which Australia pursued its two national strategic objectives: namely as a response to international terrorism, and to support our alliance with the United States. These statements provide a clear roadmap as to how changing circumstances, both within the international coalition and within Afghanistan, affected the nature and shape of the Australian mission and the changes to it that the Australian Government deemed appropriate.

2001–2005

On 14 September 2001, Australia invoked Article IV of the ANZUS Treaty in response to the 11 September 2001 terrorist attacks on the United States. Announcing the decision Prime Minister John Howard stated:

We came very quickly to the view that the provisions of the ANZUS Treaty should be invoked ... The consequence of that is that we will consult the Americans regarding responses that might be deemed appropriate ... Australia stands ready to cooperate within the limits of its capability concerning any response the United States may regard as necessary in consultation with her allies.²⁶

On 4 October 2001, Prime Minister Howard announced that, following discussions between the CDF, Admiral Chris Barrie, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Myers, Central Command Commander, General Franks, and other US counterparts, he had instructed the CDF, 'to have available a range of military assets, including a detachment of special forces and air to air refuelling aircraft. An involvement of the type I have just outlined would very much be within Australia's defence capability and fully consistent...with our obligations under ANZUS.²⁷

26. Prime Minister the Hon John Howard, 'Joint Press Conference with the Deputy Prime Minister and the Minister for Foreign Affairs', Parliament House, Canberra, 14 September 2001.

27. Prime Minister the Hon John Howard, Press Conference, Transcript, Parliament House, Canberra, 4 October 2001.



ADF

Prime Minister Howard announced the initial ADF commitment, and the details of the deployment of the ADF to Afghanistan, in a media release on 17 October 2001.²⁸ The proposed deployment comprised a Special Forces detachment, two P3 aircraft and two B707 refuelling aircraft, and one guided missile frigate, which would remain to support the Multinational Interception Force already implementing UNSCRs. Prime Minister Howard announced the additional commitment of a naval task group (including a command ship and a frigate as escort); four FA18 fighter aircraft to provide support for the air defence of coalition forces; and a frigate to assist in the coalition's naval protection of shipping effort. The proposed size of the deployment was estimated at 1,550.

Building on previous statements, the Prime Minister's announcement framed the deployment as a response to the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001, the Australian Government's decision to invoke the ANZUS Treaty and the consultations with the US Government that followed. It was clear that the ADF contingent were being made 'available to the coalition,' and while they were to 'operate under national command' they were to 'be placed under the operational control of the appropriate coalition commander for agreed tasks'. There was no suggestion that the deployed force constituted a joint operational task force, or that these force elements were being deployed as anything more than forces to round out the international coalition being assembled. The only reference to Afghanistan in the media release was the statement that the FA18s were not expected to operate in the country.

In a media interview on 18 November 2001, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer placed the ADF deployment in the context of the 'war against terrorism', and said Australia had told the United States that:

*we don't want to get ... bogged down in Afghanistan. We don't want Australian troops to be part of managing and running Afghanistan for the next five or six years ... we want to help with the war on terrorism, to destroy al-Qa'ida and its network and so on. But we don't really have a great desire ... to get into the long-term management of Afghanistan.*²⁹

On 20 November 2002, in announcing the return of the Special Forces from Afghanistan, Defence Minister Robert Hill said that 'Australian Special Forces soldiers had been on the ground in Afghanistan continuously as part of the international coalition against terrorism, but now as the focus of operations has moved towards supporting the reconstruction of Afghanistan, the particular skills of our Special Forces are in less demand'.³⁰

In April 2003, Defence announced that a single Army officer was to be assigned to a military liaison position with the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) as an 'ongoing contribution in support of UN efforts to transition Afghanistan to peace'. From April 2003 to August 2005, Australia maintained this post and one other ADF position with the coalition Mine Action Coordination Centre.³¹

28. Prime Minister the Hon John Howard, 'Australian Troops to be deployed to Afghanistan', Statement, 17 October 2001.

29. Foreign Minister the Hon Alexander Downer, Interview Transcript, Meet the Press, 18 November 2001.

30. Defence Minister the Hon Robert Hill, 'Australian Special Forces to Return from Afghanistan', Media Release, MIN 664/02, 20 November 2002.

31. Nicole Brangwin, Ann Rann, 'Australia's military involvement in Afghanistan since 2001: a chronology', Foreign Affairs, Defence and Security Section, Australian Parliamentary Library, 16 July 2010.



AID

Through the period 2001–05, Australia provided some \$94.5 million in aid, predominately in the form of humanitarian aid. Of this, \$82.1 million was disbursed through AusAID, mostly to multilateral agencies, in particular through the World Food Program, and non-government organisations. After 2003, an increasing amount of Australia's aid was delivered through the ARTF. The remainder of the funds were disbursed through Immigration (\$12.1 million to support the return of refugees) and Defence (from 2003–04, \$300,000).³²

Diplomatic Representation

At the outset of the international intervention in Afghanistan, Australia did not have diplomatic relations with the Taliban regime in Kabul. In 2002, Australia's High Commissioner to Pakistan was formally accredited as Ambassador for Afghanistan.

2005–2008

During this period, the government decided to make a renewed commitment to Afghanistan, deploying a SOTG, and later an ADF Reconstruction Task Force, and increasing Australian aid. In statements on Afghanistan during this period, the Prime Minister and ministers frequently referred to requests for support from the United States and the broader international community; spoke of the need for Australia to play its part in the international community's support for Afghanistan; and increasingly linked security to development. They also referred to the need to support democracy as a means of combatting terrorism. Cooperation between Australian government agencies occurred as required but not to the level of a coordinated whole-of-government approach. By 2008, the Australian Government was foreshadowing the broadening of the mission in Afghanistan to a civil-military one, emphasising the need, 'to win not just the military battle but the battle for the hearts and minds of the Afghan people ... [which] will require the [coalition] partners to do more on the non-military side'.³³

ADF

On 13 July 2005, Prime Minister Howard announced the decision to deploy a SOTG to Afghanistan for a period of 12 months, with a 'security task which is very similar to the task that was undertaken by an SAS [Special Air Service] taskforce that went in 2001'. He noted that the 'legitimate government in Afghanistan has come under increasing attack and pressure from the Taliban in particular and some elements of Al Qaeda', and said that Australia has:

*received, at a military level, requests from both the United States and others and also the Government of Afghanistan and we have therefore decided in order to support the efforts of others to support in turn the Government of Afghanistan to despatch ... some 150 personnel comprising Special Air Service troops, Commandos and supporting elements.*³⁴

In addition, the Prime Minister also highlighted that the government was examining 'the possibility of sending a Provincial Reconstruction Team to Afghanistan'. In doing so, he said, 'it's important that the progress made in Afghanistan is preserved and consolidated and that the resurgence of ... attempts by the Taliban to undermine the Government of that country are not successful'.

32. Official Development Assistance figures for the period Financial Year 2001-2002 to Financial Year 2004-2005 provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

33. Defence Minister the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon, 'Ministerial Statements: Afghanistan', Debates, House of Representatives, *Hansard*, 19 February 2008, pp. 692–93.

34. Prime Minister the Hon John Howard, 'Troop deployment to Afghanistan', Press Conference, Transcript, 13 July 2005.

Prime Minister Howard went on to say that:

[I]t's very important in the war against terror because of the obvious connection between Al Qaeda, the Taliban and Afghanistan that those attempts ... to undermine the Government of Afghanistan are not successful, and that involves not only a renewed security effort but it also involves a consolidation of the ... hearts and minds side of the operation as well, and that's why we're looking at the PRT.³⁵

On 24 August 2005, while farewelling the SOTG, and on the eve of Afghanistan's Presidential election, scheduled for September 2005, Prime Minister Howard said 'it's important that the democratic embrace by the people of [Afghanistan] is protected ... it's fundamental to the war against terror that Afghanistan be given the opportunity to fully embrace democracy ... [if] democracy takes root in that country ... then a massive blow is struck in the war against terrorism'.³⁶

This point was reinforced by Defence Minister Robert Hill who stated:

It is essential that the international community assist Afghan forces to defeat those who through violent means are seeking to defeat the democratic process ... We have a strong shared interest in defeating al Qaeda and in promoting a healthy and stable democracy in Afghanistan.³⁷

On 21 February 2006, Prime Minister Howard announced the deployment of an ADF Reconstruction Task Force (RTF) as part of a Netherlands-led PRT in Uruzgan province, which was itself to be part of ISAF's Stage III expansion. An aviation element of two Chinook helicopters and 110 personnel was also deployed, initially to support the SOTG and subsequently, 'to support the initial stages of our PRT deployment'.

The Prime Minister's statement described the ADF contribution in Uruzgan as a mixed security and reconstruction task force of approximately 200 personnel, deployed for a period of up to two years, which would work on 'reconstruction and community based projects'. The Prime Minister emphasised Australia's commitment to, 'assisting Afghanistan to achieve a stable and secure future' and that it was 'important that we continue to work with the Afghan people to prevent the return of the Taliban and to ensure that Afghanistan is no longer a haven for terrorists to plan, organise and train'.³⁸

On 9 August 2006 in a speech to the House of Representatives, Prime Minister Howard announced the decision 'to send to Afghanistan an additional 150 troops ... to reinforce the reconstruction task force and to provide enhanced force protection'. The deployment was to be for a period of two years.³⁹

In a statement to the Senate Supplementary Budget Estimates Hearings on 1 November, the CDF, Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, explained the role of the reconstruction task force:

The reconstruction task force has a clearly defined role to work on reconstruction and improvement of provincial infrastructure and community based projects to assist the Afghan government achieve a stable and secure future for its people. These projects, which are all in the province of Uruzgan, will be developed in consultation with local authorities.⁴⁰

35. Prime Minister the Hon John Howard, 'Troop deployment to Afghanistan', Press Conference, Transcript, 13 July 2005.

36. Prime Minister the Hon John Howard, 'Address to the Australian Troops', Transcript, Campbell Barracks, Perth, 24 August 2005.

37. Defence Minister the Hon Robert Hill, 'Special Forces Task Group deploy to Afghanistan', Media Release 135/2005, 24 August 2005.

38. Prime Minister the Hon John Howard, 'Australian contribution to a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan', Media Release, 21 February 2006.

39. Prime Minister the Hon John Howard, 'Ministerial Statements: Afghanistan', Speech, House of Representatives, *Hansard*, 9 August 2006, pp. 83-85.

40. ACM Angus Houston (Chief of the Defence Force), evidence to Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Supplementary Budget Estimates, *Hansard*, 1 November 2006, p. 9.

The CDF also outlined the role the SOTG had performed during its 12 month deployment which concluded in September 2006:

The mission of the special forces task group was to work against the Taliban leadership elements in Uruzgan province and to prevent anti coalition militia from basing their activities in this region ... [They] significantly undermined the insurgent capability of the enemy, thus making a notable contribution to the international coalition fight against terrorism and the future stability and security of Afghanistan.⁴¹

The CDF went on to highlight the changing character of military operations in Afghanistan, stating that:

What we achieved involved some very successful operations [by the SOTG] to undermine the Taliban leadership in that particular province [Uruzgan] ... Of course we are now into a situation where a very large reconstruction force has moved into the province to basically do reconstruction, to rehabilitate the province and to, hopefully, win the hearts and minds of the people.⁴²

In an interview on 22 February 2007, Defence Minister Dr Brendan Nelson outlined that the Australian Government was sending a small scoping group to Afghanistan to have a, 'very close' look at Australia's commitment. He stated that:

Afghanistan and Iraq are connected ... in that the people that we are fighting are not only fanatically anti-American, they are fanatically opposed to countries that are open to other human beings, that support the education and fair treatment of women, and they want to build a violent political Utopia, having hi-jacked Islam. It's very important we prevail, it's hard for us in Australia to see it, but it's essential that we prevail, and if we do have to send more troops in ...⁴³

Subsequently, on 10 April 2007, Prime Minister Howard announced the deployment of a new SOTG of approximately 300 personnel to Uruzgan Province saying:

... the Government has decided to boost significantly Australia's military contribution to the reconstruction and rehabilitation of Afghanistan.

We have a clear national interest in helping to prevent Afghanistan again becoming a safehaven for terrorists.

This decision is also based on the Government's steadfast commitment to helping Afghanistan's democratically elected government create a secure and stable environment in that country, and on Defence's advice that the increasing threat posed by the insurgency requires the deployment of additional force protection and support elements.⁴⁴

By late 2007, the total number of Australian Forces deployed in Afghanistan was approximately 900.

In early 2008 there was a step change in the ADF's role in Afghanistan and on 19 February 2008, Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon announced the deployment of an Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) to Uruzgan, to work alongside the RTF and the SOTG, bringing the total ADF presence to 1,100. He stated:

The government has decided to adjust Australia's defence contribution in Afghanistan. While maintaining our engineering and security effort, we intend to increase our focus on training. This means the

41. ACM Angus Houston (Chief of the Defence Force), evidence to Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, Supplementary Budget Estimates, *Hansard*, 1 November 2006, p. 18.

42. *Ibid.*, p. 11

43. Defence Minister the Hon Dr Brendan Nelson, Interview Transcript, *Sunrise*, 22 February 2007.

44. Prime Minister the Hon John Howard, 'More troops for Afghanistan', Media Release, 10 April 2007.



Australian government has decided to maintain our current level of military commitment to Afghanistan, but to increase the focus on training and mentoring of the Afghanistan National Army ...

The Australian Defence Force personnel will mentor and advise key commanders within the Kandak during both training and operations. The mentoring and training team will assist the Kandak Headquarters in military operational necessities such as logistics and personnel management, force protection planning and coordinating combined operations.

The commitment of the Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team will help rebuild the security institutions of the Afghan government, particularly in the Oruzgan province.

The training team will develop the skills of the Afghan security forces to enable them to do the job that is currently being undertaken by coalition forces. The need for this shift in focus is well recognised by the international community.⁴⁵

The Defence Minister also foreshadowed the Australian Government's move towards a broader whole-of-government commitment to Afghanistan, stating, '[i]n addition to the initiatives I have announced today, the government will soon announce an enhancement to its efforts on the non-military side of the equation.'⁴⁶

Later that year, in October 2008, a Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force was deployed to Uruzgan, replacing the RTF and incorporating the mentoring function.⁴⁷

AID

Prime Minister Howard's statement of 21 February 2006, announcing the deployment of the RTF, stated that, 'our military commitment to Afghanistan is also in addition to significant development assistance', noting that, 'Australia had disbursed \$110 million since 2001 to assist reconstruction and development in Afghanistan. At the recent London Conference on Afghanistan, Mr Downer [the Foreign Minister] announced an additional \$55 million in aid through to June 2007, which is part of an indicative \$150 million Australia had committed over the next five years.'⁴⁸

In his 9 August 2006 speech to the House of Representatives, announcing the deployment of an additional 150 ADF personnel to Uruzgan, Prime Minister Howard devoted more attention to Afghanistan's development needs than in previous statements. He outlined Australia's commitment, '[t]hrough our aid program ... to support Afghanistan's transition from conflict to stability, peace and democracy', and highlighted coalition and Afghan Government efforts in building democratic institutions, encouraging inclusion of women and investing in education. Further, he stated:

[T]he international community, including Australia, continues to have a critical role to play in assisting the Afghan Government meet its security challenges. The security challenge is twofold: firstly, to provide a secure environment to allow Afghans to rebuild their society free from violence and extremism and, secondly, to strengthen Afghanistan's institutions so that they can provide a stronger framework for democratisation, religious tolerance and economic growth ... [t]he two elements are linked. Removal of the immediate dangers ... is essential but so too is ensuring that Afghanistan has the infrastructure and institutions to support its democratically elected government.⁴⁹

45. Defence Minister the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon, 'Ministerial Statements: Afghanistan', Debates, House of Representatives, *Hansard*, 19 February 2008, pp. 692–93.

46. *Ibid.*

47. Defence Minister the Hon Joel Fitzgibbon, 'New role for diggers in Afghanistan', Press Release, 21 October 2008.

48. Prime Minister the Hon John Howard, 'Australian contribution to a Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan', Media Release, 21 February 2006.

49. Prime Minister the Hon John Howard, 'Ministerial Statements: Afghanistan', Speech, House of Representatives, *Hansard*, 9 August 2006, pp. 83–85.



In the period 2005–08, Australian official development assistance totalled \$142.1 million, of which \$111 million was disbursed by AusAID through the ARTF, multilateral agencies and non-government organisations. The remainder was disbursed through the Department of Immigration (\$6.8 million), the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) (\$300,000), the AFP (\$900,000) and Defence (\$23.1 million).⁵⁰

AusAID posted an A-based officer to Tarin Kowt in August 2008.⁵¹

Diplomatic Representation

On 9 August 2006, Australia appointed a resident Ambassador to Afghanistan. The Ambassador took up the appointment in Kabul on September 2006. In announcing the appointment, Foreign Minister Alexander Downer said, ‘the appointment...underlies Australia’s firm commitment to international efforts supporting Afghanistan’s transition to security and stability and to combating terrorism’.⁵² The Embassy was initially located in the Serena Hotel and staffed by two DFAT officers at any one time. Following the Taliban attack on the Serena in January 2008, the Embassy was relocated, first to ADF House and then to the US Embassy compound.

In announcing the appointment of Australia’s second Ambassador to Afghanistan on 22 January 2008, Foreign Minister Stephen Smith outlined Australia’s substantial commitment to Afghanistan, bringing together the military, police and civilian contributions:

Australia has nearly 1000 troops based in Oruzgan Province ... Australian special forces are engaged in security operations, while Australian military engineers are rebuilding infrastructure such as schools, bridges, wells and hospitals ... Four Australian Federal Police officers have also been deployed ... to improve the counter-narcotics and policing capacity of the Afghan Government.

*Australia has recently increased aid to Afghanistan, announcing in August 2007 ... \$115 million over two years ... to build the capacity of the Government of Afghanistan, to enhance education and health care opportunities for Afghans and to support the return and reintegration of Afghan refugees.*⁵³

AFP

The AFP first deployed to Afghanistan in October 2007 with two positions based in Kabul, one as a high-level police advisor to the Chief of the Criminal Investigations Department within the Ministry of Interior, the other as a police advisor to the Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan. Two other police advisors were assigned to the Counter-Narcotics Police of Afghanistan in Jalalabad but were subsequently transferred to Kabul.

From November 2007, the AFP deployment focus shifted to RC-South with members rotating from Kandahar Airfield through Tarin Kowt and engaged in counter-narcotics intelligence support to both NATO/ISAF and the ANP.

2008–2013

The changes to how Australia sought to meet its national objectives in Afghanistan across the previous three years had gradually moved us closer to a whole-of-government approach. This evolution was clearly marked in Prime Minister Kevin Rudd’s statement of 29 April 2009. In outlining Australia’s enduring objectives in Afghanistan, Prime Minister Rudd stated that, ‘Australia has two fundamental interests at stake. First, we need to deny sanctuary to terrorists who have threatened and killed Australian citizens. Second, we also have

50. Official Development Assistance figures for the period Financial Year 2005-2006 to Financial Year 2007-2008 provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

51. An A-based officer is an Australian public servant whose normal residence is Australia and who is posted overseas for a specific purpose.

52. Foreign Minister the Hon Alexander Downer, ‘Diplomatic Appointment, Ambassador to Afghanistan’, Media Release, 9 August 2006.

53. Foreign Minister the Hon Stephen Smith, ‘Diplomatic Appointment – Ambassador to Afghanistan’, Media Release, 22 January 2008.

an enduring commitment to the United States and the ANZUS Treaty.’ He went on to define Australia’s mission in Afghanistan in the following terms:

Strategic denial of Afghanistan as a training ground and operating base for global terrorist organisations; second, stabilisation of the Afghan state through a combination of military, police and civilian effort to the extent necessary to consolidate this primary mission of strategic denial; and third, in Australia’s case, to make this contribution in Oruzgan Province in partnership with our allies, with the objective of training sufficient Afghan National Army and police forces and to enhance the capacity of the Oruzgan provincial administration in order to hand over responsibility for the province in a reasonable time-frame to the Afghans themselves.⁵⁴

Prime Minister Rudd said Australia agreed with the United States that ‘the current civilian and military strategy is not working’, and concurred with President Obama’s definition of the ‘new mission’ as ‘disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and prevent their return to either country in the future’. This was the first time a ‘military, police and civilian’ effort had been publicly identified as part of the Australian mission. Prime Minister Rudd stressed that:

An effective long term strategy for Afghanistan involves at least three elements. One, the military strategy . . . Two the civilian assistance strategy in order to boost provincial administration ... Thirdly, a diplomatic strategy involving all those elements who make up the total security policy equation.⁵⁵

The announcement outlined an increase in Australia’s military commitment bringing the ADF deployment to Afghanistan to 1550 personnel. The commitment included an additional (approximately) 100 troops to form two more OMLTs, increased logistic support and force protection units, a further 70 ADF embeds and an infantry company to help provide security for the elections to be held later that year. The increased troop level was designed to enhance the ADF’s training mission so that the ANA could take responsibility for security in Uruzgan Province much sooner. Prime Minister Rudd also announced Australia’s decision to ‘increase our civilian efforts’ with additional AusAID officers, to support reconstruction, capacity building and development efforts, and an additional AFP training and advisory team to work with the ANP.

In further statements over this period, ministers continued to emphasise ‘strategic denial’ and the need to ‘defeat terrorism’. They also spoke of the need for a ‘civilian development assistance strategy and a political strategy’ to complement the military strategy. The terms ‘insurgency’ and ‘counter-insurgency’ came into use. On 18 March 2010, the Defence Minister, Senator John Faulkner, said in a ministerial statement to the Senate that:

Operation MOSHTARAK is the practical implementation of General McChrystal’s new strategy which places paramount importance on protecting the population, reversing the Taliban’s momentum and creating space to develop Afghan security and governance capacity ... I expect Australian forces will again be involved in supporting General McChrystal’s strategy. Australia will play its part, which could again see ADF elements and their ANA partners supporting the fight in areas nearby which have a direct bearing on the security and stability of Oruzgan province and the Australian forces deployed there.⁵⁶

Australia consolidated its whole-of-government effort in Tarin Kowt during this period. On 24 April 2010, Prime Minister Rudd announced a fifty percent increase in Australia’s civilian commitment to Uruzgan, stating working, ‘alongside the Australian Defence Force, in an integrated civil-military effort, Australia will increase its diplomatic, development assistance and police contribution to around 50 personnel’.⁵⁷

54. Prime Minister the Hon Kevin Rudd, Press Conference, Parliament House Canberra, 29 April 2009.

55. Ibid.

56. Defence Minister the Hon Senator John Faulkner, ‘Ministerial Statements: Afghanistan’, Debates, Senate, *Hansard*, 18 March 2010, pp. 2252-2258.

57. Prime Minister the Hon Kevin Rudd, ‘Increased civilian effort in Afghanistan’, Media Release, 24 April 2010.

The Dutch withdrew from Uruzgan in August 2010, with Australia taking the leadership of the PRT and the deputy leadership of the newly formed CT-U in partnership with US forces. The ADF and DFAT officers worked together as co-leads of the Australian mission in the province. In March 2012, Australia took on the leadership of the CT-U. Whole-of-government structures and processes in Canberra, and in Kabul, were also invigorated with additional resources and personnel.

From 2010, Ministers increasingly highlighted the importance of an integrated civil-military plan for an effective transition. In a statement following the ISAF Plus Conference in London on 28 January 2010, Foreign Minister Stephen Smith said, 'we now have a coherent civil and political strategy running parallel with the military strategy' and that the Conference had, 'seen the start of the transition phase, where responsibility for security, the delivery of services, all of these matters, goes to the Afghan Government'.⁵⁸

Foreign Minister Smith reinforced these comments, and Australia's commitment to the ISAF Comprehensive Strategic Political Military Plan, in his statement to the International Security Force (ISAF) Foreign Ministers' Meeting in Tallinn on 23 April 2010. He said that the resolve of the international community was to:

... move forward with the Afghan Government on the basis of an integrated military, civilian and political strategy, and an effective plan for transition of responsibility to the Afghan Government and people ...

*Australia shares the view of our international partners and the Afghan Government that this conflict cannot be ended by military force alone. It is clear that, while we have developed a mature military strategy over time, we also need concerted and coordinated civilian and political efforts to consolidate and build on security gains.*⁵⁹

Continuing to foreshadow the language of transition, he outlined Australia's 'hope' that the Kabul Conference, scheduled for July 2010, would, 'see significant progress in transitioning responsibility to the Afghan Government and people'.

In her statement opening the Federal Parliament's debate on Afghanistan on 19 October 2010, Prime Minister Julia Gillard reaffirmed the original reasons for Australian involvement in Afghanistan. She said that, 'Australia has two vital national interests in Afghanistan—(1) to make sure that Afghanistan never again becomes a safe-haven for terrorists ... and (2) to stand firmly behind our alliance commitment to the United States, formally invoked following the attacks ... in 2001'. She highlighted that the mission had 'moved to a counter-insurgency focus' after 2006, 'however, the international counter-insurgency mission was not adequately resourced until 2009'. Prime Minister Gillard's speech emphasised the civil-military nature of 'the new international strategy' in Afghanistan and its role in supporting the Afghan government:

Our mission in Afghanistan is not nation building. That is the task of the Afghan Government and people ... The new international strategy is comprehensive. It is focused on: Protecting the civilian population ... Training, mentoring and equipping the Afghan National Security Forces ... and facilitating improvements in governance and socioeconomic development—working with the Afghan authorities ...

*The international strategy is implemented by a combined civilian and military effort under the International Security Assistance Force, ISAF. This involves 47 troop-contributing nations, working alongside a host of international bodies and aid agencies, with and at the invitation of the Afghan government, and under a United Nations Security Council mandate.*⁶⁰

On 21 November 2011, in a speech to the Parliament, Prime Minister Gillard further reinforced the alignment between Australia's national objectives and the international strategy for Afghanistan, stating, 'the

58. Foreign Minister the Hon Stephen Smith, 'Doorstop at the London Conference on Afghanistan', Transcript, 28 January 2010.

59. Foreign Minister the Hon Stephen Smith, 'Intervention – International Security Assistance Force Foreign Ministers' Meeting', Statement, Tallinn, Estonia, 23 April 2010.

60. Prime Minister the Hon Julia Gillard, 'Ministerial Statements: Afghanistan', Debates, House of Representatives, *Hansard*, 19 October 2010, pp. 692-97.



international strategy in which we take our part is sound. It is focused on counter-insurgency and designed to deliver transition'. The Prime Minister linked the ISAF Comprehensive Strategic Political Military Plan with Australia's consistent objectives in Afghanistan:

*Our mission in Oruzgan as part of the international strategy is clear; protecting the Afghan people, training the Afghan security forces and building the government's capacity. Australia's national interests in Afghanistan are also unchanged ... There must be no safe haven for terrorists in Afghanistan. We must stand firmly by our ally, the United States.*⁶¹

Prime Minister Gillard also emphasised the role of Australian police and civil servants in preparing Afghanistan for transition:

*In Oruzgan Australians also work with the Afghan police to get them ready for transition. The Australian Federal Police currently has 20 officers at the police training centre and our police have trained more than 1,600 ANP officers ... In Kabul, led by our Ambassador, our diplomats work with the Afghan government and our international partners to prepare for transition in Oruzgan province ... in Oruzgan ... [o]fficials from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and AusAID work hard in what is a vital and perhaps under-recognised role.*⁶²

In a keynote address on 17 April 2012, Prime Minister Gillard provided more detail of what transition in Afghanistan would look like. Quoting General Allen, the ISAF military commander, she stated that 'our goals can only be achieved and then secured by Afghan forces. Transition, then, is the linchpin of our strategy, not merely the way out'. She went on to stress that when transition of Australian and international forces out of a security role was complete ANSF would 'need the right support—including funding and training—from the international community'. The Prime Minister pledged niche training after 2014, including: support to the proposed UK-led Afghan National Army Officer Academy; institutional capability development of the ANP in Kabul; and a possible limited Special Forces contribution 'in the right circumstances and under the right mandate'.⁶³

The drawdown of Australia's military presence commenced during this period. Key milestones included ANSF personnel assuming the lead for security in Uruzgan in July 2012; the conclusion of joint patrols with the ANA 4th Brigade and the handover of forward operating and patrol bases in late 2012; and the closure of Multinational Base Tarin Kowt, for which Australia had responsibility, and the PRT at the end of 2013. During 2013 an additional surge of about 200 personnel were deployed to Afghanistan to facilitate the ADF's redeployment, repatriation and remediation, the closure of the Multinational Base and the drawdown of the PRT.

AID

On 24 April 2010, in announcing the increase of Australia's civilian effort in Afghanistan to around 50 personnel, Prime Minister Rudd flagged a shift to a more hands-on approach to aid delivery. He outlined that additional development assistance staff, 'will expand our delivery of practical development assistance projects that improve the capacity of national and local officials, and improve governance and service delivery at the local level'.⁶⁴

Prime Minister Gillard's statement of 21 November 2011 reflected the growing international emphasis on civil-military strategy, linking the provision of aid with security outcomes. She stated that, 'the international

61. Prime Minister the Hon Julia Gillard, 'Ministerial Statements: Afghanistan', Debates, House of Representatives, *Hansard*, 21 November 2011, pp. 12895-12900.

62. *Ibid.*

63. Prime Minister the Hon Julia Gillard, 'We are serving our national interest in Afghanistan', Speech to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute and Boeing National Security Luncheon, Transcript, Canberra, 17 April 2012.

64. Prime Minister the Hon Kevin Rudd, 'Increased civilian effort in Afghanistan', Media Release, 24 April 2010.



strategy is one which understands that no insurgency is ever defeated by military force alone', and that together the diplomatic effort, soldiers, police and aid workers formed:

*... part of a nationwide strategy with international support. And the international strategy supports the Afghan government's efforts for reconciliation. We support reconciliation and the reintegration of insurgents who are prepared to lay down their arms, renounce violence and terrorism and respect Afghanistan's constitution ... we understand that security progress is not enough. Progress in human development and political reconciliation is vital too.*⁶⁵

In her 17 April 2012 address, Prime Minister Gillard identified the necessity to ensure sustainment of security, and human and economic development after 2014. She stated that Australia was prepared to provide electoral support and technical assistance to development and capacity-building programs, including in the mining, educational and agriculture sectors. On 20 May 2012, at the NATO Leaders meeting in Chicago (the Chicago Summit), the Comprehensive Long-term Partnership between Australia and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan was signed, outlining the enduring relationship between the two countries and areas of cooperation for the next 10 years.

In the period 2008–13, Australian official development assistance totalled \$648.81 million, of which AusAID disbursed \$540.3 million, mostly through the ARTF, and directly in Uruzgan Province. A number of Australian government departments and agencies, including the Department of Immigration (\$13.52 million), the ACIAR (\$500,000), the AFP (\$44.7 million), Defence (\$49.41 million), the Department of Education (\$250,000) and the Department of Industry (\$140,000), disbursed the remainder.⁶⁶

Diplomatic Representation

In July 2009 the first diplomatic staff were posted to Afghanistan outside the Embassy, initially to Kandahar and then to Tarin Kowt to work with the ADF and the Dutch-led PRT.

On 29 April 2009, Prime Minister Rudd announced the appointment of an Australian 'Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan'. Their role was to:

*work closely with the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan and with the representatives of our allies and partners, including ... the United States [and to] ensure that Australia's new commitment is integrated into the broader international effort and that Australia's mission in Afghanistan is being implemented within a reasonable timeframe.*⁶⁷

In February 2010, a DFAT officer joined the office of the NATO Senior Civilian Representative in Kabul. Australia was the first country to make a voluntary national contribution to the office, with other coalition members following shortly after.

During this period the Government also acquired stand-alone premises for the Embassy, appointed a more senior Ambassador, and significantly enhanced the staffing of the Embassy and other Posts, notably, Islamabad and Brussels.

AFP

Prime Minister Rudd's 29 April 2009 statement that announced 'an additional AFP training and advisory team of approximately ten officers to train and advise the Afghan National Police' outlined that the commitment would focus on supporting the Police Training Centre in Tarin Kowt and providing instruction to the ANP in values, ethics and general police duties. In a statement on 28 April 2010, Commissioner Tony

65. Prime Minister the Hon Julia Gillard, 'Ministerial Statements: Afghanistan', Debates, House of Representatives, *Hansard*, 21 November 2011, pp. 12895-12900.

66. Official Development Assistance figures for the period Financial Year 2008-2009 to Financial Year 2012-2013 provided by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

67. Prime Minister the Hon Kevin Rudd, Press Conference, Parliament House, Canberra, 29 April 2009.

Negus stated that the AFP:

... has refocused its efforts around the provincial training centre in Tarin Kowt to provide training and mentoring to the Afghan National Police. The AFP's role in Afghanistan will include coordinating training operations for the Afghan National Police, influencing and shaping that policing environment, and also profiling serious criminality within the Oruzgan province.⁶⁸

Farewelling a further AFP contingent on 11 October 2010, Home Affairs Minister Brendan O'Connor stated that:

The work performed by these dedicated AFP members is a vital part of the international effort to increase the internal stability of Afghanistan so that it can be governed by its own people by rule-of-law principles.⁶⁹

Subsequent AFP deployments continued training in the Police Training Centre in Tarin Kowt and retained some advisory positions at Kandahar Airfield and some training and advisory positions in Kabul. These included a Senior Police Advisor to NATO/ISAF and later the Police Coordination Board. The AFP withdrew completely from Afghanistan in January 2014.

2014 Onwards

Australia's approach to transition in Afghanistan was expressly captured by Defence Minister Smith in an address to the Australian Strategic Policy Institute on 16 April 2013. He said, 'the old adage that people may not remember how you arrived, but they certainly remember how you leave', and that, '[o]ne of the most important national security issues facing Australia in the immediate period is transition in and our drawdown from Afghanistan'.⁷⁰

Defence Minister Smith emphasised Australia's commitment 'to support transition in December 2014 and beyond'. This support included the bilateral Comprehensive Long-Term Partnership concluded between Australia and Afghanistan in Chicago in May 2012 that committed Australia to providing long-term support for Afghanistan in the key pillars of security, trade, development and capacity building.⁷¹ The Minister pointed out that the United States and 'a number of our ISAF partners, including the United Kingdom, France and Italy, as well as India and NATO itself have also signed similar agreements'.

In his 19 June 2013 report to Parliament, Defence Minister Smith set out Defence's 2014 role, stating that:

In 2014, the Australian commitment in Afghanistan will include a commitment of around 75 personnel, including instructors/advisors, support staff and force protection at the ANA Officer Academy in Kabul with our British and New Zealand colleagues.

In Kandahar, the ADF will continue to provide advisory support to the 205 Corps of the ANA through an advisor and force protection complement of over 50. The ADF will also maintain its commitment of 10 advisors to the Logistics Training Advisory Team in Kabul.

Australia currently has over 100 staff embedded within a range of ISAF Headquarters. The embed commitment in 2014 is expected to evolve as ISAF prepares for the post-2014 train, advise and assist mission.⁷²

68. Commissioner Tony Negus, 'Farewell to Members of the IDG at Parliament House', Speech, AFP Media Release, 28 April 2010.

69. Australian Federal Police, 'AFP Deploys members to Afghanistan to train police', Media Release, 15 October 2010.

70. Defence Minister the Hon Stephen Smith, 'Draw down from Afghanistan and implications for the 2013 White Paper', Speech, Australian Strategic Policy Institute, Canberra, 16 April 2013.

71. Government of Australia and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *Comprehensive Long-Term Partnership between Australia and the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*, 20 May 2012.

72. Defence Minister the Hon Stephen Smith, 'Paper on Afghanistan', Tabled in House of Representatives, 19 June 2013.

Shadowing Australia's post-2014 role, Defence Minister Smith stated that 'Australia is prepared to maintain an ADF presence in Afghanistan to support stability and security after the completion of nationwide transition at the end of 2014'. This would include 'training and advisory support to the ANSF through the NATO-led train, advise and assist mission as a part of international efforts to sustain and support the ANSF beyond transition'. He concluded that '[t]hese commitments send a strong signal to the people of Afghanistan, the Taliban and the region that Australia and the international community will not walk away from Afghanistan at the end of 2014'.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott, speaking at a recognition ceremony marking the closure of Multinational Base Tarin Kowt and the drawdown of the PRT, on 28 October 2013, said that Australia's 'armed forces and officials have done their duty'. While Uruzgan was still a poor and difficult province, it was 'richer and better governed than it was thanks to Australia and thanks to our allies. Afghanistan is a better place for our presence here.'⁷³



Mr Adrian Lochrin, Head of the Provincial Reconstruction Team, Uruzgan, Dutch dignitaries and US Navy Commander Matt Kosnar walk down the Tarin Kowt to Chorah Road following its official opening, 2011. Photo Credit: First Lieutenant Daniel Riley

Conclusion

While government statements over the period 2001–14 demonstrated overall consistency as to Australian Government mission objectives, the means chosen to pursue these objectives underwent considerable change and the language in which our role and presence was described also varied. These changes reflected the shift in coalition strategy from counter-terrorism to counter-insurgency and from a military mission to a more comprehensive civil-military-police approach.

Consistent with this, Australian statements evolved over time to include references to the Taliban and 'insurgents' as well as Al-Qaeda, and an increasing recognition of the whole-of-government nature of Australia's mission. In particular, the focus of public statements reflected:

- I. The increased importance of identifying development and governance goals including policing;
- II. A greater appreciation of the need for, and commitment to, the training of ANSF; and
- III. An increasing focus on Uruzgan province.

As well, Australian statements after 2006, while as strong as ever in their references to our Alliance interests, showed increasing recognition of the importance governments attached to our role in contributing to the efforts of the international coalition.

⁷³. Prime Minister the Hon. Tony Abbott, 'Address at Recognition Ceremony', Transcript, Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan, 28 October 2013.



Annex B: Acronyms and Abbreviations

ACC	Australian Civilian Corps
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ACMC	Australian Civil-Military Centre
ADF	Australian Defence Force
AFP	Australian Federal Police
AGD	Attorney-General's Department
ANA	Afghan National Army
ANDS	Afghanistan National Development Strategy
ANP	Afghan National Police
ANSF	Afghanistan National Security Forces
ARTF	Afghanistan Reconstruction Trust Fund
AusAID	Australian Agency for International Development
CDF	Chief of the Defence Force (Australia)
CT-U	Combined Team-Uruzgan
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
HQJOC	Headquarters Joint Operations Command
IDC	Interdepartmental Committee
IDG	International Deployment Group
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JTF	Joint Task Force
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSA	National Security Adviser
NSC	National Security Committee of Cabinet
ODA	Overseas Development Assistance
OMLT	Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team
PM&C	Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet
PRT	Provincial Reconstruction Team
QIP	Quick Impact Project
RAMSI	Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands
RC-South	Regional Command South
RTF	Reconstruction Task Force
SCNS	Secretaries Committee on National Security
SES	Senior Executive Service
SOTG	Special Operations Task Group
SPCG	Strategic Policy Coordinating Group
SRAP	Special Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission to Afghanistan
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution



