



REFORMING ANSF METRICS

Memorandum for Distribution

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The CM system does not provide an accurate picture of ANA capabilities. At best, it provides a snapshot of the resources that have gone into a unit's manning, equipping, and training. Moreover, the overly-quantitative CM system provides little information about how a unit will actually perform in the field. MNSTC-I ran into similar problems with its ORA system for the Iraqi Army. While many within the US military feel that the CM system needs to be reformed or replaced, there is little consensus as to what its replacement should look like. This memo lays out the framework for a more accurate system.

There are six major factors that should form the heart of a new ANA evaluation system:

1. **Narrative:** A narrative should be the most important part of any ANA rating system. A short paragraph written by the mentoring team detailing a unit's major strengths, weaknesses, and potential will do more to describe a unit's capabilities than any quantitative CM system. ANA units vary widely in their roles and missions. Northern and southern units in particular face strikingly different operating environments and operational tempos. This variety harms the accuracy of universal quantitative measures such as the CM system. If a unit has recently had troubles because a stellar officer was killed, this needs to be recorded. If a unit has excellent operational capabilities but corrupt or disloyal officers, this needs to be part of the unit's evaluation. Neither of these situations would be recorded by the current CM system. Narrative metrics are not conducive to the easy 1-4 ratings, and cannot be quickly conveyed or put into graphics. However, non-narrative metrics oversimplify the issue and risk misinforming leadership of the capabilities of the ANA.
2. **Loyalty and Networks of Influence:** This is one of the most difficult to quantify, but supremely important, metrics. Many Afghans have multiple loyalties, and ANA personnel are no exception. All of these loyalties need to be tracked. Almost all senior leaders in the MoD are part of one of several patronage networks most of which are ethnically based. These networks filter down to the lower ranks and need to be assessed. Whether a unit or senior officer is loyal to the central government, an ethnic group, a patronage network, or anyone else, needs to be carefully tracked and is far more important than quantitative CM metrics.
3. **Motivation/Morale:** While unit morale was covered under the old CM system, its importance was severely underrated. The willingness of the men in a unit to

fight is arguably the single most important factor in determining the unit's capabilities. If the men are willing to fight and die for their country, they can overcome massive deficits of equipment and training. Military history is full of examples of units with terrible equipment, dead or nonexistent officers, little communication with high command, and scant training overcoming long odds to perform brilliantly time and again. The only common denominator is motivation. Unit morale needs to be tracked as closely as equipment is tracked under the CM system. Consequently, the factors that affect morale need to be emphasized more. CSTC-A has relied far too much on nationalism to motivate the ANA. More mundane factors like leave policies, unit rotation, pay, medical care, base living conditions, etc. also affect morale. This assessment should also reflect factors like retention, attrition/AWOLs, rotation for leave and training, etc.

4. **Sustainability:** The current system places too much emphasis on current operations and how well/often units conduct them. While this is clearly important, the imperative to conduct operations has in some cases superseded the imperative to properly train the ANA. This has been reinforced by the status of trainers in the US military. The mission of training and mentoring, especially police training, is undervalued in the US military ranks compared to that of conducting combat missions. Because of this, personnel tasked to perform the P/OMLT/ETT mission often think that they must accomplish something tangible, such as a successfully conducted combat mission, rather than the small incremental reforms that make good, sustainable ANA units.

Moreover, the readiness rating system should alert senior officials when units are being "used up." Units that have conducted operations "independently," but have a massive AWOL rate, no leave policy, terrible equipment accountability, and low re-enlistment rates will eventually be destroyed in the process and lose any capacity to take over the security mission from ISAF. ANA metrics must take these less dramatic factors into account, and not just how well/frequently a unit performs operations. NTM-A's mission is not to create units that can conduct operations *right now* and have no long-term viability, but to train ANA units to be able to conduct successful independent operations years from now when the US has withdrawn. The supposedly capable ANCOP are a case in point with high capability ratings but 80% attrition rates. A unit that is almost completely destroyed and rebuilt every year should not be highly rated.

5. **Unit History:** This should be a major component of any new ANA rating system. This reflects the simple fact that it is extremely difficult, even in a Western military, to predict how a unit will operate until it has seen battle. The only way to know is to observe that unit in battle. As a major part of its evaluation, each unit, regardless of its specialty or size, needs a detailed historical narrative, beginning at unit generation. The witches brew of training, morale, leadership,

equipment, and luck that makes great military units great is not something that can be easily predicted. Occam's Razor affects military science just as strongly as it affects all other fields: The best way to predict how well a unit *will* perform is to look at how well it *already has* performed. New units obviously cannot be evaluated in this way. In addition, units with higher ops tempos will have a more detailed record. Unfortunately, this is somewhat contradictory to metric number 4, and a balance between the two must be found in order to create accurate assessments. Nonetheless, knowing where a unit has been is crucially important to predict where it will go.

6. **Partnering:** The degree and quality of partnering should be a metric in and of itself. The importance of partnering has become increasingly obvious in recent years, and the increased emphasis ISAF/NTM-A have put on this will significantly speed the development of the ANSF. With training times so greatly accelerated, much of the work of developing capable forces falls to ISAF partners, in addition to the P/OMLT/ETTs. But partnering needs to be tracked. How much and how good the partnering a unit has had will correlate to its capabilities. Do officers in a unit have strong partnerships with Coalition personnel? How far down the chain of command do ANA officers have partners? Do ISAF personnel have language training, or is a lack of translators a major hindrance? How do ISAF personnel rate their partner unit? Are ISAF personnel still just grabbing a unit of Afghans to take part in an operation solely to put an "Afghan Face" on it?

There are a number of other, second tier factors that were underrepresented by the CM system and should be tracked in any new system. Desertion rates strongly affect unit performance, as do re-enlistment rates. Levels of drug use/addiction must be tracked, as this is a massive and underreported problem in the ANA. In addition, whether the unit grasps the basic principles of COIN (e.g., not killing civilians needlessly) must also be tracked.

As mentioned before, the factors that affect morale must be more closely monitored: Does a unit have a sensible leave policy? Are base living conditions tolerable? Can soldiers get pay to their families? Does the unit conduct patrols without constant P/OMLT/ETT prodding? Is medical care acceptable? All of these factors indicate not whether a unit can conduct an operation today, but whether it can conduct an operation next year or the year after.

Impartiality and Closing the Training/Partnering "Loop"

A major challenge in any evaluation system (including the CM system and the ORA system in Iraq) is maintaining the impartiality of the evaluators. This problem was neatly summed up by an advisor interviewed in early 2010: "When my commanding officer comes down and asks me how my Afghans are doing, I know that the guys in the next

valley over are saying that their Afghans are doing great. If I'm honest about my guys, my commanders going to want to know what the hell I'm doing wrong." This problem is reinforced by US officers putting CM ratings on their own Officer Evaluation Reports. This is not an accusation of dishonesty, but it is a clear conflict of interest. More broadly, advisors and partners, just like anyone else, want to feel that they are accomplishing something. Spending an entire rotation without your ANA unit increasing its CM rating may feel like failure.

There are two solutions to the impartiality problem. The level of knowledge necessary to evaluate units under this new system precludes anyone other than experienced trainers/advisors/partners from doing the evaluating. However, small mobile NTM-A teams can periodically assess the metrics reported by OMLTs and ETTs. They would visit and observe various ANA units, and conduct an independent assessment that is then compared to the P/OMLT/ETT's assessment. These teams may not be numerous enough to assess all the P/OMLT/ETTs, but would act to keep them honest.

Creating such teams would also deal with a key problem: Ensuring a strong feedback loop between NTM-A, partners, and operators in the field. The present system is effectively rushing men and units through formal training and thrusting them into the field under the assumption that partnering/advising can compensate for inadequate training time. It also tends to separate formal training from the informal training done by partners and advisors in the field – some of which extends to the point of creating follow-on formal NCO training, etc.

There needs to be a system in which NTM-A is kept informed in near real time of the areas where the present formal training system works and does not work, and in which partners/advisors/trainers in the field know the limits of the formal process and strengthen their training and partnering activity accordingly. Some of the activity is underway, but training can never end at the gate, and the success of partnering cannot be assumed. Moreover, such a system should clearly identify cases where units/leaders need to be disengaged and given added formal training.

The second solution to the impartiality problem is more straightforward, and should complement the first: ISAF/NTM-A needs to stress brutal honesty in all ANA evaluations. P/OMLT/ETTs and partners need to be rewarded for honesty, not false progress. The Army is a "can do" organization, and while this ethos cannot and should not change, it can be dangerous in the training of indigenous forces. We cannot afford to repeat the mistakes of Vietnam, when the 'highly capable' ARVN collapsed despite years of glowing reviews from American trainers.

A New System

The CM system is flawed, but the core information gathered by the CM system is valuable, and should continue to be tracked. Generally speaking, the CM system does give a vague indication of capabilities: a CM 1 unit, on the whole, will perform better than a CM 3 unit. But the CM 1 unit may still be years away from actually carrying out 'independent' operations, and may very well be heading towards collapse due to high attrition/desertion rates.

A new evaluation system, based on the principles discussed in this memo and fused with the existing CM metrics would be far more accurate. Most importantly, it will give an accurate representation of ANA capabilities not just today, but in the crucial years to come.

Glossary:

CM: Capability Milestone

NTM-A: NATO Training Mission Afghanistan

ANA: Afghan National Army

ANP: Afghan National Police

POMLT: Police Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (ANP)

OMLT: Operational Mentor and Liaison Team (ANA)

ETT: Embedded Training Team

ARVN: Army of the Republic of Vietnam