

Afghanistan: Getting Disarmament Back on Track

I. OVERVIEW

The process of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of forces is crucial to creating the conditions for the Karzai government to extend its authority throughout the country and for establishing the rule of law, but its ultimate fate is still very uncertain. Thus far it has helped decommission or reduce most of the officially recognised militia units in Afghanistan, and with the support of the Coalition and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), has collected the bulk of their heavy weaponry.¹ But it has failed:

- ❑ to make significant inroads in disarming the powerful Tajik-dominated units in Kabul and the Panjshir;
- ❑ to keep pace with the evolving nature of Afghanistan's militia structures, many of which have found a new lease on life as police forces or private militias associated with governors or district administrators; and
- ❑ to tackle the threat posed by unofficial militias, which are outside the mandate of the current DDR program and are maintained by most contending regional and local forces, including registered political parties.

Unless the DDR program, known as the Afghanistan New Beginnings Program (ANBP) and managed by the UN Development Program (UNDP), tackles these realities, its legacy is likely to prove more cosmetic than substantive, and militia networks will remain a central and destructive element in Afghanistan's politics and economy.

The central government and its international supporters have, to some extent, been complicit in the maintenance of power by militia commanders. The U.S.-led Coalition has relied on militia commanders in its military operations against al-Qaeda and the Taliban, empowering its local allies militarily and economically and helping them to resist central government control.

For its part, that central government has, in a limited number of cases, backed military actions against high profile regional strongmen, notably former Herat governor Ismail Khan. These have earned the plaudits of much of the international community but have obscured the government's continued accommodation with mid- and lower-level commanders, often with the acquiescence of external donors. One major haven for these commanders has been the highway police, with responsibility for securing the ring road linking the country's four major cities as well as the main roads connecting Afghanistan with its neighbours.

This arrangement is fraught with risks, not least because it facilitates narcotics trafficking by commanders. A private American security company, U.S. Protection and Investigations (USPI), has been paying high wages to highway police commanders for guarding the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) supported Kabul-Kandahar road project without imposing any apparent accountability on them. The result of these relationships has been to strengthen the commanders politically, militarily, and economically, thus undermining DDR.

Political and military analysts in Afghanistan increasingly recognise that there has been a fundamental change in the commanders' priorities during the past three years. Most no longer see the need to maintain large stocks of heavy weaponry, since the Coalition presence precludes the waging of open warfare. Instead, they have opted to maintain leaner, lightly armed forces adequate to protect their political, military and economic interests, including narcotics trafficking.

These forces often fall outside the ANBP's remit because they are either technically civilian or they are unofficial militias. What is required to counter them are more far-reaching security sector reforms and enforcement of President Karzai's 2004 decree criminalising the maintenance of unofficial militias. Still tentative plans are being discussed to address the problem of these unofficial militias at long last in the third phase of the current program, which begins in March 2005 and is expected to conclude in June 2006.

Such enforcement is crucial but requires a much greater commitment to intelligence gathering and law

¹ See Crisis Group Asia Report N°65, *Disarmament and Reintegration in Afghanistan*, 30 September 2003.

enforcement than has been seen to date and a shift in focus from soldiers to the commanders, however minor, who are the principal agents of recruitment and mobilisation. The Coalition, too, must refrain from extending political, military and economic support to commanders who are unwilling to accept the authority of the central government.

II. DDR OBJECTIVES

DDR is one component of the larger peace-building and reconstruction process in Afghanistan. The primary objective is the effective disarmament and reintegration of the country's combatants. The formal DDR process, managed by the ANBP, is charged with decommissioning the Afghan Military Forces, whose membership is estimated at 45,000. However, an estimated 850 unofficial militias with an excess of 65,000 members² remain outside the scope of this formal DDR process.

A. AFGHAN MILITARY FORCES

The militias that came to power in the wake of the Taliban's collapse in November and December 2001, either through collaboration with the Coalition or simply by exploiting a security vacuum, were mainly led by commanders who had exercised power locally in the pre-Taliban period. Some, particularly in the centre and northeast, were part of the anti-Taliban resistance known as the Northern Alliance (also known as United Front). The creation of the Afghan Interim Administration at the December 2001 Bonn Conference prompted a reorganisation and formal recognition of these militias. Known collectively as the Afghan Military Forces (AMF), the militias were placed nominally under the authority of the ministry of defence.

Qasim Fahim, who was appointed defence minister at Bonn, led the largest militia that entered Kabul after the fall of the Taliban, one composed of Tajiks from the Panjshir Valley and Shamali Plain.³ He quickly staffed his ministry with other commanders from his Shura-yi Nazar faction.⁴ Elsewhere in the country, the ministry

confirmed local commanders in posts that either predated the collapse of the Najibullah government in 1992 or were newly created to accommodate competing factions.

The AMF is notionally structured into regional corps and, at least in theory, one division per province. Below the division level, and sometimes existing as independent units, are assorted brigades and regiments. Although this structure implies a chain of command, the reality is far different. Relationships between particular units depend on their factional (and therefore regional, political, ethnic or tribal) affiliation, rather than their place in the AMF hierarchy. Loyalties of individual soldiers are generally highly personalised and linked to local commanders. If a commander switches allegiance, the men in his unit can be expected to follow. The ability of a regional "warlord" to project and maintain authority thus depends on his ability to maintain the support of commanders below him, typically by providing them arms, appointments and income-earning opportunities in provincial and district administrations.

Assessments of the AMF's size are inherently speculative because most commanders mobilise forces as needed, rather than maintaining large standing armies. During visits to AMF corps and division headquarters around the country in 2003, Crisis Group researchers rarely found more than 30 soldiers or officers present. Most who took part in the ground campaign against the Taliban in October and November 2001 had by early 2003 returned to their previous occupations, such as farming and wage labour. In the event of factional tensions, however, commanders can rapidly assemble much larger forces through their networks of village *sargroups* (team leaders).

An effective disarmament plan thus entails three elements:

- ❑ mapping out official and unofficial militia networks, down to the *sargroup* level;
- ❑ removing the key nodes in these networks from security posts; and
- ❑ imposing criminal penalties on those who refuse to disarm their official militias or who maintain unofficial militias.

This requires effective intelligence and law enforcement. But because posts were often allocated along factional lines, commanders and their militias are also present in the police and Afghan intelligence, the National Security

² Crisis Group interview with Paul Cruickshank, ANBP Planning Advisor, Kabul, 3 February 2005.

³ Formerly a sub-region of Parwan, Panjshir was declared a separate province by presidential decree in April 2004. Shamali is located immediately to the north of Kabul and southwest of Panjshir.

⁴ Originally a military coordination council established by Jamiat-e Islami commander Ahmad Shah Massoud, Shura-yi

Nazar now refers to a more amorphous network of mainly Tajik military and political figures.

Directorate (NSD). The international community has been unwilling to commit the intelligence and security resources needed to fill the breach that would be created by their wholesale removal.

B. THE DDR FRAMEWORK

Launched on 6 April 2003, the UNDP-managed Afghanistan New Beginnings Program is a voluntary DDR process. A figure of 100,000 officers and soldiers was set as the upper limit for the process, representing a compromise between the defence ministry's claims of 250,000 and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) assessments that the true number was closer to 45,000.⁵

Japan, the largest donor to the ANBP's \$83 million three-year budget,⁶ insisted on defence ministry reforms aiming at greater ethnic diversity and professionalism in its top tiers as a precondition to releasing money. Its objective was ill served by the reforms that were ultimately announced on 20 September 2003, which left Fahim in the post of defence minister and shifted one of his two deputies, fellow Shura-yi Nazar commander Bismillah Khan, to the post of chief of staff. Japan and the ANBP nevertheless deemed the reforms sufficient to launch the program's pilot phase in late October 2003.

The plan bears the ministry's fingerprints. The agreement with UNDP leaves in practice, individual AMF units responsible for providing a comprehensive list of personnel. An independent, non-political and impartial seven-member Regional Verification Committee (RVC) confirms the names submitted for each unit. Once approved by the RVC, a soldier or officer is expected to surrender his gun to a twenty-member Mobile Disarmament Unit (MDU), which is responsible for collecting, storing, and transporting the weapons to Kabul.⁷ The DDR plan also permits the handover of operable heavy weapons, instead of light arms, by groups of militiamen. An annex specifies the number of soldiers deemed a crew for each acceptable

weapons type. Thus, four soldiers can constitute the crew of a T-54 tank, while five may represent the crew of a ZSU 23-4 anti-aircraft gun.⁸

Demobilised soldiers receive a voucher entitling them to individualised career counselling, an interim job if necessary, and one of several assistance packages.⁹ Militiamen surrendering arms were initially entitled to 130 kilograms of food and a one-time cash grant of \$200 in Afghan currency; the latter was changed to a daily stipend of \$3-\$4 after former commanders were found to be confiscating the grants and livestock in assistance packages.¹⁰

But the absence of a deterrent force that could ensure compliance with the DDR process was, and remains, a critical shortcoming of the ANBP. Compliance has generally relied on incentives rather than pressure. The Political Parties Law promulgated on 18 October 2003¹¹ has, for instance, provided a critical incentive for militia leaders aspiring to lead political parties. It states that registered political parties shall not have military organisations or affiliations with armed forces and allows the dissolution of parties in breach of this provision.¹² The same principle is enshrined in the constitution, which recognises the right to form political parties, provided, *inter alia*, that they do not have "military or quasi-military aims and organisations".¹³ Confirmation that a party seeking registration is in compliance with the law requires a separate review by the ANBP, the defence ministry, the interior ministry and the National Security Directorate.

The DDR plan explicitly linked the decommissioning of AMF units to the establishment of the new Afghan National Army (ANA) trained by the Coalition's Office of Military Cooperation (OMC-A) and intended to be an ethnically balanced, professional force. Plagued initially by high desertion rates and ethnically imbalanced recruitment, the ANA made considerable strides during 2004 toward achieving those objectives.

In February 2005, the ANA has 21,200 soldiers -- 17,800 trained and another 3,400 still in training -- a

⁵ See Dr Antonio Giustozzi and Mark Sedra, "National army: Technical annex", in "Securing Afghanistan's future: Accomplishments and strategic pathway forward", prepared by the Afghanistan Assistance Coordination Authority (AACA) and UNAMA for the International Conference on Afghanistan, Berlin, 31 March-1 April 2004.

⁶ The ANBP's target budget is \$167,000,000; the sum received is \$83,378,372, hence there is a shortfall of \$83,621,628. See "Afghanistan's New Beginnings Program", at <http://www.undp.org.af/ps14.htm>. Figures denoted in dollars (\$) in this briefing are in U.S. dollars.

⁷ Official meeting notes from ISAF Information, Operations Meeting, 25 August 2003.

⁸ ANBP DDR Plan, 6 November 2003, Annex A.

⁹ The assistance packages offered include livestock and agricultural implements, vocational training, and help in establishing small businesses or wage labour with ANBP partner agencies. See Crisis Group Report, *Disarmament and Reintegration in Afghanistan*, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

¹⁰ Crisis Group interview with Dr Paul George, Senior Program Advisor, ANBP, Kabul, 3 February 2005.

¹¹ Gazette of the Ministry of Justice, 18 October 2003.

¹² Political Parties Law, Articles 6 and 17.

¹³ Constitution of Afghanistan (2003), Article 35.

three-fold increase in strength over a year.¹⁴ There are several reasons for this rapid growth. A greater commitment of resources by the U.S. allowed a gradual increase in the pace of training, from two battalions¹⁵ at a time in January 2004 to five in December 2004. If the training pace goes to six battalions, as OMC-A contemplates, the target of a 70,000-strong ANA¹⁶ could be met by December 2006.

At the same time, desertion rates have fallen sharply, from 10 per cent a month in mid-2003 to 1.2 per cent a month in 2004. A key factor is the increase in monthly salaries for a soldier who has completed the eight-week training course from \$50 to \$70. That pay hike and others mean the average monthly salary was \$100 to \$110 by the end of 2004.¹⁷

Training of the ANA Central Corps, based in Kabul, was completed in June 2004. Though the central government deployed it several times during the year in the north and west, its use beyond the central provinces should diminish with the establishment of the ANA regional commands.

Created by presidential decree in September 2003,¹⁸ those four regional commands are based in Mazar-e Sharif, Herat, Kandahar, and Gardez and are mainly staffed by professional officers. In Mazar-e Sharif, the regional command officially replaced the AMF 7th and 8th Corps, after the two units were decommissioned in December 2004.¹⁹ If the ANA continues to grow at its current pace, the Central Corps and each regional command will have a brigade, consisting of five battalions. Brigades may also be fielded elsewhere in the

country, including the southern provincial centres of Lashkar Gah and Qalat.²⁰

Many observers, Afghan and international, viewed the initial preponderance of Tajiks in the ANA as destabilising, and an attempt to perpetuate the unequal distribution of power decided at Bonn. Because the defence ministry screened candidates at the recruitment centre in Kabul, Tajiks were prioritised for training.

A Hazara ANA officer commented:

There were four of us when we were recruited for the ANA last year [2003]. We had to wait in the recruitment centre in Pul-e Surkh in West Kabul, from where recruits are moved to training centres....Some would wait for weeks, and some waited for months. We were kept waiting for over a year. It all depends on one's connection to the defence ministry departments and their ethnic backgrounds. For example, Panjshiris would not stay in the recruitment centres [for] more than a few weeks.²¹

While Coalition officials acknowledge that factional preferences remain an important factor in appointments, they stress that the ANA has become more representative of the country's ethnic mix for two reasons. First, the establishment in late 2003 of regional recruitment centres has limited opportunities for direct interference by senior defence ministry officials. Secondly, there is now an agreement between the ministry and the Coalition to use a common set of population figures as a benchmark, within a margin of 5 per cent, for recruitment.²² This has resulted in increased Pashtun recruitment, and also increased enlistment from the smaller ethnic groups, including Hazaras and Uzbeks.²³

Yet the ANA still faces significant obstacles. Although Coalition officials maintain that their relations with the ministry have improved significantly over the past year, there are still signs of tension. The ministry, for example, has resisted proposals to place each remaining AMF corps under the authority of an ANA regional command.²⁴ Moreover, the ANA remains dependant on

¹⁴ "Afghan army makes progress, training, executing missions", Pentagongram, 14 January 2005 at http://www.dcmilitary.com/army/pentagram/10_02/national_news/32931-1.html.

¹⁵ Each battalion consists of 750-850 soldiers and officers. Crisis Group interview with a Coalition official, Kabul, 15 December 2004.

¹⁶ General Rahim Wardak, in his first press conference as defence minister, announced that his target for the ANA was a 70,000-strong force by December 2006. "Afghanistan to build a 70,000-strong army by 2007", Associated Press, 29 December 2004.

¹⁷ Crisis Group interview with Coalition official, Kabul, 15 December 2004. See also Giustozzi and Sedra, op. cit., pp. 7-8.

¹⁸ "New commanders of Afghan National Military Corps appointed", Radio Afghanistan, Kabul, 15:30 GMT, 1 September 2004, translated from Dari by BBC Monitoring - Afghanistan, 2 September 2004.

¹⁹ "First battalion of Afghan National Army joins northern military corps", Balkh TV, Mazar-e Sharif, 15:00 GMT, 1 January 2005, translated from Dari by BBC Monitoring - Afghanistan, 2 January 2005.

²⁰ Crisis Group interview with Coalition official, Kabul, 15 December 2004.

²¹ Crisis Group conversation with ANA officer, December 2004.

²² The figures used are taken from the "CIA World Factbook", according to which Pashtuns account for 42 per cent of the population, Tajiks 27 per cent, and Hazaras and Uzbeks 9 per cent each. Crisis Group interview with Coalition official, Kabul, 15 December 2004, and CIA, "The World Factbook -- Afghanistan".

²³ Crisis Group interview with Coalition official, Kabul, 15 December 2004.

²⁴ Ibid.

the Coalition for salaries, logistics, communications, and air cover, and the deployment of ANA units requires agreement between the ministry and the Coalition.²⁵ Over the long term, the ANA will need to become far more self-reliant if it is to ensure Afghanistan's security.

And despite its rapid expansion during 2004, the ANA's ability to deploy remains circumscribed by the lack of an efficient payment system. Troops are allowed to go on leave at the end of every month to take money home to their families. Coalition planners aim to open bank accounts for ANA officers in Kabul, as a pilot project.²⁶ The establishment of a banking system nationwide, however, is a long way off, so an interim arrangement remains a pressing need.

III. THE STATE OF DDR

The ANBP reported on 9 February 2005 that it had disarmed some 37,992 AMF soldiers, representing 70 per cent of the estimated AMF personnel.²⁷ Most -- 34,743 -- have gone through the formal demobilisation; 33,352 entered the reintegration process.²⁸ The rest of the force, dispersed among the remaining AMF divisions, is slated to be disarmed during the third and final phase of DDR, beginning in March and ending in June 2005.

While the program appears to be reaching its target, the figures could be misleading. According to ANBP Acting Director Peter Babbington, the actual strength of individual units targeted during the first two main phases did not reflect the numbers on the payroll. He cited, by way of example, Division 25 in Khost, one of the very few AMF units commanded by professional officers. The defence ministry payroll listed its strength as 1,700; the commander himself claimed it was 1,200, while the local Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) believed it was only 770. The latter figure was ultimately adopted by agreement between the ANBP and the ministry. Similarly, the Jamiat-e Islami affiliated

Division 7 at Rishkhor claimed to have 1,300 personnel, but only entered 200 militiamen into the program. "All available evidence indicates that there is no one else", said Babbington, who recommended on 30 November 2004 that the division be decommissioned.²⁹

Militia leaders deliberately inflated their numbers to acquire salaries for fighters who did not exist. According to a security official, "the other 50,000 never existed except on the Ministry of Defence payroll," referring to the estimate of 100,000 AMF soldiers under arms. "This is because a number of commanders who wanted to collect more salaries than they had soldiers had purposely swollen the number of military personnel under their command".³⁰

A. DDR POLITICS

The ANBP has yet to disarm fully the larger, more powerful, Shura-yi Nazar affiliated units. The AMF, as it stood in April 2003, was unevenly distributed throughout the country. The 5th Corps, based in Parwan province and encompassing Panjshir and the Central Corps in Kabul, represented about 48 per cent of the AMF's declared strength -- that is, the number of troops on the ministry's payroll. Divisions 055 and 1, as well as various independent brigades and regiments (directly accountable to the defence ministry although not officially part of the Central Corps) were also Kabul-based. The 5th Corps, Division 8 of the Central Corps, and Divisions 055 and 1 representing the principal Shura-yi Nazar units were formally under the defence ministry but in reality loyal to the Shura-yi Nazar.

From 17 May 2004 to now (February 2005), the 5th Corps' declared strength has been reduced by 9 per cent and that of the Central Corps by 21 per cent. These figures fall well short of AMF formations in other regions. As a result, the two units' share of the AMF has risen from 48 to 60 per cent.³¹ The downsizing of the Central Corps, moreover, masks the fact that much of that reduction has resulted from the demobilisation of its non-Panjshiri component units. By contrast, negotiations with Panjshiri commanders have yet to result in significant progress.

The Panjshiri commander of Division 1, for instance, accused international negotiators of manipulation and

²⁵ Crisis Group interviews with Coalition and UN officials, Kabul, December 2004.

²⁶ Crisis Group interview with Coalition official, Kabul, 15 December 2004.

²⁷ On 19 February, UNAMA disclosed that over 40,000 soldiers had been disarmed, four-fifths of the total. Press briefing by Ariane Quentier, Senior Public Information Officer and United Nations Agencies in Afghanistan, 17 February 2005, at http://www.unama-afg.org/_pb/_english/2005/_february/0517.htm.

²⁸ "Afghanistan's New Beginning Program", 24 January 2005 at <http://www.undpanbp.org/>. See also DDR Newsletter, Issue No. 12, ANBP, December 2004.

²⁹ Crisis Group interview with Peter Babbington, Acting Director, ANBP, 1 December 2004.

³⁰ "Afghan militia leaders inflated troop numbers to get salaries", Bloomberg News, 6 February 2005.

³¹ Crisis Group interview with international security official, 5 December 2004.

attempted to justify his resistance to DDR by the threat of a resurgent Taliban.³² Other Panjshiris have rejected disarmament on the grounds that Tajiks have been marginalized in the new Karzai administration. Reacting angrily to demands for disarmament, a Panjshiri militia official said:

We helped the Americans get rid of the Taliban but what did we get in return? First they [the international community and Kabul] should do something for us to show they are sincere. Then we will help them by disarming.³³

Internal divisions and a significant loss of influence of top Shura-yi Nizar leaders among the Panjshiri commanders have limited the leverage that can be exerted by threatening to deregister Nazhat-e Milli, the political party those leaders formed but that splintered prior to the presidential elections. One of its founders, former presidential candidate Yunus Qanuni, announced an intention to form his own political party, New Afghanistan, following announcement of the Karzai cabinet in late December 2004. It remains to be seen whether Qanuni's party will obtain the nearly unanimous backing of Shura-yi Nazar commanders during the forthcoming parliamentary election that his presidential candidacy did.

As noted, the Political Parties Law provides an incentive for parties with militia wings to comply with DDR. Some such as the Ittihad-e Islami (mainly Pashtun and led by Abd al-Rabb al-Rasul Sayyaf); Junbish-e Milli-ye Islami (mainly Uzbek and led by Abdul Rashid Dostum); and Jamiat-e Islami (mainly Tajik and led by former President Burhanuddin Rabbani) believe they will be registered in time for the parliamentary election in return for their recent progress towards DDR, even though they have yet to comply fully.

The use of registration as an incentive has helped the ANBP and UNAMA to decommission AMF units aligned to these parties, including Division 10, which is based in Paghman and the western outskirts of Kabul city and affiliated with the Ittihad, and Division 53, which is based in Shibergan and affiliated with the Junbish.

In November 2004, Division 10, affiliated with the Jamiat, presented an extensive list of its personnel after several months of resistance. On 21 November, 300 Division 53 soldiers enrolled in the DDR program. Three days later, Regiment 113, a unit of that division based at the customs port of Hairatan, was disarmed, its militiamen registered by the ANBP, and its regiment headquarters and border posts turned over to the Interior Ministry.³⁴

The disarming of Division 53 precipitated the broader disarmament and decommissioning of both the Junbish-controlled 8th Corps, of which it was a part, and the Jamiat-controlled 7th Corps. General Abdul Manan, the defence ministry official in charge of DDR in the north, announced on 17 December that all military units from the 7th and 8th Corps had been disarmed.³⁵ The 8th Corps was formally decommissioned on 11 December and the 7th Corps on 18 December.³⁶

Registering political parties such as Junbish and the Jamiat solely on the basis of compliance with DDR within its current mandate for dismantling the AMF could, however, prove counterproductive. It would significantly limit the leverage that could be exerted on them to disarm the unofficial militias affiliated with them. This would be particularly significant now that serious consideration is being given to bringing all unofficial militias into the ANBP framework. Many, perhaps most, of these militias are affiliated to political factions and parties and loyal to powerful regional and provincial power holders.

B. TRANSFER OF MILITIAMEN TO POLICE UNITS

Militia leaders have frequently managed to subvert DDR with the tacit support of the central government and/or the U.S.-led Coalition. A key element in this is the reassignment of AMF commanders to civilian posts, particularly as governors and police chiefs. These offices fall outside the ambit of the ANBP, so commanders can employ their former militiamen as police, maintain

³² Gada argued that Panjshiri ground forces, which had been used to defeat the Taliban, were being asked to disarm now that they had no utility for the Coalition; no one could guarantee that the Taliban would not return to power; and the Taliban were unable to enter northeastern Afghanistan through Pakistani territory because of the presence of the AMF in Panjshir. Crisis Group interview with international security official, 5 December 2004.

³³ Jon Hemming, "Isolation and pride could see Panjsher left behind", Reuters, 11 February 2005.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ "Almost 30,000 military disarmed in Afghan north", Radio Afghanistan, Kabul, 14:30 GMT, 14 December 2004, translated from Pashto by BBC Monitoring - Afghanistan, 15 December 2004.

³⁶ Crisis Group interview with UN official, December 2004; "Afghan northern military corps formally dissolved", Balkh TV, Mazar-e Sharif, 15:00 GMT 18 December 2004, translated from Dari by BBC Monitoring - Afghanistan, 19 December 2004.

patronage links with sub-commanders, and protect their economic interests.

The recently restructured national highway police are a case in point and a special concern from the standpoint of narcotics proliferation. In October 2004, the highway police, who have security responsibility for the road linking the four regional centres as well as the two major roads leading to Pakistan,³⁷ were divided into six regiments. At least four of these are led by former AMF or National Security Directorate commanders, two of whom are known to have transferred militiamen into their police units independently of the formal reintegration process.

Afghan and international sources say that the governor of Ghazni province, Assadullah Khalid, a close ally of the Coalition, has included many of his former militia personnel in the highway police.³⁸

Amanullah Guzar, commander of Regiment 01, which covers the area from northern Kabul to Khinjan highway, is the former head of the mainly Panjshiri and Shamali Tajik AMF Division 8. According to Afghan and international security sources, he has directly recruited an estimated 1,200 men from Division 8 into Regiment 01.³⁹ Imamuddin, the commander of Regiment 03, which is responsible for securing the Kabul-to-Kandahar road, is Tajik, was the intelligence chief for Takhar province under former President Burhanuddin Rabbani, and is associated with Rabbani's Jamiat-e Islami. Though his area of responsibility is predominantly Pashtun, he has inducted demobilised northern militiamen into his regiment even as he has struck deals with local commanders to supply him with additional troops.

The Kabul-Kandahar highway, funded by a \$250 million USAID grant, is the most high profile U.S. development project in southern Afghanistan. USAID's contractor, the Louis Berger Group, has subcontracted security for the entire 389-km. project to a Houston, Texas-based security firm, U.S. Protection and Investigation (UPSI),⁴⁰ which also has a UN contract to provide security for demining

operations along the Kandahar-Girishk side road.⁴¹ It is, in turn, given police personnel by the Interior Ministry to whom it pays a \$150 monthly salary -- nearly ten times that of an untrained police officer or AMF soldier.

According to a government official familiar with the road project, the local commander who is responsible for disbursing this salary bills USPI for 1,200 police, but has only positioned 400 to 500 along the road. Most of these are members of militias, whether decommissioned AMF units or unofficial forces. "In practice, [the commander] goes to local mujahidin commanders and then works out a salary sharing agreement with them", an official disclosed.⁴²

Some local highway police commanders are believed to use their recruited personnel and access to police vehicles and arms to transport processed heroin. A commander on the Kabul-Kandahar road reportedly transported large quantities of heroin from Shajui, in Zabul province, to Helmand, the province immediately bordering Kandahar, using marked highway police vehicles and police armed with machine guns and AK-47s. Although the commander was dismissed after U.S. military forces uncovered his activities, he is said to retain command over the highway police in his sector and remains involved in narcotics trafficking.⁴³

Similarly, at a checkpoint along the Kandahar-Dilaram segment of the road, a highway police commander seized twelve bags of heroin and 500,000 Afghanis (\$10,400) from a five-truck convoy in December 2004. Acting on an informant's tip, U.S. forces raided the commander's checkpoint the following night, seizing the heroin and money. Although the checkpoint was shut in the wake of the raid, the commander is said to retain his position.⁴⁴

Internal efforts to make the highway police more professional have been undermined by individual commanders. An interior ministry official described his attempts to reform a highway security post headed by a former militia commander, who he says was commanding 25 people:

I fired eight and wanted to replace them with eight professionals. He is resisting; he says he

³⁷ The two roads link Jalababad to Torkham in the North West Frontier Province and Kandahar to Quetta in Balochistan.

³⁸ Crisis Group interviews with Afghan and international security officials, December 2004.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Hervé Bar, "Afghan road reconstruction drives ahead Under threat of Taliban", Agence France-Press (AFP), 26 September 2003. USPI is expected to receive \$50 million in the contract. "Houston-based security firm working in Afghanistan", February 2004, <http://www.eldoradoinsurance.com/security/news-0204.htm>.

⁴¹ See Project No. 00035452-AFG, at http://www.unops.org/web_forms/procurement_view.asp?pmode=2&view_year=2004&prac_no=184&template=award.

⁴² Crisis Group interview with Afghan official, December 2004.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Crisis Group interview, Kandahar, 25 December 2004.

wants to replace them with his own people. [If he prevails] he will bring in demobilised fighters.⁴⁵

USPI's decision to channel salaries through commanders sets back security sector reforms and the DDR process in at least two ways: it reinforces patronage relationships between militiamen and the commanders who secure employment for them; and it is disengaged from the social reintegration processes built into DDR. As mentioned above, a majority of the men on the USPI payroll are associated with private militias and have not gone through the formal DDR channels. Many have used their authority to engage in criminal activity, including drug trafficking.

Although the UNDP has expressed its concerns about these practices to the U.S. embassy, "they have not been transparent concerning this matter", says a UN official.⁴⁶ ANBP's Acting Director, Babbington, told Crisis Group that he is not averse to employment of demobilised combatants in the highway police but it should be offered through the ANBP. Doing so, he said, would help ensure the dismantling of militia units and the handover of their light arms.⁴⁷

C. REINTEGRATION

The success and overall sustainability of the reintegration process is at this point difficult to determine. According to ANBP figures, some 33,000 disarmed soldiers have formally entered reintegration programs that include agricultural, vocational and businesses packages. An estimated 50 per cent have chosen agricultural packages and another 30 per cent were admitted to vocational training courses. During the nine-month program, participants are provided a daily stipend of \$3 to \$4, receive training, acquire work experience, and are given grants for small businesses.⁴⁸

The low dropout rate of the ex-combatants is encouraging. Most demonstrate an interest in breaking with their past and entering civilian life. A former militia *sargroup*, who attends a vocational training course

managed by the German corporation AGEF⁴⁹ in Kabul, told Crisis Group:

I fought in the *jihad* for 23 years. I am really fed up with military life and would like to live in peace, stability and with my family....As a military person, I would not see my mother for months, sometimes for years but now I am living with her every day.⁵⁰

The programs do, however, have drawbacks that need to be addressed. For example, ex-combatants in Badakhshan province must travel from Faizabad to the regional integration centre in Kunduz, and their travel costs far exceed the daily stipend. This discourages many ex-combatants.⁵¹ The drug economy is also undermining reintegration efforts. During the poppy harvesting season, an ex-combatant can gain anywhere between \$10 and \$20 a day, far more than the stipend offered by the reintegration programs.⁵²

The degree of success also varies from region to region depending on post-reintegration economic opportunities, demand in regional labour markets and the extent to which militias and factions continue to exercise influence. In Kabul, for example, the labour market has a larger absorptive capacity as a result of donor aid and reconstruction efforts so reintegration stands a better chance than in outlying areas.

Yet another challenge confronting the DDR process is the reintegration of ex-combatants into the ANA and the Afghan National Police (ANP). Many former AMF officers seek employment in the new army as a part of their reintegration. According to Paul George, ANBP Senior Program Advisor, "Many want their old jobs back, but 99 per cent of these officers can't get a job in the ANA because there aren't enough slots in either the army or officer training".⁵³ The eighteen-month wait for an opening in the ANA's officer training program is a major source of frustration for many ex-combatants.

A related issue, the reintegration program of former commanders, is a challenge to both the ANBP and the donor country, Japan. The objective of the \$5 million Commander Incentive Program is to "break the link

⁴⁵ Crisis Group interview with interior ministry official, Kabul, December 2004.

⁴⁶ Crisis Group telephone interview with UN official in Kabul, February 2004.

⁴⁷ Crisis Group with Peter Babbington, Acting Director, ANBP, 1 December 2004.

⁴⁸ Crisis Group interview with Paul George, Senior Program Advisor, ANBP, 3 February 2005.

⁴⁹ Arbeitsgruppe Entwicklung und Fachkräfte im Bereich der Migration und der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit.

⁵⁰ Crisis Group interview with ex-combatants, AGEF Vocational Training Centre, Kabul, 7 February 2005.

⁵¹ Crisis Group interview with Afghan security specialist, Kabul, 8 February 2005.

⁵² Crisis Group interview with Dr Paul George, Senior Program Advisor, ANBP, 3 February 2005.

⁵³ Ibid.

between them [the commanders] and their soldiers".⁵⁴ The program offers financial, travel and advanced health care incentives to AMF commanders and senior officers who show full support for the DDR process.⁵⁵ However, according to George, "In reality there is nothing we can offer them that most don't already have...and since the program is fairly new we have not done much follow-up".⁵⁶

How irreversible the reintegration of the ex-combatants proves to be will depend on success in a number of areas. First, successful reintegration will require sustainable employment opportunities that promise a better future for the ex-combatants. Secondly, the success of the program will continue to depend on the full dismantling of existing factional and militia structures. So long as those networks continue to dominate the provincial and district administrations, they will also act as channels of patronage and financial enrichment, undermining DDR progress.

Finally, there is need to extend the ANBP mandate to monitor ex-combatants in civilian life so that the strengths and weaknesses of the process can be assessed and necessary modifications made.

D. HEAVY WEAPONS COLLECTION

Though not part of the original ANBP framework, heavy weapons⁵⁷ collection has arguably been the most successful aspect of DDR. Using international military resources and political pressure, ANBP, NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and Coalition officials believe they are on target to get 100 per cent of assessed heavy weaponry into cantonments by March 2005. Two separate and limited initiatives, by the British PRT in Mazar-e Sharif and ISAF in Kabul, have helped the ANBP.

In March 2004, at the Berlin donors conference, UNAMA stressed that the cantonment of all heavy weaponry was an essential precondition for free and fair elections. The enabling presidential decree, issued on 27 March 2004,⁵⁸ provided for the cantonment of all AMF heavy weaponry by the defence ministry, with ANBP assistance. OMC-A underwrote much of the cost by

making airlift for heavy weapons transport available between August and November 2004, while the PRTs assisted on a case-by-case basis.⁵⁹ In addition, Canada agreed to finance specific projects, including as yet unimplemented heavy weapons collection in Panjshir.⁶⁰ ANBP contracted out the removal of munitions.

Beginning in April and May 2004, the ANBP assessed heavy weapons stocks outside Kabul. Because of resistance by commanders and an insecure environment, some AMF units, including Junbish's Division 53 in Shibergan, were not surveyed. In Panjshir, after initial resistance from local commanders, an estimated 70 per cent of heavy weaponry was assessed by September 2004.⁶¹ Pressured by Kabul and its international allies, other recalcitrant AMF units also yielded, not just to the assessment but also to the cantonment of their heavy weapons. Most notably, Junbish handed over 45 tanks and 40 ammunition dumps in Shibergan to the ANBP in November, ending a year-long impasse.⁶²

Efforts to get a handle on the heavy weapons problem actually began in 2003, as a result of tensions between Jamiat and Junbish militias in western Balkh province that, in the first week of October, resulted in armed clashes near Mazar-e Sharif, with both parties deploying tanks. A ceasefire agreement was reached on 9 October, negotiated by UNAMA, Interior Minister Ali Ahmad Jalali, and then British Ambassador Ron Nash.⁶³ Shortly afterwards the minister announced that the Jamiat-controlled 7th Corps and the Junbish-controlled 8th Corps would be merged and their heavy weaponry collected.⁶⁴ The weapons would be stored at two cantonment sites, located west of Mazar-e Sharif in the case of the 7th Corps and north of the city in the case of the 8th Corps. Since there had been no prior assessments, the British PRT in Mazar-e Sharif surveyed each faction's heavy weaponry.⁶⁵

This collection exercise was initially only partially successful. According to the ANBP, 185 of Junbish's assessed heavy weapons were cantoned by June 2004 but the Junbish did not transfer the remaining 195. Jamiat, after turning in 189 of 211 pieces surveyed

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid. See also DDR Newsletter, Issue No. 12, ANBP, December 2004.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ "Heavy weaponry" refers here to all weapons with a calibre of more than 14.5 mm, including tanks, artillery, and rocket-propelled grenade (RPG) launchers.

⁵⁸ Crisis Group interview with diplomat familiar with the DDR process, Kabul, 24 October 2004.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Crisis Group interview with international security official, Kabul, 5 December 2004.

⁶¹ Crisis Group interview with diplomat familiar with the DDR process, Kabul, 24 October 2004.

⁶² Crisis Group interview with UN official, December 2004.

⁶³ "Afghan militias begin to pull out", Aljazeera.Net, 10 October 2003, citing Agence France-Presse and the UN.

⁶⁴ Ahmad Nahim Qadiri, "Government curbs northern warlords", Institute for War and Peace Reporting (IWPR), Afghan Recovery Report No. 79, 30 October 2003.

⁶⁵ Ahmad Nahim, "Northern militias hand over tanks", IWPR Afghan Recovery Report No. 83, 26 November 2003.

withheld the rest, justifying its actions by Junbish's non-compliance.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, the British-led PRT's hands-on role in the DDR process set an important precedent.

ISAF's role in collecting and cantoning heavy weapons in Kabul was likewise significant. As early as September 2003, the ISAF mission in the capital, then under Canadian leadership, began to advocate the removal of heavy weaponry from the city.⁶⁷ Framing this within the context of the ISAF mission, it suggested that ISAF troops could verify the withdrawal and monitor its progress and thoroughness.⁶⁸

In January 2004, ISAF and the defence ministry reached an agreement on moving heavy weapons in Kabul to cantonment sites immediately outside the capital.⁶⁹ Most of this was achieved by ISAF between February and June 2004. Heavy weapons from three units, including Divisions 1 and 8, were collected in September.⁷⁰ Three cantonment sites were established immediately outside Kabul's city limits: at Hussain Kot to the north, near Band-i Qargah to the west, and at Rishkhor to the south. In a concession to Army Chief of Staff Bismillah Khan, who maintained that it was politically impossible to move the heavy weaponry from Panjshir to Kabul, the ANBP set up a fourth cantonment site for heavy weapons in Jabal us-Seraj, Parwan province, part of the Shura-yi Nazar's stronghold.⁷¹

Although AMF troops guard three of the four sites, including that at Jabal us-Seraj, ISAF officials believe their regular monitoring, coupled with aerial imagery, has prevented pilferage.⁷² By removing the munitions, ISAF has also made them at least temporarily inoperable.⁷³

The collection of heavy weapons has, however, been temporarily suspended in Panjshir following an arson attack and an attempted bombing of ANBP equipment

in January 2005.⁷⁴ ANBP's acting head has warned the Panjshiris that economic reconstruction in their region is contingent on progress towards disarmament. "The international community isn't likely to go there until they disarm", said Babbington.⁷⁵

In January 2005, the ANBP claimed to have collected and placed in cantonment 8,176 heavy weapons.⁷⁶ The number merits closer analysis, however. In absolute terms it includes weapons in all three categories used by the ANBP and ISAF: serviceable, repairable, or wrecked. Even the category "repairable" is loosely applied, covering weapons that are only useful as a source of spare parts. "Repairable" means that if you have three or four tanks, you get one", said a Western military official in Kabul. Some 75 per cent of the heavy weaponry cantoned by ISAF in Kabul is deemed either serviceable or repairable, and a similar proportion likely holds true for weaponry cantoned by the ANBP.⁷⁷ Secondly, ANBP figures are derived from its initial survey, which used a methodology that only covered heavy weapons "found or known, and accessible"⁷⁸ -- but not weapons that were deliberately hidden. "There are heavy weapons with houses built over them and we can't enter into houses", noted a UN official.⁷⁹

If data from subsequent heavy weapons assessments or discoveries were included, the percentage of weapons collected would be somewhat lower. Nevertheless, even the ANBP's critics acknowledge there has been real progress in heavy weapons collection.

But what that progress may represent is not so much a change of heart on the part of militia leaders as an understanding that they can continue to assert, protect and advance their political, military and economic interests through lightly armed militias, even as they save themselves the financial burden of storing and maintaining heavy weaponry. "The more successful [commanders] need not have heavy weapons now because the war is over", notes a Western official. Short of new

⁶⁶ Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 27 August 2004.

⁶⁷ Major-General Andrew Leslie, deputy commander of the ISAF mission, said in an interview, "Perhaps it is time for the various owners of these heavy weapons systems to consider moving them to cantonment sites outside of Kabul". "Remove heavy weapons systems from Kabul, Canadian urges", *Globe & Mail*, 24 September 2003.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Crispin Thorold, "Kabul Disarmament Accord Signed", BBC World Service, 12 January 2004.

⁷⁰ Heavy weaponry cantonment statistics for the Kabul garrison, 12 August 2004.

⁷¹ Crisis Group interview with a diplomat familiar with the DDR process, 24 October 2004.

⁷² Crisis Group interview, Kabul, 5 December 2005.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ "Bombs, arson hamper U.N.-sponsored disarmament of powerful Afghan faction", Associated Press, 19 January 2005.

⁷⁵ Jon Hemming, op.cit.

⁷⁶ Crisis Group interview with Peter Babbington, Acting Director, ANBP, 1 December 2004. "Afghanistan New Beginnings Program", 24 January 2005 at <http://www.undp.anbp.org>. According to the U.S. military, more than 7,800 heavy weapons are now under government control. See "Afghan army makes progress training, executing missions", op. cit.

⁷⁷ Crisis Group interview with an international security official, 5 December 2004.

⁷⁸ Crisis Group interview with UN official, February 2005.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

all out war, to protect and advance their factional interests, all commanders need are "light weapons and men".⁸⁰

E. DDR AND ELECTIONS

The DDR effort has undoubtedly had a positive impact on the democratic political process. More than 40,000 AMF soldiers have been disarmed and the program is on target for completion by June 2005, ahead of parliamentary elections anticipated later in the year. Progress in DDR has enhanced space for political party development and the wider democratic process. The ANA and ISAF do not have to factor thousands of now demobilised AMF troops into their security precautions for the elections. However, although some combatants have been disarmed, others could take their place, financed by what is still a war economy, indeed one that is primarily driven by a booming drug trade. And unless a more concerted attempt is to made to disarm unofficial militias, the rule of the gun might continue to prevail.

IV. EXPANDING THE DDR FRAMEWORK

Unofficial militias, that is, armed groups that are not recognised as AMF units by the ministry of defence, continue to lie outside the ANBP's mandate, a glaring omission in the plans to disarm Afghanistan's warring factions that is only now -- very late -- being addressed. Most are linked to political parties, backed or led by former commanders; some are even supported by government officials. They exercise considerable authority in rural areas and undermine the centre's attempts to extend its authority. The progressive decommissioning of AMF units could even strengthen these militias further, creating new challenges for the Karzai government and its international allies.

In July 2004, President Karzai issued a decree ordering "the severest of punishments" for individuals who refuse to disarm or who maintain private militias⁸¹ but it has not been enforced, and no arrest warrants have been issued. According to the ANBP's assessments, there are 853⁸² "illegal armed groups"⁸³ but the number could be more

than 1,000,⁸⁴ with anywhere between 65,000 to 80,000 armed personnel.⁸⁵

The Afghan government, with the support of the ANBP, intends to launch a new program aimed at disarming all illegal armed groups.⁸⁶ However, it is unclear how much the program would cost and which government agency would be given the lead operational role.

The ANBP is working under the assumption the program will be conducted by the office of the National Security Advisor, supported by the interior and defence ministries, and cost \$13 to \$15 million over a year. Although it is slated to begin in March 2005 and conclude by June 2006 when the ANBP's mandate expires, according to an international official, "nothing has been decided yet".⁸⁷ In the meantime the ANBP is working in a "directional vacuum...a strategic brainstorming and decision making session [had been] planned for 25 January. But it's 9 February and nothing has been decided on strategy and implementation...realistically we're looking at the end of March".⁸⁸

This new project will differ in two ways from the DDR process. First, rather than offering stand-alone reintegration packages as in the case of the AMF, it will link the reintegration of the groups to community development projects so as not to reward illegality. Secondly and more significantly, the national police and ANA will have the power to enforce the program, basing their actions on the 2004 presidential decree: "the primary difference is that people must know that this (new program) is enforceable".⁸⁹

The ANBP has categorised illegal armed groups slated for disarmament as either "low threat" or "high threat".⁹⁰ In the "high threat" category are those the ANA or ANP will have to disarm forcibly.⁹¹ The program, however, aims at minimising the risk of violent confrontation through a negotiated process

any armed militias outside the AMF. The rationale is that the term "militia" can have a legitimate connotation.

⁸⁴ Crisis Group interview with Paul Cruickshank, Planning Advisor, ANBP, 3 February 2005.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ An official name has yet to be ascribed to the program. Crisis Group interview with Paul Cruickshank, Planning Advisor, ANBP, 9 February 2005.

⁸⁷ The ANBP's official mandate is 3 years starting in July 2003 to June 2006. Crisis Group interview with Yuichi Inouye, Counsellor, Embassy of Japan, 9 February 2005.

⁸⁸ Crisis Group interview Paul Cruickshank, Planning Advisor, ANBP, 9 February 2005.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Carlotta Gall, "Afghanistan hears leader get tough on disarmament", *The New York Times*, 15 July 2004.

⁸² This number is based on information collected by UNAMA, ISAF PRTs, Coalition PRTs, and NGOs in their areas of responsibility.

⁸³ The ANBP is tentatively using the term "illegal armed group", which can be two or more armed individuals, to define

that will focus around the community aid incentives, primarily for the creation of infrastructure projects that will in turn create jobs. "Theoretically the jobs will go to the disarmed groups".⁹²

The disarmament pilot project will commence in Laghman province, at the invitation of its governor, who has claimed that the 200 to 300 unofficial militias there are willing to disarm peacefully without even incentives of community development aid.⁹³ The ANBP will use the Laghman experience to determine progress in disarmament as well as the cost of weapons collections and transfer.⁹⁴ It may also help the Kabul government and the ANBP assess the pros and cons of using incentives versus the threat of punitive force in disarming the bulk of the illegal militias.

Much like the DDR process in Gardez,⁹⁵ sizeable tribal militias such as the *arbakai* (tribal self-defence forces in parts of the southeast) are unlikely to be prioritised for the disarmament phase although they are the largest armed groups in the region.⁹⁶ Their exclusion from the process would be a disincentive for others to give up their weapons and probably have serious implications for a process that essentially relies on mutual disarmament.

The exclusion of these militias from the DDR process could add to the challenges that the ANBP and Karzai government will face in 2005. These challenges include the provision of security for the parliamentary elections; combating anti-government forces; dealing with ethnic and factional tensions; and battling the narcotics trade. Since several of these challenges are interlinked, the ANA will be stretched thin on the ground and could find itself unable to deliver unless it receives robust international support.⁹⁷

The ANP, too, will find it an uphill task to fulfil its mandate, given its uneven levels of professionalism. According to a U.S. Army police trainer, "The Kabul

police do not demonstrate the same level of professionalism as their counterparts in Parwan or Kapisa".⁹⁸ And although the ANA is a reputable, professional force, it lacks the numerical and operational capacities to perform its own tasks and help with policing simultaneously. It is essential, therefore, that the local police force be professionally trained and adequately staffed.

The ANBP and the Karzai government must also have a clear strategy to map out the order of disarmament of each militia in terms of region, threat, and the presence of a sufficiently effective police force to enforce the law. They will also have to take into account the links between drugs, arms and conflict in Afghanistan as they initiate this new disarmament phase.

There are a number of requirements for this new disarmament project to be successful, including:

- ❑ the benefits of the DDR program must be articulated countrywide before it begins;
- ❑ the definition of what constitutes an illegal group must be made publicly clear before the project commences;⁹⁹
- ❑ militia members must be informed about the punitive actions they will face if they defy DDR;
- ❑ communities must have prior knowledge of any military action to disarm militias in populated areas;
- ❑ there must be transparency and accountability in disbursement of community development aid;
- ❑ funding and planning for community development projects must precede DDR; and
- ❑ the interior, defence, and narcotics ministries, ANBP, and the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) must develop a strategy that coordinates their efforts in order to enhance effectiveness and minimise security risks.

Large stocks of ammunition are a related problem which also falls outside the original ANBP mandate. Caches have recently been discovered in western and central Afghanistan, including some 5,000 tons in the

⁹² Crisis Group interview with a senior political officer, U.S. Embassy, Kabul, 10 February 2005.

⁹³ On 9 February 2005 the ANBP sent a team to Laghman to lay the groundwork for the pilot project. Crisis Group interview with Paul Cruickshank, Planning Advisor, ANBP, 9 February 2005.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Gardez, the capital of Paktia province, was one of the venues of the pilot phase of the DDR project launched in October 2003. See Crisis Group Report, *Disarmament and Reintegration in Afghanistan*, op. cit.

⁹⁶ Crisis Group interview with Peter Babbington, Acting Director, ANBP, 1 December 2004.

⁹⁷ Crisis Group interview with Nick Downie, Project Coordinator, Afghanistan NGO Security Office (ANSO), 8 February 2005.

⁹⁸ Crisis Group interview with Sergeant Beatty NCO, U.S. Army PRT, Baghram, ANP Trainer, Kabul, 8 February 2005.

⁹⁹ Although Abdul Rashid Dostum recently began disarming his local militia, he retains a personal entourage of 200 bodyguards. It must be clarified whether or not personal security details of this size constitute illegal militias and/or violate the Election Law. See "Dostum survives suicide attack", Agence France-Presse, 20 January 2005.

possession of Herat's now decommissioned Division 17 on 24 November 2004.¹⁰⁰ The ANBP estimates that "hundreds of thousands" of tons of ammunition remain, far exceeding the requirements of the ANA.

With a start-up grant from the Canadian government and additional U.S. support, the ANBP, two of its contractors, the defence ministry, and the UN Mine Action Centre Afghanistan (UNMACA), launched a joint ammunition assessment on 11 December. It aims at locating caches, identifying ammunition that could be used by the ANA or serve as reserve stocks, and determining what should be destroyed -- possibly on the order of 60 to 70 per cent of the total. Still unaddressed, however, is the question of secure storage sites and funding for the destruction of excess ammunition.¹⁰¹

V. CONCLUSION

President Karzai's appointment of a new cabinet in late December 2004 came at a critical moment for Afghanistan's DDR process. Angered by the perceived domination of Pashtuns and the loss of their monopoly on the security apparatus, the Tajik-dominated Shura-yi Nazar units in Kabul and Panjshir are dragging their feet on disarmament.

One way of defusing their growing distrust of the Karzai government would be to ensure that defence ministry reforms, including appointments to ANA command posts, take into account both professionalism and ethnic diversity. Appointments to police command posts should be ethnically balanced but made on professional grounds.

If the DDR process is to be sustained, the ANBP and the Karzai government must also pay special attention to finding out if demobilised commanders with new security responsibilities have recruited their former militiamen, or those of other commanders, directly into their units. Those who have done so should be removed from their posts. Any employment of former militiamen in security capacities, whether directly by the interior ministry or by private firms that contract with the ministry, must be integrated into the DDR process rather than serving as a channel through which DDR can be undermined. At the same time, U.S.-led Coalition forces need to distance themselves from any commander who refuses to accept central government authority.

The Karzai government's initiative to disarm militias is at the core of its effort to establish its authority throughout the provinces. It is crucial for reconstruction of the Afghan state and rule of law. As a senior diplomat said, "There is no room for failure".¹⁰²

The international community has a vital role to play in helping the Karzai government as the country moves into the second phase of its democratic process, copes with ethnic and factional tensions, and battles the narcotics trade. The most immediate requirement for both the central government and the international community is to ensure that all Afghans recognise that law is enforceable and those enforcing the law can be trusted. In the final analysis, the disarmament process is not solely about collecting weapons; it is also about transforming Afghan lives.

Kabul/Brussels, 23 February 2005

¹⁰⁰ Crisis Group interview with UN official, December 2004.

¹⁰¹ Crisis Group interview with Peter Babbington, Acting Director, ANBP, 1 December 2004.

¹⁰² Crisis Group interview with a senior UN diplomat, Kabul, 27 January 2005.

APPENDIX A

MAP OF AFGHANISTAN

