



MEMORANDUM

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To: House Armed Services Committee/Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations

From: Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, 7-7612

Subject: Testimony of Kenneth Katzman

Testimony of Kenneth Katzman, Specialist in Middle Eastern Affairs, Congressional Research Service

House of Representatives, Committee on Armed Services, Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee

“Afghan National Security Forces: Afghan Corruption and the Development of an Effective Fighting Force”

August 2, 2012

I would like to thank the Sub-Committee, Chairman Wittman, Ranking Member Cooper, for asking the Congressional Research Service for my testimony today. I will summarize my testimony and ask that the full text be included in the record, and I look forward to your questions.

This testimony is based primarily on the many conversations on this issue that I’ve had since 2001 with U.S. officials, Afghan officials, allied government officials, journalists, U.S. military personnel, and academics, including conversations in the course of several visits there since 2004.

Definition of the Issue

One problem that analysts, policymakers, diplomats, and military leaders have had in assessing corruption within the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) is that the term “corruption” is often used to describe many different behaviors – most of which are illicit or illegal. Some behaviors that are commonly termed “corruption” include cultural or political factors that do not directly violate any Afghan laws or regulations, or are unlikely to prompt any enforcement or punishment efforts. In addition to what analysts assess as classic forms of corruption - the misuse of power and position for private gain - the ANSF is influenced by several related but distinct factors, such as ethnic, political, and regional factionalism. I will address all these different factors with respect to the ANSF because, collectively, they have the potential to undermine the effectiveness of the ANSF, if not fracture it outright.

Background to the Creation of the ANSF¹

The ANSF is subject to the adverse influences of corruption and factionalism in part because it is a newly-created force. It is not an established institution with a long history and well-honed traditions of professionalism. ANSF elements, as part of the Afghan population, are aware of all the uncertainties surrounding the reduction of international forces and transition to Afghan security leadership by the end of 2014. Successive Afghan regimes have fallen since 1973, each time displacing families and leaving many bereft of savings and economic livelihood. Many observers say that current Afghan officials and members of the ANSF insist they will not suffer a similar fate if the Afghan government does not hold together after 2014.

With the exception of some Afghan Air Force elements based at Bagram Air Base, no professional army survived the 1992-1996 civil war between mujahedin factions or the Taliban regime of 1996-2001. The Afghan military that existed during the time of the Soviet occupation, and the Communist regime that lasted until 1992, had completely disintegrated.

During the 1992-1996 civil war, there was a Defense Ministry headed by legendary mujahedin commander Ahmad Shah Masoud, but the rolls of the ministry were filled out with “Northern Alliance” (northern minority Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara) fighters and virtually no ethnic Pashtuns whatsoever. The Taliban - which is Pashtun and which was opposed bitterly by the Northern Alliance - stopped paying these fighters when it took over in Kabul in September 1996. The only military organization in place during Taliban rule was the Taliban militia force. After the Taliban regime fell in 2001, the Northern Alliance fighters were put back on the Defense Ministry payroll, and the Ministry took over the few tanks and artillery pieces that survived the 2001 U.S. bombing campaign that ousted the Taliban. There were no working fixed wing combat aircraft that survived U.S. bombing during the 2001 war, but some Russian-made helicopters did survive and were placed under Ministry control.

Dismantling Militias and Building a New Force

After the Taliban regime fell, the international community decided to create a relatively strong central government that would possess a monopoly of armed force. To do so, the international community concluded that the armed *mujahedin* groups – overwhelmingly non-Pashtun - that had helped overthrow the Taliban would have to be disarmed. This decision was opposed by - and is still criticized to this day by - the Northern Alliance that had hoped to dominate the post-Taliban political landscape through its predominance of armed force. On the other hand, the decision signaled to the Pashtuns – which are a plurality of the Afghan population (about 42%) – that they would not be subjugated by the superior arms of the Northern Alliance. In addition, the Taliban consists almost entirely of Pashtuns, and alienating the Pashtuns could have led to a large movement of Pashtun support back to the ousted Taliban movement.

The main program to disarm mujahedin fighters was run by the U.N. Assistance Mission – Afghanistan (UNAMA). It was called the “DDR” program—Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration. It began in late 2003 and formally concluded on June 30, 2006. The program got off to a slow start because the Afghan Defense Ministry was slow to reduce the percentage of Tajiks in senior positions by a July 1, 2003, target date for the program to begin in earnest. The international community judged that, in order to form a credible and cohesive new force that Pashtuns would readily join, the Defense Ministry and post-Taliban security forces being formed needed to reflect the ethnic proportions of the population. UNAMA demanded that the Tajik dominance of these institutions be reduced before the DDR program could begin. In September 2003, Karzai replaced 22 senior Tajiks in the Defense Ministry officials with Pashtuns,

¹ Information in this section is derived from the witnesses’ conversations with aides to President Karzai and close observers of military issues in Afghanistan. November 2001- February 2002.

Uzbeks, and Hazaras. This paved the way for the DDR to proceed. The major donor for the program was Japan, which contributed about \$140 million.

The DDR program was initially expected to demobilize 100,000 fighters, although, after more exhaustive study and analysis, that figure was later reduced to about 60,000. Of the approximately 59,000 fighters demobilized under the program, 55,800 former fighters exercised reintegration options provided by the program: starting small businesses, farming, and other options. U.N. officials say at least 25% of these found long-term, sustainable jobs. Some studies criticized the DDR program for failing to prevent a certain amount of rearmament of militiamen or stockpiling of weapons and for the rehiring of some militiamen.²

Part of the DDR program was the collection and cantonment of militia weapons, but generally only poor-quality weapons were collected. As one example, Muhammad Fahim, the main military leader of the Northern Alliance faction, refused to turn heavy weapons over to U.N. and Afghan forces (including four Scud missiles). This reflected his dual role as a Northern Alliance partisan, even though he served as the first post-Taliban Defense Minister and is currently Karzai's first Vice President.

Despite the earlier demobilization, which affected many of the northern minorities, there are indications that some faction leaders may be seeking to revive disbanded militias. UNAMA and other institutions fear that the Northern Alliance and other factions have retained caches of weapons, including some heavy weapons, in case there is civil conflict after the 2014 transition. The minorities communities may also fear increased Taliban influence as a result of the Karzai efforts to reconcile with the Taliban. The minorities want to be sure they could combat any Taliban abuses that might result if the Taliban achieves a share of power.

Since June 11, 2005, the militia disarmament effort has emphasized another program called "DIAG"—Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups. It was run by the Afghan Disarmament and Reintegration Commission, headed by second Vice President Karim Khalili. This program involved fighters who were never formally placed on Defense Ministry rolls, and thus are characterized as "illegal armed groups."

Under the DIAG, no payments are available to fighters, and the program depends on persuasion rather than use of force against the illegal groups. DIAG has not been as well funded as was DDR: it has received only about \$15 million in operating funds. As an incentive for compliance, Japan and other donors have made available \$35 million for development projects where illegal groups have disbanded. These incentives were intended to accomplish the disarmament of a pool of as many as 150,000 members of 1,800 different illegal armed groups. However, these goals were not met by the December 2007 target date in part because armed groups in the south said they need to retain their weaponry to defend against a continuing threat from the Taliban insurgency. The program remains in place, but with little evident activity or progress in recent years.

Governmental Corruption in Afghanistan

Corruption in the 350,000 person Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) is a subset of the broader and highly vexing problem of corruption in the Afghan government. The corruption in Afghanistan's governing and security institutions has caused many Afghans to view the central government as "predatory," and many Afghans and international donors to lose faith in President Hamid Karzai's leadership. The U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime estimated in 2010 that about \$2.5 billion in total bribes – about 23% of Afghanistan's gross domestic product – were paid by Afghans that year.³ Reducing

² For an analysis of the DDR program, see Christian Denny's *Disarmament, Demobilization and Rearmament?*, June 6, 2005, <http://www.jca.apc.org/~jann/Documents/Disarmament%20demobilization%20rearmament.pdf>.

³ [Http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2010/january/corruption-widespread-in-afghanistan-unodc-survey-says.html](http://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2010/january/corruption-widespread-in-afghanistan-unodc-survey-says.html); (continued...)

corruption in government was a major focus of the Tokyo Mutual Accountability Framework, issued at the end of a major donor's conference on July 8, 2012, which requires Afghanistan to "Enact and enforce the legal framework for fighting corruption" and, for the first time, specifically conditions international aid on progress toward that end.⁴

President Hamid Karzai has not denied that corruption is pervasive in his government; he has repeatedly acknowledged that corruption is a major problem in Afghanistan. In a June 21, 2012 speech to Afghan parliamentarians, he said his government has a responsibility to step up the fight against governmental corruption. On July 26, 2012, Karzai appeared to try to meet his pledges to the Tokyo conference and in other settings by issuing a "decree on administrative reforms" – a 23-page document of policies and directives to curb corruption. However, concerns about his leadership on this issue center on implementation and his apparent reluctance to prosecute officials for corruption – particular those related to him or aligned with him politically. This stands in contrast to his attempts to vigorously prosecute for corruption those politically opposed to him.

High-Level Governmental Corruption

U.S. officials have been concerned about Afghan governance, and particularly the corrosive effect that high-level corruption has on Afghan public support for the government. At the upper levels of government, some observers have asserted that Karzai deliberately tolerates officials or prominent relatives who are allegedly involved in illicit activity and supports their receipt of lucrative contracts from donor countries, in exchange for their political support. Karzai's brother, Mahmoud, has apparently grown wealthy through real estate and auto sales ventures in Qandahar and Kabul, purportedly by fostering the impression he can influence his brother. Mahmoud also received millions of dollars in loans on concessionary terms from the Kabul Bank – loans to him and other major shareholders, such as the brother of First Vice President Muhammad Fahim contributed to the Bank's virtual collapse in 2010. Many of these soft loans were used to buy luxury property in Dubai, and the real estate downturn there led to defaults totaling about \$925 million. In October 2010 it was reported that a Justice Department investigation of Mahmoud Karzai's dealings (he holds dual U.S.-Afghan citizenship) had begun, and reported grand jury consideration of charges (racketeering, tax evasion) against him began in mid-February 2011.

On the other hand, some cases of high-level corruption are, according to many observers, instigated more by political feuds rather than corruption per se. For example, in 2009, then Minister of Mines Mohammad Ibrahim Adel was accused of accepting a \$20 million bribe in exchange for choosing China Metallurgical Group's bid to develop a large copper mine at Aynak.⁵ Adel denied the allegations and the case was subsequently dropped, although Adel was replaced. The accusations could have been a result of some Afghan resentment of the terms of the bid, although many Afghan officials say the China Metallurgy bid was far superior to that of other firms and there would have been no need for bribery to win that contract.

Another example in which corruption allegations may be conflated with politics is that of former Central Bank governor Abdul Qadir Fitrat, who was accused by the Karzai government of failing to discover the Kabul Bank scandal at an early stage. He subsequently fled Afghanistan to the United States, believing

(...continued)

http://www.boston.com/news/world/middleeast/articles/2010/07/30/petraeus_takes_on_afghan_corruption/

⁴ <http://www.embassyofafghanistan.org/article/the-tokyo-declaration-partnership-for-self-reliance-in-afghanistan-from-transition-to-transf>

⁵ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2009/11/17/AR2009111704198.html>

Karzai intended to make him a scapegoat for the scandal – in which Mahmoud Karzai and the brother of first Vice President Fahim were central figures.

Another trend that has attracted notice among Afghans is that several high officials, despite very low official government salaries, have acquired ornate properties in west Kabul since 2002. They allegedly have appropriated to themselves government or private land for this purpose, as well as for business ventures such as housing projects. Some believe the appropriations have been mostly of government-owned land, not land believed to be owned by other Afghans.

Several Afghan officials have been accused by Afghans of using their position to enrich themselves. Afghan officials are said to have an “inside track” for their side enterprises to win contracts because of the contacts these officials have with donor organizations and non-governmental organizations. In the June 21, 2012 speech discussed above, Karzai called on international donors to cease awarding “construction, building, and commercial contracts to the government authorities and their relatives.”⁶

Some observers who have served in Afghanistan say that, in exchange for political support, Karzai has appointed some provincial governors to “reward them” – giving them an opportunity to use their positions to “prey” economically on the populations of that province. Implicit in these accusations is that provincial governors are able to use their powerful position to solicit bribes from their constituents, or are able to siphon off customs revenues at border crossings. The populations purportedly presume that the provincial governor will be shielded from any prosecution or disciplinary action by Karzai.

Lower-Level Corruption

U.S. officials are highly concerned that lower level corruption is eroding support for the Afghan government. Observers who follow the issue assert that most of the governmental corruption in Afghanistan – by transaction, if not by monetary value, does not take place in elite circles. It is this lower-level corruption that is perhaps more of a threat to government popularity than is high level corruption, because it is the lower-level forms of corruption that most directly confronts Afghans in the course of their interactions with the government. For example, many Afghans report needing to pay bribes to government officials or representatives to accomplish such mundane functions as processing of official documents such as passports and drivers’ licenses.⁷ By contrast, according to many observers, higher level corruption is, to a certain extent, “expected,” and involves figures (such as Mahmoud Karzai) who are little known to most Afghans. The bribery solicitations are in part caused by the fact that government workers receive very low salaries and count on such illicit payments to earn a living wage. The typical Afghan government bureaucrat earns about \$200 per month, as compared to the pay of typical contractors in Afghanistan that might pay as much as \$6,500 per month.

Other corruption is characterized by Afghan government officials’ siphoning off supplies and then selling the supplies to earn additional income. Such actions have caused consternation in the international community because, in most cases, the supplies stolen by government officials have been donated by governmental or non-governmental aid organizations.

Analyzing Corruption: Nepotism, Patronage, and Factionalism

Some practices in Afghanistan do not conform to accepted Western business and governmental practices, but fall short of constituting “corruption” in the sense of illegal or illicit behavior. Some of the practices

⁶ Joshua Partlow. “Karzai Calls on Afghans to Fight Corruption.” *Washington Post*, June 21, 2012.

⁷ Filkins, Dexter, “Bribes Corrode Afghan’s Trust in Government,” *New York Times*, January 2, 2009.

reflect cultural patterns and behaviors typical not only of Afghanistan but of many countries in the region and the developing world more broadly.

Among the widely noted practices are patronage, nepotism, and factionalism. Many observers say that it is a cultural norm that those Afghans who have achieved government positions will reward their relatives, ethnic kinsmen, and friends with favors and contracts. Karzai's previous comments about this practice notwithstanding, until the issuance of the decree on administrative reform, mentioned previously, on July 26, 2012, there had been no clear laws or regulations in Afghanistan that prevent government officials from hiring relatives or contracting with firms owned by their relatives or associates. His decree included a provision ordering "senior government officials to avoid intervening in the recruitment for the civil service, judiciary and universities."⁸ The Karzai decree is unlikely to be vigorously enforced or have significant effect: firstly, it applies only to "senior government officials." Second, this provision of the decree is inconsistent with Afghan cultural norms: an Afghan government official might be the only member of an extended family earning a full salary, and the official is expected by his familial and political associates to use his position to financially help them.

A related practice is factionalism, another behavior in no way unique to Afghanistan. This refers to a widely noted trend in which cabinet ministers, security chiefs, and other senior figures tend to bring in many members of their ethnic or political faction to work in their institution. Until the July 26 decree discussed earlier, no Afghan laws or regulations prevented officials from hiring trusted partisans as aides. It is not clear that the July 26 decree would even apply to this practice, because many of the top positions at a ministry are not civil service positions, and senior officials have discretion on whom to hire as their top aides. The political system in Afghanistan has tried to curb factionalism, to some degree, through the informal process of consensus building in Afghanistan. For example, there has been an unwritten understanding that when the head of a ministry or organization is a Pashtun, his top deputy will typically be a Tajik, and vice-versa. This understanding has been applied widely to preserve the fragile political consensus that has kept the Northern Alliance working relatively cooperatively within the Karzai government.

Corruption and the ANSF

Observers have noted that the practices discussed above are widespread within the ANSF and the Afghan ministries that oversee it – the Interior Ministry that oversees the Afghan National Police and the Defense Ministry that oversees the Afghan National Army. In part, corruption is fueled by the low salaries paid to ANSF members - they are paid an average of about \$250 per month. Among the behaviors and practices that have been reported by observers in recent years, many of which are practiced simultaneously:

Demands for Bribes. By all accounts, ANP officers continue to demand bribes from citizens in exchange for favorable treatment. Some of these bribes are solicited at ANP checkpoints, and others are paid to ward off ANP investigations such as searches of homes. Observers say that ANP and ANA officers have sometimes demanded extra payments from the U.S. or other militaries in Afghanistan to help guard their military equipment shipments.

Although the issue is under investigation, it is possible that solicitation of bribes might have been a common pattern in the mistreatment of patients at the Mohammad Daoud National Military Hospital in Kabul. Press reports say ANSF members died of malnutrition and lack of medical care because their families could not or did not pay bribes to the staff to ensure necessary care.⁹

⁸ Alissa Rubin. "Afghan President issues Reforms Aimed at Corruption." *New York Times*, July 27, 2012.

⁹ Susan Cornwell. "Pentagon Probing Alleged Abuse at Afghan Military Hospital." *Reuters*, June 20, 2012.

Selective Justice. Many observers agree that in Afghanistan, justice is based on who you are rather than what actions you did or did not take. There are numerous examples in which prison officials – and prison are under the jurisdiction of the Interior Ministry per a January 2012 Karzai decree - have released suspects from prison because of solicitations, personal appeals, offers of bribes, or threats, from the suspect’s family or clan.

Revenue Siphoning/Embezzlement. There are widespread reports that border police (part of the ANP) and border officials have siphoned off customs revenues. Much of the Afghan budget is derived from customs duties collected at major border crossings, and the Karzai government has struggled since 2002 to ensure that all collected duties are turned over to the central government. In some cases, the provincial governors, such as Ghul Agha Sherzai of Nangarhar, have reputedly siphoned off customs revenues, asserting that their province is not receiving its fair share of national revenues. In these cases, the border police may be acting at the behest of the governor who seeks to impound that revenue.

Ghost Employees. There have been widespread reports in recent years that security commanders frequently place “ghost employees” on official payrolls in order to pocket their salaries. A variation has been to provide relatives and friend with “no show” security jobs in which a person is paid but does not report for duty, or reports only infrequently.

Salary Diversions. An illicit practice that receives extensive discussion among diplomats in Kabul is that in which security commanders, particularly those in the ANP, siphon off some of the salary payments to personnel under their command. This has been a function of the tradition in the ANSF in which a commander distributes salary payments, giving the commander the opportunity for misfeasance. In some cases, commanders refuse to tell their personnel what their exact salary is supposed to be, thereby facilitating the siphoning off of a portion of the payment. The United States and its partners have curbed this practice, to some extent, by paying ANP personnel directly through a mobile phone-based electronic account called E-Paisa, run by the Roshan cellphone company.

Misuse or Sale of Donated Equipment and Supplies. Several observers have reported cases in which ANSF personnel have sold U.S. or other donor-provided vehicles, fuel, and equipment. The proceeds of the sales are subsequently divided among the personnel of the unit selling the provisions. The intent of the activity is to supplement the low ANSF salaries. In other reported cases, ANSF units are said to have stripped schools or other buildings of their wood and used it to build fires during cold weather. This latter activity appears to be motivated by a deficit of fuel resources available to the particular unit.

Participation in Illicit Activity. There have been cases reported in which ANSF personnel, even whole units, have participated directly in illegal economic activity. For example, some observers have reported cases in which poppy crop - the precursor to opium – was being grown in local ANP headquarters. There have been numerous other reports in which ANSF personnel were said to be involved in narcotics trafficking or paid by the traffickers not to investigate their activities. In a prominent example, U.S. investigators are looking into allegations that Afghan Air Force officers have been using the force’s assets to run drugs around Afghanistan.¹⁰

Absences Without Leave. In building up the ANSF, U.S. military commanders in Afghanistan have noted difficulties with retaining ANSF personnel. In many cases, however, what appear to be personnel desertions are often long absences-without-leave. It is typical in Afghanistan that security personnel serving outside their home villages will return to their family for extended periods of time, in part to deliver part of their salaries to their families, in cash. This results in long absences from their ANSF units. The U.S. military has sought to curb this behavior, reportedly with mixed success, by compelling ANSF

¹⁰ <http://abcnews.go.com/blogs/headlines/2012/03/afghan-air-force-suspected-of-drug-running-report/>

personnel to open bank accounts to facilitate money transfers to their families without having to deliver cash in person.

The Impact of Corruption and Related Practices on Effectiveness

These practices and patterns of behavior in the ANSF have had a significantly corrosive effect on the public perception and overall effectiveness of the ANSF, raising questions about how well the ANSF can secure the country after the 2014 security transition.

- The practices have eroded the legitimacy of the ANSF by causing many Afghans to question the dedication of the ANSF to its mission. There is a concern that, if much of the ANSF is concerned primarily with personal enrichment, its commitment to hold off the Taliban after 2014 is doubtful.
 - The practices discussed above have cost the ANSF – and the Afghan government - public support. Many in the Afghan public views the ANSF – particularly the ANP - as “predatory” because of the demand for bribes.
 - The lack of public trust in the ANP causes many local communities to avoid informing on the movements or activities of the Taliban or other insurgent groups.
 - The practices deprives the public of faith in the Afghan justice system. Many Afghans turn to informal mechanisms, such as local *shuras* (councils), local militias, or to extended family members, to resolve disputes or combat crime. Observers say many crimes go unreported.
 - The practices have caused an unrealistic assessment of the true number of forces available. Although the publicly stated size of the ANSF is about 350,000 personnel, the actual number serving is likely lower than that. This complicates U.S. and NATO planning for the post-2014 transition.
 - Those ANSF who are involved in illegal economic activity may be contributing directly to the insurgency because these activities are used by the Taliban to fund much of their activities. The Taliban might ultimately benefit financially whether or not the ANSF personnel are conducting actual transactions with Taliban.
 - The practices directly deprive the ANSF of some of the equipment and materiel provided by the international community, rendering some units unable to perform their missions. For example, the sale of their fuel provisions threatens to render ANSF units unable to conduct patrols or respond to insurgent activity.
 - The issue of diversion of salary payments has often caused frictions between commanders and their personnel – particularly in cases where personnel discover that their commanders have been skimming salary payments from them. This erodes unit cohesiveness and command authority and respect within the ANSF.
 - The practices discussed have, in some cases, caused ANSF recruits to become disillusioned and leave the force, by many accounts. Some recruits who are not aligned with a particular faction or do not have the backing of large clans have seen promotions go to others who may be less competent but are better connected.
 - The practices discussed above have, in some cases, directly deprived the Afghan government of revenues because some customs duties are being siphoned off.
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Ethnic Balance and Factionalism in the Security Sector

There is an analytic distinction between corruption and factionalism, as discussed, but factionalism is a key factor in assessing the effectiveness of the ANSF after the transition. Both factionalism and corruption relate to the overarching question of whether the ANSF is a professional force, loyal only to its mission and the Afghan nation. The existence of factionalism within the ANSF calls into question the cohesiveness of the ANSF if it is challenged militarily or politically.

The first question most analysts ask is how is the ANSF balanced by ethnicity. With about 41% Pashtuns, 34% Tajiks, 12% Hazaras, and 8% Uzbeks, the composition of the overall ANSF is roughly in line with the broad demographics of the country. However the ANP serves in the area where they join the force, and reflect the makeup of local communities to a greater degree than the ANA does, as discussed in the April 2012 Defense Department report on stability in Afghanistan and the Afghan security forces. However when aggregated at the national level, Tajiks are significantly overrepresented, Pashtuns are proportionately represented, and Hazaras, Uzbeks, and others are somewhat underrepresented.¹¹

U.S. commanders say that those Pashtuns who are in the ANA are disproportionately eastern Pashtuns (from the Ghilzai tribal confederations) rather than southern Pashtuns (Durrani tribal confederations). Defense Minister Wardak said in February 2011 that a greater proportion of southern Pashtuns are being recruited to redress that imbalance somewhat, and the October 2011 DOD report says a re-evaluation in 2011 shows that there are more southern Pashtuns in the ANP than previously thought. In addition, some observers assert that Tajiks continue to control many of the command ranks of the Afghan security institutions, giving Pashtuns only a veneer of control of these organizations. Others rebut such assertions, pointing out that not only is the Defense Minister, Abdul Rahim Wardak, and Pashtun, but the current chief of staff of the ANA (Lt. Gen. Sher Mohammad Karimi) is a Pashtun as well.

Factionalism

Assessments of the overall ethnic balance do not adequately address the issue of factionalism within the ANSF. Factions exist in the ANSF because, since its inception in 2002, its key leaders and commanders have tended to hire their partisans and relatives to subordinate positions, sometimes as part of a deliberate strategy to enhance the political strength of their particular faction. However, the ANSF is not, on the whole, divided along ethnic lines. All ANSF units are integrated, and many ANSF personnel are loyal to the nation rather than a specific ethnic faction or faction leader. The vast majority of ANSF personnel, by most accounts, do not identify themselves as members of any particular ethnic or political faction.

Factionalism was more prominent in the early years of the ANSF than it is now. At the time the United States first began establishing the ANA, Northern Alliance figures who were then in key security positions weighted recruitment for the national army toward its Tajik ethnic base. Many Pashtuns, in reaction, refused recruitment or left the ANA program. The naming of a Pashtun, Abdul Rahim Wardak, as Defense Minister in December 2004 reduced desertions among Pashtuns (he remains in that position). U.S. officials in Afghanistan say this problem was further alleviated with better pay and more close involvement by U.S. forces, and, as noted above, the force has become ethnically balanced since then.

Still, concerns about factionalism within the ANSF have drawn particular attention from Afghans because every faction in Afghanistan fears any effort by rival factions to potentially use the security services to further their own political purposes. For the United States, a force that is highly factionalized has the

¹¹ Department of Defense. "Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan/United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghanistan National Security Forces." April 2012.

potential to fracture, particularly if it is challenged extensively on the battlefield or if the fragile national political consensus among faction leaders breaks down.

As a prominent example of how sensitive the issue is in Kabul, the former chief of staff of the ANA, Bismillah Khan Mohammadi, a Tajik who is aligned with the Northern Alliance politically, was widely reported to have been trying to pack the ANA with Northern Alliance loyalists. Partly because of complaints from Pashtuns about this practice, Karzai reassigned Khan from the ANA to be Interior Minister in June 2010,¹² although he is said to be similarly favoring Northern Alliance loyalists for high appointments in that Ministry.

His re-assignment to the Interior Ministry represented an effort to preserve the tradition of ethnic balance in the security sector of government. He replaced Mohammad Hanif Atmar, a Pashtun (Rehmat Nabil), the same day (June 26, 2010) as another Tajik/Northern Alliance figure, Amrollah Saleh was fired as head of the National Directorate of Security (NDS, the intelligence agency). Saleh was replaced by a Pashtun as head of that service. The security ministries tend to have key deputies who are of a different ethnicity than the minister or top official.

Another example is that of Daoud Daoud, a Northern Alliance stalwart. A year before his assassination in May 2011, he was assigned to be ANP commander for virtually all of the northern provinces. He was assigned because of his reputation as a legendary mujahedin commander politically close to Ahmad Shah Masoud.¹³ Daoud's appointment in the north accomplished what was intended – it energized the mostly Tajik police forces that serve in northern Afghanistan at a time when the Taliban was making major inroads in areas of the north such as Konduz, Baghlan Province, and elsewhere in the north.

Key Armed Faction Leaders

The ANSF is said to have loyalists of almost every major political figure in Afghanistan. In some cases, these loyalists – particularly those that serve in areas of Afghanistan dominated by their faction - tend to take direction from their party chief rather than their line commander in the ANSF. For example, many Tajiks in the ANSF look to first Vice President Fahim for leadership and guidance. Many ANSF personnel serving in Qandahar are directed by the Karzai family, which hails from that province, rather than the ANSF command structure in Qandahar.

A number of major figures in Afghanistan have support within the ANSF, and continue to control small militia organizations informally. The figures discussed below would likely become even more politically powerful should the ANSF fracture.

- *Vice President Muhammad Fahim.* Karzai's choice of Northern Alliance figure Muhammad Fahim as his first vice presidential running mate in the August 2009 elections might have been a manifestation of Karzai's growing reliance on faction leaders, as well as his drive to divide the Northern Alliance. Fahim is a Tajik from the Panjshir Valley region who was named military chief of the Northern Alliance/UF faction after Ahmad Shah Masoud's death. The Fahim choice was criticized by human rights and other groups because of Fahim's long identity as a *mujahedin* commander/militia faction leader. Some allegations suggest he has engineered property confiscations and other benefits to feed his and his faction's business interests. During 2002-2007, he reportedly withheld turning over some heavy weapons to U.N. disarmament officials. He is said to have a considerable following among Tajiks within the ANSF. Fahim's brother, Abdul

¹² Dexter Filkins. "After America." *The New Yorker*, July 9, 2012.

¹³ Ray Rivera. "Taliban Bomber Infiltrates Afghan-NATO Meeting, Killing Police Official and Others." *New York Times*, May 28, 2011.

Hussain Fahim, was a beneficiary of concessionary loans from Kabul Bank, a major bank that has faced major losses due to its lending practices, as discussed below. The Fahim brother is also reportedly partnered with Mahmoud Karzai on coal mining and cement manufacturing ventures.

- *Uzbek Leader Abdul Rashid Dostam.* Some observers have cited Karzai's handling of prominent Uzbek leader Abdul Rashid Dostam – the longtime head of a party called Junbush Melli (National Front) as inconsistent. Dostam, generally aligned with the Tajiks and part of the Northern Alliance, commands numerous partisans in his redoubt in northern Afghanistan (Jowzjan, Faryab, Balkh, and Sar-i-Pol provinces). Uzbeks within the ANSF would be likely to gravitate to his leadership were the ANSF to fracture. During the Soviet and Taliban years, he was widely accused of human rights abuses of political opponents.¹⁴ On July 11, 2009, the *New York Times* reported that allegations that Dostam had caused the death of several hundred Taliban prisoners during the major combat phase of Operation Enduring Freedom in late 2001 were not investigated by the Bush Administration. In responding to assertions that there was no investigation of the “*Dasht-e-Laili*” massacre because Dostam was a U.S. ally,¹⁵ To try to separate him from his armed followers, in 2005 Karzai appointed him to the post of chief of staff of the armed forces. Dostam supported Karza's re-election in 2009 primarily to limit the influence of a strong rival figure in the north, Balkh Province Governor Atta Mohammad Noor. Noor is a Tajik but, under a 2005 compromise with Karzai, is in control of a province that is inhabited by many Uzbeks. However, Dostam has since re-aligned with his former Northern Alliance colleagues in opposition to Karzai. In June 2012, the Karzai government launched a prosecution of Dostan for allegedly insisting the China National Petroleum Co. (CNPC) hire Dostam loyalists to security and other jobs on their oil development project in northern Afghanistan. However, Dostam and those close to him alleged that the prosecution was a Karzai effort to favor his relatives' firm, Watan Group, which is the partner of CNPC on the project and which is therefore in line to provide security and other services to the development.
- *Atta Mohammad Noor.* Another Tajik figure in the Northern Alliance is Atta Mohammad Noor, who has been the governor of Balkh Province, which includes the commercially vibrant city of Mazar-e-Sharif, since 2005. He is a former *mujahedin* commander who openly endorsed Karzai's main opponent, Dr. Abdullah in the 2009 presidential election. However, Karzai has kept Noor in place because he has kept the province secure, allowing Mazar-e-Sharif to become a major trading hub, and because displacing him could cause ethnic unrest. Observers say that Noor exemplifies the local potentate, brokering local security and business arrangements that enrich Noor and his allies while ensuring stability and prosperity.¹⁶ Some reports say that he commands two private militias in the province that, in at least two districts (Chimtal and Charbolak), outnumber official Afghan police, and which prompt complaints of abuses (land seizures) by the province's Pashtuns.
- *Mohammad Mohaqiq.* Another faction leader is Mohammad Mohaqiq, a Hazara leader. During the war against the Soviet Union and then Taliban, Mohaqiq was a commander of Hazara fighters in and around Bamiyan Province, and a major figure in the Hazara Shiite Islamist party Hezb-e-Wahdat (Unity Party). The party was supported by Iran during

¹⁴ CRS e-mail conversation with a then National Security aide to President Karzai, December 2008.

¹⁵ This is the name of the area where the Taliban prisoners purportedly died and were buried in a mass grave.

¹⁶ Gall, Carlotta, “In Afghanistan's North, Ex-Warlord Offers Security.” *New York Times*, May 17, 2010.

those periods. Mohaqiq is widely perceived by observers to have substantial support among Hazaras within the ANSF. Currently, Mohaqiq is aligned with Dostam and hardline Tajik figures in an opposition grouping called the National Front of Afghanistan. In July 2012, Mohaqiq demanded Karzai fire the head of the Academy of Sciences for publishing a new national almanac that Mohaqiq said overstated the percentage of Pashtuns in Afghanistan at 60%. Karzai fired the Academy head and three others at that institution. Another major Hazara figure, Karim Khalili, tends to work with Karzai and has served as his second Vice President through Karzai's two terms as president.

- *Isma'il Khan.* Another Northern Alliance strongman that Karzai has sought to simultaneously engage and weaken is prominent Tajik political leader and former Herat Governor Ismail Khan. In 2006, Karzai appointed him minister of energy and water, taking him away from his political base in the west. However, Khan remains influential in the west, and maintaining ties to Khan helped Karzai win Tajik votes in Herat Province that might otherwise have gone to Dr. Abdullah. Still, Khan is said to have several opponents in Herat, and a bombing there on September 26, 2009, narrowly missed his car. Additional questions about Khan were raised in November 2010 when Afghan television broadcast audio files purporting to contain Khan insisting that election officials alter the results of the September 18, 2010, parliamentary elections.¹⁷ Khan is on the High Peace Council that is the main body overseeing the reconciliation process with Taliban leaders.
- *Sher Mohammad Akhundzadeh and Other Helmand Strongmen.* Karzai's relationship with a Pashtun strongman, Sher Mohammad Akhundzadeh, demonstrates the dilemmas facing Karzai in governing Afghanistan. Akhundzadeh was a close associate of Karzai when they were in exile in Quetta, Pakistan, during Taliban rule. Karzai appointed him governor of the overwhelming Pashtun-inhabited province of Helmand after the fall of the Taliban, but in 2005, Britain demanded he be removed for his abuses and reputed facilitation of drug trafficking, as a condition of Britain taking security control of Helmand. Karzai reportedly has, at times, suggested reappointing Akhundzadeh as Helmand governor because, Karzai has argued, he was more successful against militants in Helmand using his local militiamen than Britain has been with its more than 9,500 troops there. However, Britain and the United States have prevailed on Karzai not to remove the current governor, Ghulab Mangal, who has won wide praise for his successes establishing effective governance in Helmand and for reducing poppy cultivation there.
- An Akhundzadeh ally, Abdul Wali Khan (nicknamed "Koka"), was similarly removed by British pressure in 2006 as police chief of Musa Qala district of Helmand. However, Koka was reinstated in 2008 when that district was retaken from Taliban control. The Afghan government insisted on his reinstatement and his militia followers subsequently became the core of the 220-person police force in the district. Koka is mentioned in a congressional report as accepting payments from security contractors who are working under the U.S. Department of Defense's (DOD's) "Host National Trucking" contract that secures U.S. equipment convoys. Koka allegedly agreed to secure the convoys in exchange for the payments.¹⁸

¹⁷ Partlow, Joshua, "Audio Files Raise New Questions About Afghan Elections." *Washington Post*, November 11, 2010.

¹⁸ House of Representatives. Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs, Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. "Warlord, Inc.: Extortion and Corruption Along the U.S. Supply Chain in Afghanistan." Report of the Majority Staff, June 2010.

- *Karzai Family and Qandahar Province.* Governing Qandahar, a province of about 2 million, of whom about half live in Qandahar city, and the vast majority of which are Pashtun, is a sensitive issue in Kabul because of President Karzai's active political interest in his home province. Were the ANSF to fracture, it is highly likely that many Pashtuns within the force, particularly those from Qandahar, would group around President Karzai, others in his family, and other power brokers in the province. President Karzai's half brother, Ahmad Wali Karzai, was essentially running the province informally prior to his assassination in July 2011. With government services in the province weak or non-existent, many constituents and interest groups met him each day to request his interventions on their behalf. Numerous press stories have asserted that he protected narcotics trafficking in the province, and some press stories say he was also a paid informant and facilitator for CIA and Special Operations Forces in the province.¹⁹
- Before Ahmad Wali's assassination, U.S. officials had been trying to bolster the clout of the appointed Qandahar governor, Tooryalai Wesa. The international community expected that the death of Ahmad Wali would further empower Wesa. However, President Karzai quickly installed another of his brothers, Shah Wali Karzai, as head of the Popolzai clan and informal Qandahar power broker after Ahmad Wali's death. Shah Wali at first lacked the acumen and clout of Ahmad Wali but reports in mid-2012 say he has become highly influential, while also becoming involved in significant business dealings in the province that continue to cast aspersions on the motives and actions of the Karzai family.
- *Ghul Agha Shirzai.* A key gubernatorial appointment has been Ghul Agha Shirzai as governor of Nangarhar. He is a Pashtun from the powerful Barakzai clan based in Qandahar Province, previously serving as governor of that province, where he reportedly continued to exercise influence in competition with Ahmad Wali Karzai. Many Pashtuns from the Barakzai clan within the ANSF would likely look to Shirzai for leadership if the ANSF were to fracture. In Nangarhar, Shirzai is generally seen as an interloper. But, much as has Noor in Balkh, Shirzai has exercised effective leadership, particularly in curbing poppy cultivation there. At the same time, Shirzai is also widely accused of arbitrary action against political or other opponents, and he reportedly does not remit all the customs duties collected at the Khyber Pass/Torkham crossing to the central government. He purportedly uses the funds for the benefit of the province, not trusting that funds remitted to Kabul would be spent in the province. As noted above, Shirzai had considered running against Karzai in 2009 but then opted not to run as part of a reported "deal" that yielded unspecified political and other benefits for Shirzai.

Supplements to the National Police Create Potential for Abuses and Fracture

The potential for the fracturing of the security services has been increased by a trend instituted in 2008 to supplement the ANP with local police forces. Some refer to these forces as militias, and say the policy of building these forces counters the 2001-2 rationale that spawned the dismantling of the local militias. Until mid-2008, U.S. military commanders opposed assisting local militias anywhere in Afghanistan for fear of creating rivals to the central government and of re-creating militias that commit abuses and administer arbitrary justice.

However, the urgent security needs in Afghanistan - the need to stabilize the security situation and pave the way for a reduction in U.S. military involvement in Afghanistan - caused reconsideration of the

¹⁹ Filkins, Dexter, Mark Mazetti and James Risen, "Brother of Afghan Leader Is Said to be on C.I.A. Payroll," *New York Times*, October 28, 2009.

concept of empowering local security elements. During his command (2010-2011), top U.S. and NATO commander in Afghanistan General David Petraeus expanded local security experiments, based on successful experiences in Iraq and after designing mechanisms to reassure Karzai that any local security organs would be firmly under Afghan government (mainly Ministry of Interior) control.

Among these initiatives are:

- *Village Stability Operations/Afghan Local Police (ALP)*. The Village Stability Operations concept began in February 2010 in Arghandab district of Qandahar Province. U.S. Special Operations Forces organized about 25 villagers into an armed neighborhood watch group, and the program was credited by U.S. commanders as bringing normal life back to the district. The pilot program was expanded and formalized into a joint Afghan-U.S. Special Operations effort in which 12 person teams from these forces live in communities to help improve governance, security, and development.
- An outgrowth of the Village Stability Operations is the Afghan Local Police (ALP) program in which the U.S. Special Operations Forces conducting the Village Stability Operations set up and train local security organs of about 300 members each. These local units are under the control of district police chiefs and each fighter is vetted by a local shura as well as Afghan intelligence. As of June 2012, there are about 13,000 ALP operating in 58 different districts. There are three ALP centers in Helmand province. A total of 99 districts have been approved for the program, each with about 300 fighters, which is expected to bring the target size of the program to about 30,000 by the end of 2014.
- The ALP initiative was also an adaptation of another program, begun in 2008, termed the “Afghan Provincial Protection Program” (APPP, commonly called “AP3”), funded with DOD (CERP) funds. The APPP got under way in Wardak Province (Jalrez district) in early 2009 and 100 local security personnel “graduated” in May 2009. It was subsequently expanded to 1,200 personnel. U.S. commanders said no U.S. weapons were supplied to the militias, but the Afghan government provided weapons (Kalashnikov rifles) to the recruits, possibly using U.S. funds. Participants in the program are given \$200 per month. General Petraeus showcased Wardak in August 2010 as an example of the success of the APPP and similar efforts.
- *Afghan Public Protection Force*. This force is growing, under the supervision of the Ministry of Interior, to guard development sites and organizations. The force was developed to implement Karzai’s August 17, 2010, decree (No. 62) that private security contractor forces be disbanded and their functions performed by official Afghan government forces by March 20, 2012. That deadline was extended because of the slow pace of standing up the new protection force, and some development organizations continue to use locally hired guard forces. Now at about 11,000 personnel, it is intended to grow to 30,000 personnel by March 2013. Embassies and other diplomatic entities can still use private security firms.

The performance and actions of some of these local forces have justified some of these concerns, in the form of widely noted human rights abuses and arbitrary administration of justice. The April 2012 DOD report on Afghan stability, cited above, said there have sometimes been clashes and disputes between ALP and ANSF units, particularly in cases where the units are of different ethnicities. These are the types of problems that prompted the earlier efforts to disarm rather than establish local militia forces. The local security programs were heavily criticized in the September 12, 2011, Human Rights Watch report.²⁰ That

²⁰ Human Rights Watch. “Just Don’t Call it a Militia.” September 12, 2011.

report documented wide-scale human rights abuses (killings, rapes, arbitrary detentions, and land grabs) committed by the recruits. The report triggered a U.S. military investigation of the ALP program, an investigation that substantiated many of the report's findings, although not the most serious of the allegations.²¹ In May 2012, Karzai ordered one ALP unit in Konduz disbanded because of its alleged involvement in a rape there.

The local security experiments to date resemble but technically are not *arbokai*, which are private tribal militias. Some believe that the *arbokai* concept should be revived as a means of securing Afghanistan, as the *arbokai* did during the reign of Zahir Shah and in prior pre-Communist eras. Reports persist that some tribal groupings have formed *arbokai* without specific authorization.

Conclusions and Prospects

Corruption, patronage, nepotism, and factionalism are cause for serious concern about the cohesiveness and performance of the ANSF after the completion of the security transition in 2014. It is ethnic and political factionalism that probably poses the greatest threat to the post-2014 prospects for the ANSF, particularly if the Taliban-led insurgency remains active and puts pressure on the ANSF militarily. It is possible that many Pashtuns in the ANSF could defect from the force, and that the northern and western minorities might leave the force and rejoin the militias and irregular forces formerly fielded by the political leaders of those minorities.

Another scenario that could cause the ANSF to fracture would be a major political rift between the Northern Alliance and Pashtun leaders in the event of a political settlement with the Taliban. Virtually all Taliban fighters are Pashtun, and Northern Alliance leaders fear that a settlement with the Taliban will bring additional Pashtuns into the political structure. That outcome would weaken the political influence of the Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara minorities. Some Northern Alliance leaders are said to be planning for a possible major rift, which could turn violent, in the event a settlement is reached that dilutes Tajik, Uzbek, and Hazara political power.

On the other hand, it is likely that U.S. forces will remain in a training and advisory capacity after 2014 – a policy that would place U.S. forces and commanders in position to mitigate the fractious tendencies in the ANSF. U.S. and international forces present after 2014 could also continue the longstanding efforts to instill professionalism in the force and to try to reduce corruption and culturally-motivated behaviors within the force. And, perhaps most significantly, a continuing international presence would stiffen the ANSF so as to prevent major insurgent gains after 2014, and thereby prevent or reduce the potential for ANSF dissolution.

²¹ Ernesto Londono. "U.S. Cites Local Afghan Police Abuses." *Washington Post*, December 16, 2011. The Human Rights Watch report is entitled "Just Don't Call It a Militia." <http://www.hrw.org>, September 12, 2011.