



The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Kandahar Province interfacing with Afghani locals in the village of Spin Bulduk, 2 September 2005.

## THE STRATEGIC ADVISORY TEAM IN AFGHANISTAN – PART OF THE CANADIAN COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO STABILITY OPERATIONS

by Lieutenant-Colonel Michel-Henri St-Louis, CD

*This is another type of war, new in its intensity, ancient in its origins – war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins; war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him ... It requires in those situations where we must counter it ... a whole new kind of strategy, a wholly different kind of force...*

– John F. Kennedy<sup>1</sup>

**M**irroring what John F. Kennedy observed with respect to the Vietnam War in 1962, the Canadian Forces (CF) in Afghanistan has found itself in the middle of a counter-insurgency campaign that calls for new strategies and new capabilities inspired by old lessons. This type of warfare is now at the centre of the present and future operating environment.

With respect to this modern battlefield, Canada made its policy known in April 2005. It clearly stated that our approach to intervention on the international stage would

be rooted in a 3D + C approach (Diplomacy + Development + Defence and Commerce). This approach is one in which diplomacy, defence, and development work together to synchronize efforts, to improve effectiveness, and to maximize the impact of Canada's contribution. After a change in government in January 2006, the new ruling party ratified this approach, albeit under the term Whole of Government, or Team Canada. For the purpose of this study, the whole of government approach (WGA) will be the term used to represent this concept. This approach demands a coherent policy and integrated activities by all elements of power within the government.

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In Afghanistan, Canada's efforts, both in the Kandahar region and in the capital, Kabul, are one example of this WGA. More specifically, in Kabul, the CF worked in consultation with the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada (DFAIT), and with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), to employ the Canadian Strategic Advisory Team – Afghanistan (SAT-A) from 2005 to 2008. This team comprised a small group of military members, a defence scientist, and a CIDA 'co-operant' working in consultation with the Canadian Embassy toward strengthening the national government of Afghanistan, and serving as a tool at the operational and strategic level.

This article will trace the genesis of the SAT-A, and it will argue its usefulness in the fight against an insurgency or in support of failing and failed states. It will demonstrate that the CF had the ways and the means to participate in nation-building in order to accomplish its ends. Although this initiative was terminated in 2008 after only three one-year rotations, it will conclude that a small, adaptable, and professional group of planners from the Department of National Defence (DND), DFAIT, CIDA, and other relevant agencies, working together to support good governance, can help a host nation, Canada, and the CF achieve their aims.

**The genesis of the Strategic Advisory Team – Afghanistan (SAT-A)**

In 2003, General Rick Hillier served as the commander of the NATO International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Working out of Kabul, General Hillier came to realize the magnitude of the task required to ensure stability, and, ultimately, success. The complexity of the challenges facing Afghanistan called for an integrated, long-term approach to nation-building. Part of that approach included the work done with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRA) by the members of the military planning staff in the ISAF Headquarters (HQ). This work centred upon the development of a comprehensive roadmap for the strategy that Afghanistan needed in order to embark upon a path of sustainable development and enduring stability.

Working with the Afghan Finance Ministry, this group of officers used military campaign planning tools to formulate a viable framework for investment in Afghanistan, and to proceed with the rebuilding of the country, its infrastructure, and its institutions. This group left the theatre in 2004, not long after General Hillier returned to Canada. In 2005, General Hillier, then Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) responded to a request from the President of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, to provide another group of planners similar to the one that had assisted his government in 2003-2004.

The request posed by President Karzai to General Hillier in the spring of 2005 triggered the CDS into launching the Strategic Advisory Team – Afghanistan. Colonel Michael D. Capstick, an artillery officer working in the National Defence Headquarters (NDHQ) at the time, received an email in mid-June 2005, directing him to lead the deployment of a small group of military and civilian personnel destined for the capital of Afghanistan in support of the GIRA. Following that direction, Colonel Capstick met directly with the CDS. During that meeting, General Hillier explained to Capstick that he was to form, deploy, and command a team of a dozen people and go to Afghanistan to "...help president Karzai build a democratic and stable government." To fulfill this ambitious mission, he was to deploy at the end of the summer for one year. As this initial direction was being given, links with the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Canadian International



Figure 1 – Nation Building

This model comes from The Center for Domestic and International Health Security. It clearly illustrates some of the elements that need to be improved quasi-simultaneously for a nation-building effort to be successful. A SAT-A like team mainly provides capacity building on the governance elements, which in turn enables all others.

Seth G. Jones et al, *Securing Health, "Lessons from Nation-Building Missions"* (Santa Monica: RAND Corporation, 2006), xvii, figure RAND MG321-S.1.

Development Agency were being pursued in order to produce an integrated multi-agency initiative. That being said, this initiative on the CDS's part would lead to some criticism as to the way in which this team was launched.

An element of improvisation plagued this mounting phase of the mission. Nonetheless, Colonel Capstick immediately set about forming the team and preparing for a reconnaissance trip to Afghanistan in order to plan the deployment. He was able to select a group of military officers and civil servants that brought military planning skills, scientific research experience, and development work experience to the team. The original SAT was made up of fifteen members. Twelve were military, two were civilian public servants of the Department of National Defence, and one was a co-operant from CIDA. The military members were a mix from the three components – air, naval, and land – and were both Regular Force and Reserve members. One of the public servants was an operational research scientist, whereas the other was a strategic planner from the central staff.

While assembling the team in Ottawa, there was growing concern that DND was duplicating the efforts of other governmental agencies. Since the formation was intended to be an integrated 'whole of government' team, Colonel Capstick faced some challenges in securing representation from CIDA and aligning efforts with the Department of Foreign Affairs. Mounting such a team for the first time proved to be a significant test that

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required flexibility and patience with respect to the intricacies of departmental and intra-governmental politics. Ultimately, the ability of DND to field elements on short notice enabled the team to be assembled and to eventually deploy as directed.

In mid-summer 2005, Colonel Capstick completed his reconnaissance of Kabul and was able to establish first contact with the Head of Mission (HoM) and the Head of Aid (HoA) for Canada, Christopher Alexander, and Dr. Nipa Banerjee respectively. His team was finally assembled in July and started deploying on 22 August 2005. The initial focus of the SAT commander was to ascertain the specific areas where his group of planners could be most beneficial to the Government of Afghanistan. Greatly facilitated by the reputation and interventions of the Head of Mission and the Head of Aid, it became clear that the SAT team could be useful in the conception of the Interim – Afghanistan National Development Strategy and eventually the actual Afghanistan National Development Strategy (I-ANDS and ANDS). With the support of the Canadian Ambassador and the Head of Aid, Colonel Capstick quickly developed a working relationship with Dr. Ishaq Naderi, the Senior Economic Advisor to the President, and the person ultimately responsible for the production of the ANDS.<sup>3</sup> The ANDS was the overarching document that served as the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, and it was the initial step in the coordinated reconstruction of the state.<sup>4</sup> This document and the process for its production were of critical importance to the ratification of the Afghanistan Compact in London in 2006. The Compact constituted the commitment made by the international community for a long-term solution to the crisis in Afghanistan.

In parallel to the work that was needed with the production of the ANDS, the SAT found the need to support Public Administration Reform (PAR). As a key enabler of the ANDS, PAR faced a significant capability gap challenge and was in urgent need of support. Therefore, the CIDA co-operant in the SAT immediately headed a number of capacity-building programs in the Independent Administrative Reform and Civil Service Commission (IARCS), the Commission that was responsible for PAR at the national level.

This team faced a number of challenges. Some elements of the international community representatives in Kabul were



The President of Afghanistan, Hamid Karzai, greets Chief of the Defence Staff (CDS) General Rick Hillier on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

DND photo SU2006-0523-38 by MCpl Jill Cooper

suspicious as to what a group of military planners could bring to the nation-building effort. Some benign rivalries with other national agencies were also experienced at the mid-manager level. Thirdly, there was always the concern that someone else was already doing the same work. In fact, with the high number of technical advisors (TAs), international agencies, and personnel from ISAF and the US HQ (Combined Forces Command – Afghanistan, CFC-A) in Kabul, it was common to meet someone working on exactly the same issues as the SAT. Nonetheless, the initial work accomplished by the team “...made the clear

demonstration of the potential of military staff ‘skills transfer’ to the civil sector in a post-conflict society that has had little time to develop viable public institutions and a culture of good governance.”<sup>5</sup>

The HoM at the time, Christopher Alexander, recalled this initial period of activity and remarked that the success of SAT rested upon Canada’s integration of all of its elements of power. By the time SAT arrived in Kabul, Canada had demonstrated its resolve by deploying an important military contingent, and by assuming command of the Multinational Brigade in Kabul (KMNB) and the ISAF mission as a whole in 2003. It had re-opened its embassy, energized its development program through CIDA, and had contributed to nation-building efforts through assistance from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and other governmental agencies. When the group of strategic planners from the SAT arrived in 2005, all the key elements of Canada’s whole of government approach were in place in Kabul, and the sheer desire to communicate with each other in order to help the legitimate government of Afghanistan made the integration of this new capability possible.<sup>6</sup> Also important in this early stage was the credibility the team acquired because it had deployed at the request of the President of the Government of Afghanistan. This endorsement ‘opened a number of doors’ in the Afghan government, and it was instrumental in ensuring middle- and top-level managerial support.

Recognizing that the extremely difficult task of state-building rested at the heart of the Afghanistan



Canada’s Ambassador to Afghanistan, Christopher Alexander, listens to a Canadian CIMIC Team Leader at a well dedication in the village of Dowghabad, Afghanistan, 24 May 2004.

DND photo: KA2004-R103-1127d

challenge, the SAT team was immediately put to the task of supporting the construction and reconstruction of the governance institutions capable of providing the citizens with the physical and economic security they required.<sup>7</sup>

During this initial phase of the operation, the bi-lateral nature of the mission constantly needed to be emphasized. The team did not fall under the command and control architecture of either NATO (ISAF) or the US (CFC-A). As the mission statement said, it answered to the Head of Mission, the CDS, the Afghanistan President’s office and to the different Afghanistan ministries with which it was involved.

As the first year passed, the mission matured and the work done with the ANDS and the IARCSC led to further expansion into the President’s office and to other PAR initiatives, to the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development and the Civil Service Gender Equity Policy.<sup>8</sup> It also served as a key enabler in the alignment of Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) activity at the operational level and the ANDS objectives at the strategic level. The SAT-A was able to ‘operationalize’ the strategic objectives in order to facilitate the campaign design of each of the PRT commanders.

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As the SAT-A progressed and completed its first rotation in the summer of 2006, it also expanded the scope of its work and went on to support the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of National Communications, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Transportation and Civil Aviation, the Ministry of the Interior, and the Ministry of Finance.<sup>9</sup> These efforts in both *capacity* and *capability* building were all

being done in light of the desired effects that impel Canada's intervention toward the strategic end-state that had been articulated by the CDS as follows: "The development of an organic Government of Afghanistan (GoA) strategic planning capability that enables them to make effective use of their resources."<sup>10</sup>

### Impact of SAT-A

What did the Afghan people get out of this mission? What did the Canadian public get out of this operation? One debatably partial answer can be found in Canadian reporter Christie Blatchford's journalistic assessment: "The smallest and arguably most influential group of Canadians [SAT-A] working in Afghanistan was born about a year ago in an informal meeting in the Chief of Defence Staff Rick Hillier's car."<sup>11</sup> Blatchford spent a significant amount of time with Canadian soldiers in Southern Afghanistan as an embedded journalist. While focusing on the tactical and operational side of the mission in Kandahar, she was able to witness and report upon some of the achievements of SAT-A during the spring of 2006. Notwithstanding her praise, the team generated some discomfort with respect to duplication of effort, appropriateness of the military's involvement in state building, and the apparent new role DND was assuming in providing advice on governance issues. This discomfort among various national agencies would ultimately play a role in the termination of the team in 2008.

Prior to discussing the inclusion of a SAT in future operations, an analysis of its impact is necessary, starting with some of the opinions of key Afghan officials who worked closely with the SAT-A.

Wahid Waissi was the Senior Process Manager for the ANDS. Under his supervision, the ANDS Working Group had to produce the final version of the ANDS and develop the basis for the Afghanistan Compact that was signed at the London Conference in January 2006. And this monumental task benefited from SAT-A involvement as early as September 2005. From that point forward, a group of four Canadian planners was embedded in the ANDS Working Group. They concentrated their efforts upon capacity transfer and upon mentoring the

production of the capstone documents. They also worked on effective communications strategies for the Office of the Senior Economic Advisor to the President of Afghanistan. The Senior Economic Advisor was ultimately responsible for the Compact and for the ANDS.

In Waissi's opinion, the ANDS Working Group benefited from SAT's structured advice. It helped focus their work. Even if SAT members were not development specialists, their capacity to envision strategies, to align plans with objectives, and to manage effectively contributed to the overall performance of his working group.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the ability of the SAT to work in terms of 'ways and means,' and to work as enablers, had a significant impact with respect to preparation for the London Conference. With no subject matter experts in the field of development on the team assisting the development of the ANDS, the SAT planners had to concentrate their contribution on the integration of processes and the alignment of strategies. The approach taken was therefore drastically different from what the ANDS Working Group was accustomed to seeing from highly paid technical advisors. By virtue of the mere willingness of the Canadian team members to participate in the work, and not to dictate what Afghanistan needed, the SAT established some credibility and increased the abilities of the working group as a whole.

In March 2006, Professor Ishaq Naderi, Senior Economic Advisor to the President, and the supervisor of Wahid Waissi, was quoted praising the work of SAT-A. "... The team has done invaluable work, particularly in organizing the country's economic development plan, which was recently approved at the London conference on Afghanistan's future."<sup>13</sup> He added: "We are counting on

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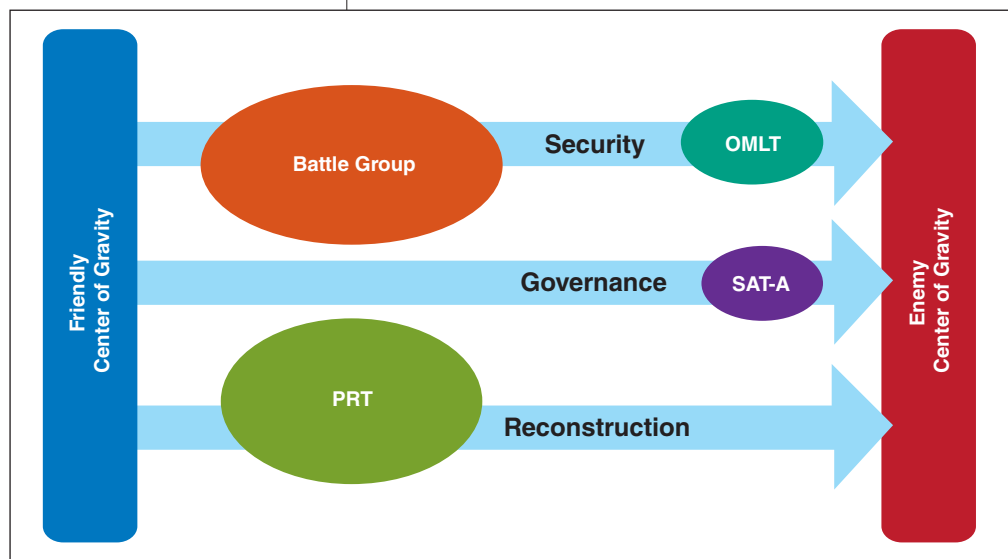


Figure 2 – Conceptual representation of the role of SAT-A in the overall campaign plan.  
**Note:** Canada's Task Force 3-06 Lines of Operation and areas of influence of the different teams in 2006.

their contribution. As a member of this government I want to express my appreciation for this help. It will not be forgotten.”<sup>14</sup>

Near the halfway mark of the first rotation of SAT, an opportunity to assist the President’s office offered itself. By that point, the contribution of SAT to the ANDS and IARCSC was well established and the perception that the team had some key abilities was acknowledged in the national capital. SAT was asked in early 2006 to take a look at the organization and structure of the Office of the President. This office constituted a crucial component of the central government in Afghanistan, and it was undergoing significant change.

Ershad Ahmadi, Deputy Chief of Presidential Programs, acknowledged that SAT helped energize the path to change and gave momentum to the implementation of some badly needed reforms in the Office of the President.<sup>15</sup> The team’s ability to talk in terms of strategy, vision, and mission were particularly useful in the restructure of Afghanistan’s executive branch. When the time came to work in the Office of the President, SAT’s experiences in the ANDS Working Group and the IARCSC were of very beneficial use in creating some coherence to the changes required in that office. The team’s ability to work with the government in pursuing Afghanistan’s goals placed it in sharp contrast to some of the expert advice various consultants were providing. It became clear during the first rotation that Kabul was replete with well-intentioned albeit very highly paid advisors. And the advice they provided was sometimes given from a position of unequal partnership. SAT, on the other hand, had adopted a sense of reciprocity and suggestion versus an attitude of experts giving solutions to novices. This attitude was important to the success of the team and its ability to get some of the recommendations for change accepted. “TAs come to Afghanistan for two months, three months, six months, produce a report and then leave. That does not make a lasting impact.”<sup>16</sup> SAT’s presence and long-term commitment provided a completely different dynamic. It inspired confidence in the dedication of Canada’s contribution, and it facilitated the establishment of the trust that was needed in order to embark upon such important state-building tasks.

The Chairman of the IARCSC, Dr. A. Mushahed, supported the use of military planners in an advisory role for purely civilian governance issues. In his view, “...concentration on security operations is not the only way to defeat the terrorists. Service delivery of the government, when it is efficient, is another way.”<sup>17</sup> Military campaigns and the personnel waging them need to be as concerned with security as they are with the strengthening of the country in which they are deployed. Military skills enabled the SAT to do just that.

Colonel Capstick, who had experienced stability and peacekeeping operations as a commander in Cyprus and Bosnia, reinforced that idea in an interview he gave on 27 March 2006. “Planning Afghanistan’s national economic development strategy or civil service is not a heck of a lot different than planning General Fraser’s [Canadian commander of Regional Command South in Kandahar at that time] campaign in terms of the skills needed and the steps.”<sup>18</sup> While military planners are not expected to know the answer to a governance problem, they can act as enablers in the weak national institutions of the host nation. By facilitating the development of strategies, and ensuring capacity transfer and the adherence to rigorous processes, the skills brought to bear by military planners can play a role in creating the conditions for success.

One of the directors of the IARCSC, Homayoun Seddiq, observed that one of the key qualities of the members of the SAT was their willingness to adapt to host nation constraints and to work within that environment. The fact that the team was not being directly paid by the IARCSC also made a significant difference. Without the monetary connotation, the support provided by team members took on a whole different nature.

The sense that SAT was not working to any other agenda than that of supporting Afghanistan’s reform facilitated the labour. As far as using military personnel in tackling civil service problems, Seddiq did not see that as an issue. There were enough development and governance experts willing to provide ‘how-to’ advice, but what the SAT brought was the ability to use critical thinking and to establish strategies, and, more importantly, to pass on that knowledge to the young public servants with whom they were working.<sup>19</sup> The work done by the SAT

was in part possible because the team had no funds to manage and to distribute to the host nation. It was also different from all other technical advice provided in as much as it was a bilateral agreement between Afghanistan and Canada established without any need for payment.

Toward mid-2006, and, more significantly, during the later portion of that year, the SAT became heavily involved in the improvement of strategies within the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development (MRRD). It was concerned specifically with transferring the skills needed to plan strategically. The MRRD oversaw the National Solidarity Program (NSP), one of the most important poverty-reduction initiatives in the country. The NSP received \$13M from Canada in 2006, which brought CIDA’s total contribution to Afghanistan to \$109.5M.<sup>20</sup> And this contribution made Afghanistan Canada’s largest recipient of aid.

Seen from an American perspective, the team also made a contribution in as much as it was involved in building the governance, legitimizing the government, and, ultimately, countering the insurgents in the eyes of the

**“If the international community fails to secure and rebuild the country, Afghanistan will slide back down the path of a failed state.”**

Afghan people. The American Colonel Fred Solis was the Team Chief for Governance in the Civil Military Affairs Division (CJ-9) of the American HQ CFC-A. He was in Kabul when the team arrived, and was instrumental in the expansion of the work into the IARCSC. In his view, the team was effective because of the way it was embedded. By working alongside its Afghan counterparts, emphasizing capacity transfer and indirect mentoring, the team had a strategic effect.<sup>21</sup> By building up good governance, it was working toward achieving the desired end-state of a legitimate and functioning nation.



A member of the Canadian Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) hands out short-wave radios to the local population in Kandahar City, 28 August 2005.

However, there is one constant danger associated with such work, namely, the possibility of becoming involved in the internal politics of the organization that one is assisting. In a piece aired by the CBC on the SAT team in March 2007, the point was raised that Canadian governmental and Canadian military involvement at such a political level caused some suspicions among other intervening countries and agencies.<sup>22</sup> This suspicion was quickly quelled by clarifications from Afghanistan's government officials as to the usefulness and pertinence of such a Canadian team. Still, the relationships that are built when conducting mentorship or capacity transfer can be easily politicized, and therein lies some of the more pertinent criticism of the SAT. How does it avoid being identified with the administration or ruling body of a host nation? In its first year, while being involved in the IARCSC, the team came to be linked closely to some of the key personnel in the structure. This, in turn, resulted in the team being dragged into internal bickering and factional rivalries. Ultimately, such tensions were partly responsible for the SAT reducing its involvement in the IARCSC and expanding its work with the MRRD.

The foregoing observations suggest that the team increased Canada's influence in the capital. While it was unable to make a profound difference outside Kabul, the team contributed to the development of some key capabilities in the government. It raised Canada's visibility in the Government of Afghanistan, helped shape the intelligence picture of the conflict, and participated in elevating the status of Canada in the region. Furthermore, it can be stated objectively that capacity transfer took place, processes and strategy development were facilitated, and, lastly, that some critical steps and documents required on the road toward stability were influenced by SAT's work. Despite the fact that it generated

some criticism from other contributing nations, and that it brought to the forefront some inter-governmental sensitivities, SAT contributed to the nation-building efforts in the host nation.

### **Strategic Advisory Teams, a new capability in nation-building for the Government of Canada**

If the international community fails to secure and rebuild the country, Afghanistan will slide back down the path of a failed state. The constant possibility of Afghanistan reverting to a neo-Taliban fundamentalist regime remains grave. This would threaten regional stability and also Canada's national interests.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, Canada has been actively involved in the efforts to support the Government of Afghanistan as it stabilizes and rebuilds Afghanistan. For this to be successful, Canada's strategy in Afghanistan, and in any other fragile state, needs "...[to] build trust, engage in development and reconstruction, and ensure the rule of law..."<sup>24</sup> This demands that Canada adopt an integrated counter-insurgency strategy that focuses upon innovative local interactions.

The SAT-A, together with the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) and the Operational Mentor and Liaison Teams (OMLTs), are all elements of this innovative interaction with the local population. Such teams might not have been envisioned during the 1990s. Today, these new capabilities are helping to strengthen Afghan capacity to deliver quality governance, both centrally and locally. The SAT-A worked in conjunction with the Government of Afghanistan to develop the human capacity critical to achieving the objectives of the ANDS and to move toward a stable and secure Afghanistan.<sup>25</sup>

*(Refer to Figure 1 for a model in nation-building, and Figure 2 for a conceptual representation of the role the SAT-A played in the overall Canadian Forces campaign plan)*

### Inclusion of a Strategic Advisory Team capability in future operations

Canada's Ambassador to Afghanistan from 2003 to 2005 remarked that a capability such as SAT could be duplicated in future interventions if the following conditions existed:

- a host nation was in desperate need of capacity building,
- Canada was making a significant contribution in that country,
- Canada had no negative historical ties with the host nation, and, lastly,
- strong links existed with the legitimate government of that country.

Furthermore, this type of intervention could be possible only if the host nation requested Canada's contribution in this fashion, and if the involvement had an important developmental component.<sup>26</sup>

Another useful set of criteria for the replication of such a capability was gleaned from interviews conducted with the Canadian DND scientist working in SAT-A at the time, Dr. Elizabeth Speed, and Colonel Andre Corbould, the Deputy Commander Civil Military Affairs Division CJ9 (US HQ, CFC-A). They both made the

case that there has to be a willingness to reform on the part of the host nation, that there has to be a clear lack of capability to do so, that it is a legitimate government that Canada is trying to help, that high-level support exists that generates mid-level buy-in, and, lastly, that key stakeholders in the Government of Canada must be willing to integrate inter-departmental efforts.<sup>27</sup>

Without a request from the host nation for Canada to become involved at this level of nation-building, a SAT is a 'non-starter.' But one more condition, in addition to the five mentioned earlier, needs to be established in order for this type of intervention to succeed. There has to be a minimum level of stability in area of operation for this type of work to take place. While it has been argued that nation-building needs to take place in a quasi-simultaneous manner, as is the case with other stability operations, an advisory team cannot operate in chaos or in a condition of all-out war. Without a certain level of stability, no capacity-building efforts can take place.

Critics saw the concept of SAT as nothing more than an anomaly that was only possible in Afghanistan because of the personal relationship between President Karzai and General Hillier, an anomaly that was only possible because of Canada's political landscape at the time. As early as January 2008, the *Globe and Mail* reported that the future of the SAT-A was in question.<sup>28</sup> Inter-departmental rivalries were initially suspected to

be behind this shift, but there was also a genuine deliberation as to the role of the CF within this nation-building effort and the possibility that other elements of the Canadian government were better suited for this capacity transfer.<sup>29</sup> As spring turned to summer and the date for the fourth rotation of the SAT-A loomed ever closer, a decision to terminate the team cascaded down the chain of command. DND and the CF were not to replace the team in August 2008, and DFAIT was to civilianize the effort and evolve Canada's role at the political level of Afghanistan.

In actual fact, DFAIT transferred the responsibility to CIDA, which, in turn, contracted CANDEM, a Canadian private consulting firm.<sup>30</sup> This firm established in late July 2008 the



DND photo IS2004-7505 by Sgt Danielle Bernier

Members of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) participate in a Mission Rehearsal Exercise near Kaiserslautern, Germany, prior to deployment to Afghanistan, 20 January 2004.

Canadian Governance Support Office (CGSO) in lieu of the SAT-A. According to their information sheet, the CGSO's mandate was to hire and to second senior experts to various Afghan government offices and to set up a Kabul-based support office.<sup>31</sup> This evolution of the SAT-A concept has received mixed assessments. In an article in the DFAIT newsletter, *The Embassy*, Jeff Davis wrote: "With a budget of \$12.2 million to spend over the next five years, the newly-established Canadian Governance Support Office in Kabul will provide fewer advisors to the Afghan government than its predecessor, the controversial Strategic Advisory Team."<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, Dr. Nipa Banerjee provided interesting insight on this evolution when she wrote,

"Before SAT could prove if it would leave a permanent imprint on the building of sustainable capacity, its life was cut short as the Canadian government took the decision to replace the DND SAT with a civilian crew... The value added of a DND team lay in the deployment of disciplined teams, well-trained and supervised to deliver at the operational levels. Based on my personal experience, such high standards are not expected from civil servants or contracted civilian personnel, and even less encouraged."<sup>33</sup>

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## Conclusion

The genesis of SAT-A and the analysis of its immediate results demonstrated the positive impact that such a team can provide. Notwithstanding the recent migration of a DND-led team to a 'contracted out' approach, it is foreseeable that a 'SAT-like' team could be deployed in conjunction with other Government of Canada elements in order to make a critical contribution to future Canadian interventions in weak states. The composition and leadership of such a team could evolve and shift through time as a situation improves within a fragile host nation. But throughout this process, the Canadian Forces can play a vital role within that strategic advisory team. The CF has the ways and the means to participate in nation-building in order to accomplish the government's ends.

In the future, a small, adaptable and professional group of planners from the Department of Foreign Affairs, the Department of National Defence, the Canadian International Development Agency and other relevant agencies, working together in moving a host country toward good governance, will help Canada achieve success.



Meeting of the five governors of Afghanistan's southern provinces, Kandahar City, 25 April 2006.

## NOTES

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2. Colonel Michael D. Capstick, Commander Operation *Argus* (SAT-A Roto 1), interviewed on 16 May 2006 for research paper on SAT-A by the author.
3. Dr. Ishaq Naderi is an economist who took leave from a faculty position at New York University in order to contribute to the rebuilding of his country. As the Senior Economic Advisor to the President, he played a key role in developing the I-ANDS / ANDS, and in securing support from the international community.
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6. Christopher Alexander, Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary General, Pillar1-Political Affairs, United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), interviewed on 6 May 2006 for research paper on SAT-A by the author. These thoughts on the genesis of SAT were echoed in a subsequent interview with Dr. Nipa Banerjee, Canada's Head of Aid in Afghanistan, Canadian International Development Agency interviewed on 10 May 2006 for research paper on SAT-A by the author.
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