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Innovative Transformation:

An Evaluation of the Ministry of Defense Advisors Program in Afghanistan

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February 2012

“Successful engagement will depend upon the effective use and integration of different elements of American power. Our diplomacy and development capabilities must help prevent conflict, spur economic growth, strengthen weak and failing states, lift people out of poverty, combat climate change and epidemic disease, and strengthen institutions of democratic governance. Our military will continue strengthening its capacity to partner with foreign counterparts, train and assist security forces, and pursue military-to-military ties with a broad range of governments.”

- United States National Security Strategy, May 2010ⁱ

Introduction

The United States Department of Defense (DOD) has been performing the mission of strengthening the capacity of partner nations for many years. Traditionally, DOD focused primarily on improving the tactical proficiency of counterpart national security forces. However, there had been a realization that though tactical gains of foreign militaries and police forces were vital, these skill sets would only be sustainable if coupled with effective and accountable ministerial institutions. As former Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates stated: “The United States has made great strides in building up the operational capacity of its partners by training

and equipping troops and mentoring them in the field. But there has not been enough attention paid to building the institutional capacity or the human capital needed to sustain security over the long term.”ⁱⁱⁱ

The Defense Department’s 2010 Quadrennial Defense Review (QDR) outlined key initiatives for building the security capacity of partner states. As part of its efforts to build partnership capacity, the QDR specifically included strengthening the US military’s capability for foreign ministerial level training.ⁱⁱⁱ With a renewed focus on ministerial level efforts, the acknowledgment came that developing critical and complex ministries required a long-term approach. Assistance in the form of technical platforms and structures was part of the puzzle, but ministerial capacity was most strongly based on the personnel that made up the ministry staff. Therefore, at the heart of assisting in ministerial development was the forging of working relationships with counterparts, which took time and unique skill sets in the form of ministerial level advisors. Programs for ministerial development had included advising in the past, primarily through the use of uniformed personnel and contractors. However, despite the talents of these groups, the determination was made that a gap existed in our foreign advisory construct.^{iv} DOD recognized the further need for a significant commitment of personnel advising counterparts at the ministerial level in the form of DOD civilians. To fill this role, the DOD launched a formal program to support institutional development in Iraq and Afghanistan in FY 2010: the Ministry of Defense Advisor (MoDA) Program.^v

Operated by the Office of Secretary of Defense (OSD) for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations, MoDA was designed to forge long-term relationships with ministerial level counterparts in Iraq and Afghanistan. This program marked a significant evolution in the DOD approach to institutional capacity building. It involved the foreign deployment of DOD civilian personnel preceded by rigorous predeployment training in mentoring skills with a reach back capacity that allowed advisors to draw upon DOD resources. Additionally, the program offers a backfill employee to the DOD office providing the advisor.^{vi} The goal was for the advisors to exchange expertise with foreign counterparts in similar defense specialties while deployed in Iraq or Afghanistan. The MoDA program deployed Defense Department civilians to assist counterparts in specific competencies such as Defense Policy and Strategy, Force Planning and Resource Allocation, Logistics, Personnel and Readiness Management, and Acquisitions and Procurement.

These DOD advisors were to deploy for up to two years under the auspices of the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce. The Civilian Expeditionary Workforce (CEW) is a DOD program which deploys civilians alongside military personnel to provide crucial functions not normally found in military ranks. The CEW program recruits civilian experts in fields such as Senior Cultural Advisors, Logisticians, Contract Administrators, Public Affairs Specialists, and Engineers. MoDA aimed to send DOD civilians in grades GS-13 and above who had 15 or more years of federal service.

In July 2010, the MoDA program deployed the first 17 trained DOD civilian advisors to Camp Eggers in Kabul. MoDA has since sent four additional groups of advisors to Afghanistan for a total of over 80 since the program’s inception.^{vii} Initial plans were to place all advisors within the Afghan Ministry of Defense (MOD). However, DOD’s role in Afghanistan was to build the

whole of the Afghan National Security Forces. The Afghan National Security Forces included not only the Afghan National Army (ANA) and MOD, but also the Afghan National Police (ANP) and the Ministry of Interior (MOI). Therefore, when the MoDA advisors arrived in Kabul, it was quickly recognized that their skill sets were also useful in the institutional devolvement of the Afghan MOI. Therefore, MoDA advisors were divided among both the MOD and MOI.

This report describes the history of the MoDA program. It examines the MoDA process including the selection, training, deployment and reintegration of advisors. This report notes the strengths and shortcomings of the MoDA program, incorporating the firsthand insights of returned advisors, MoDA program office staff and training instructors, members of the US government who have had contact with the MoDA program and members of NATO Training Mission – Afghanistan (NTM-A). The report is based on research and interviews conducted by the authors.

Before MoDA: Prior US Assistance to the Afghan Ministries of Defense and Interior

When President Obama took office in January 2009, it was evident to US officials in Kabul and Washington that the Taliban was resurgent and that U.S. and coalition forces were under strength, inadequately supported and in danger of losing the war. Following an initial policy review, President Obama announced a new strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan on March 27, 2009. Speaking from the White House, the President stated that the core goals of U.S. efforts in Afghanistan and Pakistan were to defeat al Qaeda and dismantle its safe havens in Pakistan. The President said these goals would be achieved by disrupting the terrorist networks that threatened the U.S., by promoting a more capable and accountable Afghan government and by developing Afghan security forces that could lead the fight with reduced U.S. assistance. The President announced that he was sending more civilian development experts and 4,000 additional troops. The U.S. would scale up the size of the Afghan army and police to 134,000 and 82,000-members, respectively, in two years. Noting that international terrorism also threatened our European allies, the President stressed that the U.S. would request increased contributions of combat forces, trainers, mentors and equipment from NATO partners.^{viii}

One week later, on April 4, 2009, President Obama and his NATO counterparts at a summit meeting in Strasbourg-Kehl, France, agreed to a major expansion of the mandate of the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force to include training of the Afghan National Security Forces. NATO leaders voted to create the NATO Training Mission in Afghanistan (NTM-A) that would upgrade and professionalize the Afghan army and police. The new commander of the US Combined Security Transition Command Afghanistan (CSTC-A), Lt. General William Caldwell, would become ‘dual-hatted’ and lead both organizations by forming a single command. In its first year, NTM-A would focus on increasing the size and improving the quality of Afghan forces, while building the facilities and providing the specialized equipment and training necessary to professionalize the force. NTM-A would collaborate with the European Union Police Mission in Afghanistan and the European Gendarmerie Force to bring together all the major parts of the international police assistance efforts.^{ix}

This increased emphasis on improving the Afghan security force occurred at a time of growing awareness that the U.S. security assistance program had failed to produce a viable Afghan army or police force and that conditions in the country were deteriorating. When NTM-A became operational on November 21, 2009, the US faced a worsening crisis that required an immediate infusion of personnel and resources.^x The seriousness of the situation was reflected in President Obama's landmark, December 1, 2009 speech on Afghanistan policy to the cadet corps of the US Military Academy at West Point. The president recalled that when he took office there were only 32,000 American troops serving in Afghanistan compared to 160,000 in Iraq. US commanders had repeatedly asked for additional resources but re-enforcements had failed to arrive. The president noted that the new US military commander in Afghanistan, Lt. General Stanley McCrystal, had reported in September that the deterioration in the security situation was more serious than he had anticipated and that the *status quo* was not sustainable. The president told his audience that after concluding a careful strategic review he was ordering an additional 30,000 American troops into Afghanistan and would provide the resources necessary to build Afghan capacity to defeat al Qaeda and the Taliban and take responsibility for protecting their country. The president promised to increase US capacity to train competent Afghan security forces, to get more Afghans into the fight and accelerate the transfer of US forces out of Afghanistan beginning in July of 2011.^{xi}

Among the first manifestations of this enhanced international effort was the January 10, 2010 decision of the Joint Coordination and Monitoring Board, the formal governing body for allied security assistance, to increase the growth targets of the ANP from 82,000 to 109,000 in October 2010 and 134,000 in October 2011. The ANA target was a force of 134,000 by October 2010 and 171,600 by October 2011.^{xii} NTM-A upgraded the number and seniority of international advisors assigned to the ministries and began work on improving leadership development and identifying ways to control corruption. NTM-A also recognized that MOD and MOI required greater assistance to improve policy development, management practices, procurement, human resources and logistical support. All of these efforts were directed at improving the quality of oversight and support provided to the Afghan police and army.^{xiii}

The provision of the MoDA advisors to improve the existing foreign advisory corps for defense and interior ministries was an important component of the overall increase and improvement in the US Afghan National Security Forces assistance program that resulted from the establishment of NTM-A. Previously, defense and state department contractors, US military along with European Union, Canadian and Australian police had been advising Afghanistan's ministerial level. Though experienced within their own fields, these contractors, soldiers and police were often inappropriately matched with Afghan generals who were the head of departments at the ministerial level. There was a need to utilize civilian specialists coming from DOD headquarters with equivalent rank and experience. The MoDA advisors were added to the Joint Manning Document and Crisis Establishment billets. When they arrived in late 2010, these senior defense civilians brought the skill sets required to be appropriate counterparts to senior officials in the Afghan ministries. They also demonstrated the value of a cohesive civilian-military team.

The Creation of MoDA

The legislative origins of the MoDA program were found in congressional interest in improving the quality of U.S. advisors in Iraq and Afghanistan. The first mention of the program was in the House Armed Services Non-binding Committee Report (House Report 111-166 – National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for FY 2010 (HR 2647)). It described an initiative to deploy DOD civilians in an advisory role to the defense ministries of Iraq and Afghanistan. DOD senior civilians were chosen as ideal counterparts at the ministerial level due to their unique understanding and experience working within a bureaucracy. Additionally, through improving the capacity of the Afghan and Iraqi ministries, the program was to help build long-term relationships between the US and Iraq and Afghanistan.^{xiv}

The House bill contained the following language:

- (a) Authority – The Secretary of Defense, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, may provide civilian advisors to senior military and civilian officials of the Governments of Iraq and Afghanistan for the purpose of providing institutional, ministerial-level advice and other training to such officials in support of stabilization efforts and United States military operations in those countries.
- (b) Formulation of Advice and Training Program – The Secretary of Defense and the Secretary of State shall jointly formulate any program to provide advice and training under subsection (a).
- (c) Limitation – The Secretary of Defense may not expend more than \$13,100,000 for any fiscal year in carrying out any program in Iraq or Afghanistan as described in subsection (a).
- (d) Additional Authority – The authority to provide assistance under this section is in addition to any other authority to provide assistance to foreign nations or forces.
- (e) Termination of Authority – The authority to provide assistance under this section terminates at the close of September 30, 2010.

The provision creating the MoDA program was dropped in the House-Senate conference on the bill. However, Congress included funding for a new US advisory corps in the Afghan Security Forces Fund (ASFF). The ASFF provided the Secretary of Defense with Title 10 funding through the NDAA to man, train, equip, and sustain the Afghan National Security Forces.^{xv} CSTC-A was responsible for managing the use of funds from the ASFF.^{xvi} The FY 2012 budget for the ASFF was \$12.8 billion, of which MoDA's budget was \$16.5 million.^{xvii}

In response to congressional interest, the Department of Defense created the MoDA program. Once temporary funding and authority was established in FY2010, a MoDA program office was created within the Office for Partnership Strategy and Stability Operations Center, part of the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy. The MoDA office was responsible for the development of the program in its entirety, including the selection, training and deployment of civilians through the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce program. Though legislation initially included a provision to deploy MoDA advisors to both Iraq and Afghanistan, the determination was made to send advisors only to Afghanistan after the program office was created. This

decision was made after consultations with the respective commands in both Afghanistan and Iraq and based on their needs at the time.

Though the MoDA office was responsible for the execution of the program, it delegated funding for administrative organization and development of MoDA training to the Director for Training and Readiness (TRS) in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (P&R). P&R was the principal office for all force management to include health affairs, equal opportunity, personnel requirements and training within DOD. The TRS office outsourced responsibility for the MoDA training. A contract was awarded to the McKellar Corporation, a commercial contracting firm specializing in training and education; bi-lingual-bicultural advising, and subject matter expert support.^{xviii} The McKellar Corporation worked closely with the MoDA program office and alongside other partner government agencies to develop the training curriculum. The Center for Complex Operations (CCO), located at the National Defense University, and the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) along with Department of State, USAID and U.S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) assisted the MoDA program office to fulfill its congressional mandate to develop and deploy appropriately trained and effective civilian advisors to Afghanistan. Specifically, the CCO supported the lessons learned processes and best practices compilation in helping design the program. USIP's contributions included providing instructors and assistance in shaping the training curriculum.

Finding: Congressional intent has been achieved. The MoDA Program Office has prepared and deployed over 80 advisors to Afghanistan. According to the March 2011 audit report from the DOD Office of the Inspector General (DOD OIG), NTM-A/CSTC-A regarded the MoDA advisors as invaluable assets.^{xix} NTM-A requested an increase in the program to a total of 100 advisors for key positions in the MOD and MOI.

Finding: Funding has been adequate. The MoDA program office has been able to fulfill its mandate of providing quality, senior level advisors to Afghanistan. The Defense Department OIG reported that without the additional support from MoDA, the development of the MOD would have been delayed and could have jeopardized the objectives of the US counter-insurgency efforts.^{xx}

The Architecture of the MoDA Program

A. Defining the Advisors' Roles

The program began with an effort to determine the nature of the role of advisors. The CCO's research on best practices for advisors began with a conference in February 2009 in partnership with USIP and DOD's Joint Staff. This workshop examined lessons learned from former advisors. Approximately 40 former advisors attended the workshop and discussed the results of a survey of desired advisor traits and the optimal advisor curriculum. From this conference two problems were identified: 1) U.S. advisors serving in Afghanistan did not have the technical expertise required to perform many of the advising roles they were asked to perform; and, 2) these advisors had not received training on the "art" of advising prior to their deployment to Kabul.

The workshop participants maintained that advisors should be carefully selected for their positions. Traditionally, the U.S. military and commercial contracting firms provided the advisors. The military based selection and placement on military rank and specialty. Though vetting on some level did take place, this system did not allow for a thorough screening process based on personality and skill sets prior to arrival in country. Though most military advisors selected were senior in rank and had experience within their own specialty, they had little knowledge of how to run an organization at the ministerial level. Fortunately, the flexibility of the military system allowed these advisors to be moved within the command if they were found ill-suited for the advising role. However, this process took time and could be frustrating for both the advisor and the advisee. Contractors were selected through the personnel process of their respective contracting agency. Though there was a vetting process within this system, NTM-A had little input on personnel selection, aside from creating the job requirements. Additionally, once in theatre, it was extremely difficult to remove a contractor. In neither case were technical experts with ministerial level experience provided that could serve as a true counterpart to an Afghan minister or deputy minister at MOI or MOD.

The second realization from the meeting was that advising is an art, not a science. Advisors needed to focus on building relationships. Specifically, advising requires the skill of influencing others rather than mentoring or commanding them on how to proceed. Through the CCO conference, it was understood that a skill set of ‘exerting influence’ was not traditionally fostered within the military command structure where officers were accustomed to giving orders to subordinates. Therefore, it needed to be taught in order to have a successful program. Four guiding principles were developed for all advisors: 1) local ownership; 2) sustainability; 3) respect, humility and empathy; and 4) do no harm. Additionally five core competencies were developed to aid in success: 1) relationship building; 2) integrity; 3) open communication; 4) strategic alignment; and 5) organizational savvy.^{xxi}

Finding: The MoDA program has applied lessons learned. After gathering information from the CCO conference, the MoDA program has sought to correct shortfalls in previous initiatives. Specifically, MoDA recruited senior DOD officials with the required technical expertise who were appropriate counterparts to their advisees. Secondly, MoDA developed a stringent vetting process in which NTM-A participated ensuring the advisor had the right skill set and mindset for the position. Thirdly, the program implemented a rigorous training curriculum for the advisors prior to deployment.

B. Recruiting the Right People

The MoDA program recruited DOD civilians of the GS-13 through 15 level through the Civilian Expeditionary Workforce website. The program had also utilized an internal DOD and OSD information outreach mechanisms like the Pentagon TV Channel, email marketing, networking with returning advisors and word of mouth. More recently, MoDA positions were posted online on the USAJOBS website. Applications tripled, but the quality of applicants has been mixed. USAJOBS recruited personnel who were not current DOD employees.

The MoDA office recruited for both people with specific skills, such as procurement and logistics, along with generalists.^{xxii} All job postings were generated from a requirement list provided by NTM-A. The recruiting office received approximately 300 resumes for 15-20

positions in each training class. Applications were first screened by MoDA human resources (HR) staff. From this initial look, about 165 of the resumes were reviewed by a screening panel within the MoDA office. After this panel, approximately 70-75 applicants were invited for interviews with the MoDA HR officer and members of NTM-A via Video Teleconference. Those normally present from NTM-A were the senior HR representative in charge of MoDA's administration in country and a subject matter expert at NTM-A, such as a current advisor. At this point in the process, potential advisors were selected and started the medical screening process. Future advisors were also assigned a MoDA sponsor currently in Afghanistan.

Overall, DOD civilians comprised approximately 70% of the MoDA advising teams. These DOD civilians came from a variety of organizations, including the Defense Commissary Agency, Defense Finance and Accounting Service, and SOCOM. Rarely did a member for another government agency join the MoDA program, but there have been advisors in MoDA from the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency and the Department of Energy. These government civilians were chosen because of their unique skill sets not found among the DOD applicants.

Around 20% of the MoDA teams came from the outside the government. They were hired under Schedule A, an appointing authority that allowed for temporary hiring when it was impractical to use standard qualification requirements and to rate applicants using traditional competitive procedures.^{xxiii} MoDA advisors hired under Schedule A authority were civilians who possessed skill sets traditionally not found in DOD, such as policing expertise or were used to supplement areas where the DOD applicant pool was lacking.

Finding: The MoDA recruiting system works, having produced qualified recruits with proper rank and experience. The MoDA program enabled NTM-A to have access to a pool of highly experienced DOD civilian experts that filled a critical gap in the ranks of the U.S. advisory corps in Afghanistan.

Finding: Many of the current MoDA advisors were motivated to apply for the program in order to contribute to the war effort in Afghanistan. There was some evidence that this might be a relatively small number of people and that this was reflected in growing need to recruit advisors using the Schedule A authority. It remains to be seen whether the appeal of national service will continue to be a motivating factor as the war winds down over the next two years.

Finding: Many participants in the MoDA program were recruited from outside of DOD. A touted strength of the MoDA program was its utilization of the most qualified DOD civilian employees. However, on average, 20% of the first five classes were direct hire, Schedule A personnel from outside the government. These civilians have the prerequisite skills and experience; many had previous military or government experience and have proven an asset to the program. However, the program narrative that MoDA deploys DOD civilians is not always the case. Additionally, if an advisor hired under Schedule A authority does not perform during training or in country, it is difficult to remove them from the program.

C. Backfilling Advisors during Deployments

The MoDA recruitment package included backfill funding, which allowed the advisor's office to hire a temporary replacement during the one-year deployment. This program was designed to

make losing a staff member for a year more amenable by filling the gap created by the deploying advisor. There were several options that could be used to hire a backfill, such as: hiring a contractor using an existing contract vehicle; detailing an employee from a satellite office or another organization; having an employee with a lower grade backfill the deployed advisor; or hiring a reservist through a voluntary recall to active duty.

Finding: The backfill program should have been an incentive for offices to release personnel, however at times it was difficult for offices to fill slots given DOD regulations and the short one-year timeframe. Offices that already had a contract vehicle in place had the easiest time since they were able to utilize an existing mechanism for hiring. However, even some offices that had a contracting arm had some difficulty due to the short turnaround time. For offices without a contracting vehicle in place, options such as temporarily filling the position with a lower grade employee were helpful. Yet, for both cases, it was still administratively challenging for the office to train and integrate a new employee for only a year.

D. Training Advisors for their Roles

A key initiative of the MoDA program was its emphasis on training for the advising role. Without training advisors learned their jobs through trial and error, or failed completely. Training was needed to shorten the learning curve in order to prevent advisors from making not only 'rookie mistakes' but also irreparable errors. The MoDA training program was initiated to close the gaps identified at the CCO workshop and became the first DOD advisors training program since the Vietnam War.

The fundamental MoDA curriculum assumed that the students did not need training on their areas of expertise, but rather how to undertake cross-cultural advising in an impoverished, war-torn country. Therefore, the goals of the training program were to:

1. Teach functional experts the skills required to become effective mentors, advisors and capacity builders;
2. Impart cultural, historical and political knowledge of the Afghan/MOD/MOI environment; and,
3. Prepare advisors to be safe, resilient and adaptable during their deployment
4. Practice lessons learned in field exercises^{xxiv}

All MoDA advisors received approximately seven weeks of pre-deployment training. The comprehensive course included: professional advisor training; cultural awareness, country familiarization, and language instruction; senior-level consultations and briefings; and an evaluated final exercise which simulated the experience of advising in Afghanistan. The first week was dedicated to medical and administrative pre-deployment preparation at Camp Atterbury Joint Maneuvers Training Center in Indiana. The next five weeks were classroom-based learning held near the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia. After classroom instruction, the students returned to Indiana for a final week of personal security training and field exercises at the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center. There, students performed exercises with Afghan role-players and a simulated Afghan ministerial workplace in an immersive civilian-military environment.^{xxv}

The training program drew on the expertise of all of the MoDA training partners (USIP, USAID, Department of State, NDU and SOCOM), returned advisors and McKellar Corporation staff. McKellar provided language instruction and cultural awareness exercises. McKellar also hired experts on specific topics like counterinsurgency as well as former officials who attended the training sessions and facilitated daily wrap-up discussions with the students. USIP and NDU provided instruction in culture, capacity building, mediation, negotiation, and gender roles. With preparation in these skill sets, MoDA advisors were more effective when they arrived in country.

In order to keep the program current and effective, CCO, USIP and the MoDA program office conducted surveys and met with returning advisors for feedback and updates on the current situation in Afghanistan. Prior to every training session, the MoDA program office briefed instructors on specific feedback from the previous class of advisors. Over time the curriculum shifted from an emphasis on understanding the Afghan conflict and on basic advising skills to an emphasis on strategic planning and program design. There was also increased participation by subject matter experts who had recently served in Afghanistan. Changes in the organization and content of the curriculum were the subject of extensive debate within the core curriculum team and deserve a separate evaluation by curriculum development experts.

Finding: Training was a great strength of the program. Program veterans rated their training highly and said it was relevant to their assignments. The McKellar Corporation did a good job of handling the administrative portion of the program. McKellar also created a highly believable Afghan environment at the Muscatatuck Training Center, which included Afghan role players and soldiers from the Indiana National Guard in realistic training scenarios.

Finding: Despite the success of the training program, some participants and outside critics objected to the involvement of a contractor in the substantive aspects of the training. They argued that the expertise required for developing the training curriculum resided within U.S. government agencies. Therefore, it was unnecessary to involve a contracting firm other than to handle administrative functions such as travel and accommodation.

In Kabul: Deployments and Performance

A. Deploying to Afghanistan

Many MoDA advisors had prior military experience. For others, the flight on military transport from Kuwait to Bagram Airfield in Afghanistan marked the beginning of their first immersion into a military environment. As government employees, the MoDA advisors had equivalent military ranks. Once in a military environment, the treatment the MoDA advisors received was based on their equivalent military rank, which often meant that members of the MoDA group were treated differently. Many advisors experienced a sense of culture shock, recognizing they needed to make adjustments in the way they interacted with coworkers and supervisors. For a few advisors, this initial period of adjustment was somewhat traumatic, but all felt they were able to adapt over time.

Once in Kabul, most MoDA advisors attended a two week course at the U.S. Army Counter-Insurgency (COIN) Academy at Camp Julian. There, MoDA advisors studied COIN strategies in classes with US military personnel and members of the Afghan National Security Forces. As a result of their extensive pre-deployment training, MoDA advisors were often excused from attending the two-day NTM-A orientation for new advisors which included a briefing on Afghan history and culture and a presentation by a current senior advisor. After completing their introductory training, the MoDA advisors began the process of taking over from their departing counterparts and meeting with their Afghan advisees for the first time.

Though MoDA advisors were selected on the basis of a specific job description and billet, advisors worked for NTM-A and could be reassigned by the command once they arrived. NTM-A was able to move MoDA advisors to positions where it felt their skills would be best utilized. In the first MoDA classes, some advisors were assigned as staff members at NTM-A and worked on developing policies and strategic plans for the MOI or MOD. In many cases, these MoDAs, though not advising, became powerful voices within the command and orchestrated policy changes within NTM-A. In some cases, the assignment of MoDA personnel to staff positions at NTM-A headquarters was not a good fit, causing problems and wasting resources. Overtime, the MoDA program has improved the pre-arrival assignment process, but some assignments are still shifted upon arrival in country and not all MoDAs serve as advisors to Afghan officials.

Finding: Asking U.S. government civilian employees to serve in a military organization during wartime presented a major challenge for civilian military relations. Returned MoDA advisors stressed that their military counterparts often did not understand or appreciate the value of having civilian government experts as members of the advisory team. As U.S. government employees, MoDAs were different from contractors in that they had rank, authority and could serve in supervisory roles. For some military personnel, this was their first experience working with a civilian, particularly in a warzone. Some military personnel were reluctant to allow MoDAs to directly advise Afghan counterparts despite their technical expertise. Indications from NTM-A are that the importance of civilian advisors will increase as the military draws down and MoDA numbers increase relative to the number of military advisors and contractors.

B. Working in the Afghan Ministries of Defense and Interior

NTM-A's ministerial development focus was on improving the capacity of the MOI and MOD to operate independently. In 2009, NTM-A had few advisors on the ground, and the overall effort was disjointed. By 2011, there were approximately 580 NTM-A advisors assigned to the MOD and MOI. The MoDA program, with 50 advisors, accounted for less than 10 percent of the advisory pool.^{xxvi}

MoDA advisors were typically partnered with the ministers, deputy ministers and heads of departments in the MOD and MOI. All of these officials were general officers with the rank of brigadier to lieutenant general. Infrequently, MoDA advisors would be paired with lower ranking and subordinate Afghan staff. Assignments were based on the experience and expertise of the MoDA advisor. For example, a MoDA Schedule A who had a successful business career after retiring from the army advised the Afghan First Deputy of Acquisition Technology &

Logistics (AT&L) and AT&L's Director of Resource Management. In this role, he advised a major general, 3 brigadier generals and 31 colonels.^{xxvii} Another MoDA advisor who served previously as the Director of Logistics for the U.S. Army Garrison in Bamberg, Germany was the senior advisor to the MOI Chief of Supply and Sustainment and the MOI Chief of Transportation Policy, both brigadier generals.^{xxviii} MoDAs typically spent three days a week at the ministry with their Afghan counterparts. Ideally each advisor was paired with a dedicated interpreter, who stayed with the advisor throughout their tour.

When the MoDA advisors arrived in Afghanistan in 2010, a program was underway to develop comprehensive institutional development plans for both the MOI and MOD. NTM-A, in concurrence with its Afghan partners, created Ministerial Development Plans, which were based on the Afghan National Strategy and Plans for the police and army respectively. These Ministerial Development Plans divided each ministry into approximately 30 sections with a specific development plan for each section. On a quarterly basis, the implementation of these plans was reviewed by a Ministerial Development Board that included senior advisors and Afghans officials. The board measured the ministry's ability to function without assistance from coalition partners based on categories called Capability Milestones (CM). These CM ratings were broken into four parts. If a unit was considered CM-4 it meant the unit could not operate without assistance of coalition partners. When a segment of the ministry became CM-1, it was determined that it could function independently. Ministerial Development Plans and the Ministerial Development Board were considered vital to synchronizing ministerial development.^{xxix} MoDAs played a key role in the process both in designing the strategies and contributing to improvements within their respective sections of the ministries.

MoDA advisors were responsible for several initiatives that improved the interior ministry's performance. Two MoDA advisors teamed to develop a logistics readiness tool that provided ANP provincial commanders with insight into the availability of equipment in their districts. Another advisor helped his Afghan counterparts design a tool that accurately tracked ANP vehicles for an external audit. Two other MoDA advisors improved gender integration in the police forces. The senior MoDA advisor, David Clifton, produced the first "Afghan Ministry of Interior (MOI) Advisor's Guide" to help advisors understand how to navigate within the ministry. The Guide was developed with assistance from the Joint Center for International Security Force Assistance in FT Leavenworth. It provided valuable information on the ministry, NTM-A, and ministerial development programs and helped advisors become oriented more quickly to their new environment.

Another MoDA initiative was the development of a team concept to synchronize coalition efforts within the MOI. Coordination was especially important at the MOI due to the important role played by the U.S. State Department and international partners. NTM-A worked with the State Department's Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement (INL), the European Union Police Mission, and bilateral partners such as Canada and Australia that provided police officers. Under the MoDA plan, the minister and deputy ministers (department heads) were advised by teams composed of a U.S. military officer (an army colonel or equivalent), a MoDA advisor and an international police officer, as a core group. The teams were augmented by additional advisors and other personnel depending on the requirements of the Afghan official who they were assigned to advise.

Findings: According to returning advisors, most MoDAs found their work to be rewarding and an overall positive experience. Returnees felt that the MoDA advisors had a large advantage over military counterparts because of their previous bureaucratic experience and training. Additionally, many returnees felt it was beneficial not to be in uniform while assisting their Afghan counterparts. Finally, returning advisors said their Afghanistan experience was invaluable when they returned to DOD. After being imbedded with NTM-A, the returning MoDA advisors had an intimate understanding of the challenges of operating within a warzone which they could apply in their work in Washington.

Finding: The field training at the Muscatatuck Urban Training Center received high marks for realism and for preparing advisors for life in Afghanistan. However, returning advisors believed that the orientation and training they received would benefit from better situational awareness of the work actually done by MoDA advisors in Afghanistan. MoDA advisors were told they would serve as advisors to Afghan officials and work side-by-side with an Afghan counterpart. Instead, many MoDAs were assigned to perform staff functions at NTM-A, or served in working groups or as members of advising teams with only very limited personal contact with Afghans. Returnees noted that there was a substantial disconnect between the way their duties were described in Washington and Indiana and the actual jobs they performed in Afghanistan.

C. Advising Alongside Others

MoDA was one of three U.S. programs that provided civilian advisors to the security ministries in Afghanistan. The first program relied upon commercial contracting firms. Contractors were selected by the contracting agency and were not screened by the command receiving the advisor. Contract personnel were hired to do a specific task and could not be moved as requirements changed in country. However, unlike MoDA advisors who were limited to two-year tours, contracts could be extended and contractors could remain in Afghanistan almost indefinitely based on the needs of the command.

The second program, the Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands (AfPak Hands), was created in September 2009 to provide a cadre of military and senior civilian experts that specialize in the complexities of Afghanistan and Pakistan. The members of AfPak Hands were intended to develop close working relationships with their Afghan and Pakistani counterparts.^{xxx} AfPak Hands did rotations in Afghanistan and Pakistan over the course of a five-year period. When recruiting civilians, the AfPak Hands program used the existing Civilian Expeditionary Workforce website. The program included a robust selection process and a six month training program focused on language, culture and the unique challenges of working in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but not on how to advise their counterparts.

Finding: Contractors and government civilians provide a different product to NTM-A than MoDA advisors. Critics of the MoDA program argued that there was no need for a separate program for advisors outside of the traditional contracting system. The advantages of using contractors were the flexibility to extend contracts and the ability to hire for specific skill sets. However, the MoDA advisors provided advantages not found with commercial contractors,

whose work was limited to the specific tasks identified in their contracts. MoDA advisors could undertake strategic planning and engage in problem solving with the Afghanistan counterparts. As government officials, MoDA advisors had equivalent rank to their military counterparts which allowed them to serve as supervisors and to lead teams and direct offices. Conversely, contractors were not allowed to perform supervisory functions. Finally, MoDA advisors could form professional relationships with their Afghan counterparts that continued when they returned to their jobs at the DOD. Establishing these types of relationships was one of the goals of the MoDA program.

Finding: The cost of MoDA personnel has been comparable with the cost of civilian advisors provided by commercial contractors. The cost of the MoDA program to provide approximately 100 advisors per year in FY 2011 was \$11 million. The cost in FY 2012 is an estimated \$15.5 million.^{xxx} The contract for civilians to fill these positions was \$60 million for the FY12 DynCorp International contract, which provided approximately 300 civilians.^{xxxii} Therefore, the MoDA program spends about \$165,000 to \$192,000 per advisor compared with an average of \$200,000 per DynCorp contractor.

Finding: Although all advisors worked for NTM-A, the MoDA, AfPak Hands and contractors competed for limited positions and funds. A few returning MoDA advisors reported that some contractors saw MoDA as a threat to their jobs. This perception gave rise to some tensions and criticisms of MoDA among members and supporters of competing programs.

Return and Reintegration

At the end of their tours, MoDA advisors returned to the United States through the military transport system. This process took the advisors first to Bagram Air Base and then by air through Kuwait to Germany and back to the Camp Atterbury in Indiana. There, the advisors out-processed, returned their equipment and were officially detached from the MoDA program. Those who were DOD employees returned by air to Washington. Those hired under Schedule A authority returned to their homes around the country.

Finding: Those MoDA advisors who returned to the U.S. reported mixed experiences with the administrative portion of the reintegration process. As civilians, many advisors objected to the requirement to return via the military transport system on military aircraft. They noted that commercial flights to the U.S. were faster and more convenient, but were not permitted even if the advisors were willing to pay their own way.

Finding: While MoDAs were required to use military transport, they were not provided with either the decompression time or out-briefs that were routinely provided for their military counterparts in Kuwait. Military personnel spent 3-5 days in Kuwait, during which they attended classes covering topics such as reintegration with family members, techniques for dealing with stress and tools for successfully transitioning home. Military members also had the option of receiving follow-on individual counseling sessions once they returned home. These services were not available to MoDA advisors, though often they did the same jobs and worked alongside military colleagues in Kabul.

Finding: MoDA advisors were supposed to return to the same jobs that they left at DOD, but this was not always the case. Happily, many advisors were promoted or otherwise assigned to better positions. On the other hand, some MoDAs found that their jobs had been eliminated as a result of budget cuts or reorganizations. Others discovered that circumstances had changed within their old offices during their absence. Some were frustrated by the fact that while they were away their colleagues had become accustomed to getting along without them.

Finding: After a debrief with CCO, USIP and the MoDA Program Office, advisors were no longer tethered to the MoDA program. Many returnees conveyed the importance of keeping a record of MoDAs who had returned from the field. They believed they could play a useful role in training and mentoring future advisors. Additionally, if the MoDA program went “global,” many advisors wanted the opportunity to utilize their experiences in another country.

The Future of the MoDA Program

The FY 2012 National Defense Authorization Act called for MoDA to become a global program. Under this legislation, DOD can assign senior civilian advisors to countries in support of stabilization and capacity-building efforts at a ministerial level until September 2014. The authority for expanding the MoDA program is found in Section 1081 of the Act which reads as follows:

Authority for assignment of civilian employees of the Department of Defense as advisors to foreign ministries of defense:

Subtitle I—Miscellaneous Authorities and Limitations

(a) AUTHORITY.—The Secretary of Defense may, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, carry out a program to assign civilian employees of the Department of Defense as advisors to the ministries of defense (or security agencies serving a similar defense function) of foreign countries in order to—

- (1) provide institutional, ministerial-level advice, and other training to personnel of the ministry to which assigned in support of stabilization or post-conflict activities; or
- (2) assist such ministry in building core institutional capacity, competencies, and capabilities to manage defense related processes.

The expansion of the MoDA program by Congress was both a vote of confidence for and a recognition of the value of providing civilian advisors to assist defense ministries in partner countries. Going ‘global’ will change the program in ways that are beyond the scope of this study, but there are a few issues that are already identifiable. First, MoDA’s recruiting for Afghanistan has been based upon a call to national service for Defense Department civilians to serve alongside their military counterparts in a war zone. Recruiting for a broad range of countries where advisors could bring their families and work in relatively attractive environments could broaden the potential pool of recruits, but also result in different types of people who would volunteer. MoDA training, which has focused exclusively on Afghanistan, will have to be expanded to include other countries. Advisors may no longer be deployed in groups which will mean that training will have to be modified, perhaps through greater use of online courses, to prepare individuals to serve in different environments. Supporting individual

advisors spread around the globe will also be a challenge. As the MoDA program takes on a global reach, it will need new policies related to sending government civilians overseas who are not Foreign Service Officers. It will also be necessary to create individualized evaluation criteria for judging performance in vastly different bureaucratic environments.

Concurrent with the expansion of the MoDA program, responsibility for managing the program will be transferred from the current MoDA program office to the Defense Security Cooperation Agency beginning FY13. Originally locating the MoDA program in the Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy was an anomaly, since OSD Policy normally provides policy oversight, but does not directly manage programs. On the other hand, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency specializes in managing programs, including the Defense Institution Reform Initiative, a complementary program that does ministerial capacity building in partner countries. Moving MoDA to a permanent home will be an additional step in regularizing the program and ensuring its continued operation in the long term.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The MoDA program has provided a new approach to advising at the ministerial level. It has demonstrated that government civilians, who have experience in the bureaucratic process, are well-suited for the role of advising counterparts in foreign defense and interior ministries. Given the overall success of the program, there are a number of conclusions and recommendations that flow from this evaluation.

All U.S. advisors sent to Afghanistan should benefit from the major strengths of the MoDA program: rigorous selection and thorough training. Advising foreign counterparts is not easy and cannot be done by anyone. There are certain innate characteristics and personality traits that are required to be a successful advisor. All military and civilian advisors going to Afghanistan should be subjected to the same rigorous selection process utilized in the MoDA program. In addition, all advisors, regardless of their program, should undergo the MoDA training, which is far superior to any other advisory training program. All future advisors should benefit from instruction in advising skills, Afghan history, language and culture, and Afghan institutions. They should also participate in the same type of realistic training scenarios involving Afghan role players prior to deploying to Afghanistan.

The basic advisor's tour should be extended to two years, with advisors encouraged to remain for three years in country. Building relationships takes time and a criticism of all foreign advisory programs was the length of time spent in country. Understanding the complexities of Afghanistan and other crisis states takes time. Rotating advisors on an annual basis with time off for orientation, home leave, vacations and out-processing limits their effectiveness and creates a revolving door syndrome that frustrates U.S. administrators and Afghan counterparts. Creative solutions, including increased financial incentives, should be found to address the need to keep advisors in country for longer periods.

The MoDA program requires improved administrative support, particularly when advisors are in Afghanistan. There was no precedent for sending senior civilians advisors abroad for an extended period within the DOD system which led to a number of administrative challenges.

Though the program office tried to align experts with the billets assigned by NTM-A, there was a frequent need to change assignments and to make certain that moving advisors around resulted in a proper fit. This required human resources expertise with support from a robust management team. Pay issues were a problem for many advisors while in country, especially those who were Schedule A employees. There were also issues surrounding leave policies and procedures. Many returning advisors suggested the need for a dedicated administrative support person to handle pay and administrative issues. It was pointed out that the presence of more than 50 MoDAs in one location was evidence of the need for greater management and administrative support capacity in the Department and in country.

Increased attention should be paid to MoDA advisors at the end of their tours and after their return to the U.S. MoDA advisors should receive the same type of counseling and decompression time as their military counterparts and be eligible for follow-on evaluation and assistance. At a minimum, they should receive information on resources available to them after spending a year or two in a warzone. Ideally, an effort should be made to ensure that their unique needs are met when they return home. Former MoDA advisors are a resource for program design and curriculum development. Not all MoDA advisors come back with a positive story, but they all have a realistic view of what can occur in country. These stories should be told so upcoming classes have a better picture of what to expect. Former advisors can serve as subject matter experts in training programs. Efforts should be made to keep track of former advisors and draw upon their expertise whenever possible.

A system for program evaluation should be established to measure program effectiveness and to answer critics of the program. There is no baseline to measure the effectiveness of the MoDA advisors. It is difficult to evaluate a program where personal relationships are the most critical component and results may take years to emerge. Short-term solutions can have unintended consequences over the long term. Time spent developing a relationship built on mutual trust with a relatively junior official may pay dividends years later when the official is promoted to a higher office. Critics of the MoDA program were concerned about its cost and administrative burdens, but especially the effectiveness of the ministerial advising program in Afghanistan as a whole. An effort is needed to develop program metrics and to establish an ongoing evaluation program so the results of the program can be measured in the short term and over time.

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