



**Headquarters
International Security Assistance Force**



KABUL AFGHANISTAN

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SUBJECT: PARTNERING DIRECTIVE

DATE: 29 August 2009

- REFERENCES:
- A. COMISAF Tactical Directive, (1 July 2009)
 - B. ANA/CFC/NATO-ISAF/Partnership Memorandum of Agreement, (17 July 2006)
 - C. HQ ISAF FRAGO 377-2008 ISAF – ANSF Partnering (20 January 2009)
 - D. ISAF Joint Command (IJC), *Partnership as Doctrine Overview* (1 August 2009)
 - E. ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance (25 August 2009)

1. **Purpose.** To provide additional guidance and intent for the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) to conduct embedded partnering with the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). This directive also applies to all U.S. forces operating under the operational control or tactical control of U.S. Forces-Afghanistan (USFOR-A). Wherever this directive refers to ISAF SOPs, FRAGOs or Directives, USFOR-A forces will refer, where applicable, to comparable USFOR-A SOPs, FRAGOs or Directives; otherwise they will follow the ISAF guidance.

2. **Commander's Intent:**

a. The Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) faces two daunting tasks; protecting the Afghan population and defeating the insurgency that challenges its sovereignty. ISAF's mission is to assist GIRoA in accomplishing these tasks. ISAF will use embedded partnering—a trust-based, habitual and enduring relationship with the ANSF—as the method to assist GIRoA in overcoming these challenges.

b. ISAF has routinely planned and conducted combined operations with the ANSF, referring to them as partnered operations. These “partnerships” were temporary and ended when ISAF and ANSF returned to their separate Forward Operating Bases (FOB) upon completing an operation.

c. Embedded partnering is a fundamentally new approach that extends beyond just working together outside a FOB. It changes the current paradigm by merging ISAF and ANSF into one entity with a single purpose—protecting the population by defeating the insurgency.

d. ISAF cannot independently defeat the insurgency; a well trained and competent ANSF is necessary to achieve this endstate and to ensure GIRoA's long-term survival. To rapidly expand the capabilities of the ANSF, ISAF will change the manner in which we partner. Embedded partnering will integrate ISAF and ANSF units together to form a more coherent relationship: we will live, train, plan, control, and execute operations together at all command echelons. The synergy created through embedded partnering will increase the likelihood of accomplishing the mission.

(1) ISAF will partner with the ANSF at all levels—from the Government Ministries down to platoon level. An embedded partnership does not change ISAF's mission; rather, it enhances our capabilities to perform the mission by establishing a trust-based relationship between ANSF and ISAF units. Formal partnerships permit shared responsibility for planning and execution. The emerging relationship is between equals, with ISAF as the supporting organization and ANSF as the supported organization.

(2) ISAF is committed to building enduring relationships with the Afghans by living, training, developing, and operating with the ANSF. ANSF and ISAF units will plan and execute all activities together. By combining resources, the partnered units will be better able to leverage each other's strengths while compensating for weaknesses, thereby improving their collective combat effectiveness.

(3) Partnership is a symbiotic relationship where ISAF and Afghans provide input that will allow each to respectively visualize the operational environment from a different perspective. ANSF leaders will have the opportunity to adopt our planning methodologies, administrative procedures and multispectral approach to warfare. Meanwhile, ISAF leaders will learn Afghan cultures, norms and values.

3. **Embedded partnering builds relationships:**

a. Trust and mutual respect is the basis for relationships, especially in combat. Temporary partnerships cannot build the trust and respect required to excel. Without trust, there will be little long-term growth and development. Our new approach to partnering will create enduring relationships through shared experiences, both in and out of combat.

b. An embedded partnership is not a long distance relationship. ANSF and ISAF units will no longer operate from separate FOBs. Instead, they will live and operate from the same FOB and integrate their headquarters,

operations centers, planning cells, and other functions. While there are tactical and cultural challenges to overcome, integration begins the process of forming a lasting bond between partnered units.

c. For partnering to succeed, ISAF and the ANSF must share resources. These resources are both physical (e.g. aviation, weapons systems, and building infrastructure) and sometimes sensitive resources such as current battlefield information, doctrine, techniques, and intelligence. By partnering at all command echelons, we will improve procedures to plan and execute combined operations and develop more effective methods to measure, reassess and adjust our campaign effects. If we partner properly, there will not be a question of whether or not to support an Afghan element, or to ensure Afghan representation at coordination meetings.

4. Partnering implementation:

a. It is crucial that ANSF capability grows to a level where they can operate independently to protect the population. All operations will be embedded partner operations with the ANSF. Eventually, the ANSF will mature to a point where they will transition to exercising responsibility within independent battlespace, as currently exists in Kabul.

b. Partnering should employ the following five-step methodology: explain how to conduct a battlefield function or operation, show by example, execute the function or operation together with ISAF in the lead, execute with ANSF in the lead, and finally ANSF on their own with ISAF overwatch. By using this methodology, the ANSF capacity and confidence should grow until they no longer rely on ISAF support.

c. Embedded partnering means that ISAF and ANSF units will live on the same bases, train, plan, brief, rehearse, exercise command and control, fight, and recover together. ANSF is the supported command; ISAF is the supporting command. As the supporting command, ISAF has the responsibility for preparing, training, and assisting the ANSF to defeat the insurgency. Embedded partnerships are effective when the ANSF can successfully accomplish independent combat operations.

d. Partnership programs may vary across the RCs based on force ratios and composition. The intent remains unchanged; to join every coalition combat, combat support, and combat service support unit with a comparable ANSF unit.

(1) Task organization revisions may be required in order to match people, equipment, unit capabilities, and living space with the ANSF. These changes will take some time, so analysis with our Afghan partners should begin immediately to determine requirements and shortfalls.

(2) Embedded partnering includes more than just ANA manoeuvre and command and control elements. It includes the Afghan National Police (ANP), ANA logistics units, and other combat support multipliers. ISAF will develop metrics to track and evaluate progress of partnering and its effectiveness with both the ANA and ANP.

(3) Relationships must be formal and not ad hoc. The same organic units must conduct all phases of operations together, from planning and preparation through execution and after operations recovery. The same ANSF commander and staff should interface with the same members in the partnered ISAF unit. Building trust and working through the partnering methodology together will build ANSF capability and self-reliance much faster.

(4) Embedded partnering will occur everywhere, even in Kabul Ministries and ISAF Headquarters. It solidifies the ANSF-ISAF relationship that is critical for the ANSF to secure long-term success once they assume independent battle space.

5. **Conclusion:** Only the Afghans can win this conflict, but they need our support. Partnering creates a synergy that amplifies our strengths and reduces our individual weaknesses. However, effective partnering takes active leadership across all echelons. Embedded partnering must be embraced at every level from HQ ISAF to the most junior organization, setting conditions for Afghanistan to grow into a democratic, unified, and independent nation.

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