



Visit to Tarin Kowt, Uruzgan

Background

- 4.1 Tarin Kowt is the Provincial Capital of Uruzgan Province in southern Afghanistan. The province is one of the poorest and the population the least educated of all Afghanistan's provinces. The province is dominated by the mountains and valleys of the southern edge of the Hindu Kush. To its west is the violent Helmand Province and to its south Kandahar Province, the birthplace of the Taliban.
- 4.2 Uruzgan Province is the focus of Australia's main effort with the major concentration of Australian forces based from Multinational Base Tarin Kowt (MNBTK), on the outskirts of the capital. The base was established by the Dutch-led Task Force-Uruzgan, which oversaw ISAF efforts in the province from March 2006 until August 2010. The base provides easy access into Tarin Kowt and has a recently upgraded tarmac airfield capable of C17 operations.
- 4.3 ISAF Operations in Uruzgan are commanded and controlled by Combined Team Uruzgan (CT-U). CT-U is US led, with Australian personnel and formed bodies throughout the team. The following ADF elements were based in Uruzgan at the time of the visit:
- CT-U HQ, with Australian personnel integral to the HQ;
 - Mentoring Task Force 2 (MTF 2);
 - Special Operations Task Group 16 (SOTG-16);
 - Provincial Reconstruction Team Uruzgan (PRT-U);
 - Elements of Force Support Unit 4 (FSU-4);

- Elements of Force Communications Unit 4 (FCU-4);
- Scan Eagle (UAV) Detachment; and
- Counter Rocket, Artillery and Mortars 1 (CRAM-1).

Purpose and Conduct of Visit to Tarin Kowt

4.4 The purpose of the visit to Tarin Kowt was to visit the HQs and units based in Uruzgan, develop an understanding of the issues affecting ADF operations in the province, to meet with provincial Afghan leaders, gain an appreciation of the true conditions of the situation in the province and obtain an understanding of the progress of operations. Some of these briefings were of a classified nature and will not be discussed in this report.

Figure 4.1: The delegation with escort, COL Andrew McLean (in slouch hat), arrives at Multi-National Base Tarin Kowt, Afghanistan by RAAF C130J, is met by Commander CT-U, COL Jim Creighton



- 4.5 The delegation was hosted by the Commander of CT-U, Colonel Jim Creighton (US Army), and spent 20 hours in Uruzgan. The conduct of the visit was as follows:
- The delegation flew by RAAF C130J aircraft from AMAB to Tarin Kowt where it was met by Colonel Jim Creighton, Colonel Dennis Malone (Australian Army), Deputy Commander CT-U, and Lieutenant Colonel Darren Huxley, Commanding Officer (CO) MTF-2;
 - the delegation attended a classified operational briefing in HQ CT-U, followed by a round table discussion with the key leaders within CT-U;

- the delegation walked to PRT House on MNBTK where members attended a Shura and Dinner with local Uruzgan leaders;
- the delegation returned to HQ CT-U for a briefing and round table discussion with PRT-U;
- the delegation walked to HQ SOTG for a classified discussion with CO SOTG;
- the delegation stayed overnight in the transit lines;
- the delegation had breakfast with members of MTF-2;
- the delegation flew by US Blackhawk helicopters to Patrol Base (PB) Musaza'I, Mirabad Valley, where the delegation received a ground brief and situation brief by Captain Kirby, Commander Operational Mentoring and Liaison Team (OMLT) Combat Team-B (CT-B);
- the delegation then met with local senior village leaders from the villages surrounding PB Musaza'I; and
- on return to MNBTK, the delegation had morning tea with members of CT-U and MTF-2 before departing by C130J to Kandahar.

Observations from the CT-U Round Table Discussion

- 4.6 The key personnel in attendance at the CT-U round table discussion were:
- Commander CT-U: Colonel Jim Creighton (US Army);
 - Deputy Commander CT-U, outgoing: Colonel Dennis Malone;
 - Deputy Commander CT-U, incoming: Colonel David Smith;
 - CO MTF-2: Lieutenant Colonel Darren Huxley;
 - CO MNBTK: Wing Commander Paul Aggett;
 - CO 4-70 Armour Battalion (US Army): Lieutenant Colonel David Oeschger (US Army);
 - Director PRT-U: Mr Bernard Philip (DFAT); and
 - Deputy Head of Mission, Australian Embassy Kabul: Adrian Morrison.
- 4.7 CT-U is a US led formation, however it is a multi-national combined team made up of personnel from US, Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, Netherlands, Slovakia and Afghanistan.

- 4.8 CT-U is responsible for mentoring and developing all Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) in the Province, including the Province's ANP and the ANA's 4th Brigade of 205th Corps (4/205).
- 4.9 CT-U has made significant progress in security since taking over from the Dutch. CT-U has expanded the security coverage, from 18 x PB to 36 x PB, in the last 12 months.
- 4.10 The local Afghan leadership is key to the development of a secure and safe province. The current Provincial Governor, Omar Shirzad, and Provincial Chief of Police (PCoP), Colonel Shirzad, are very effective which has led to improved governance and development and, thus, improved security.
- 4.11 CT-U has had a very effective winter campaign; a mild winter has allowed successful operations where CT-U has increased the area under ISAF/ Afghan control and security. SOTG has been key to the winter gains as they have taken 19 x mid and low level Taliban Leaders off the field.
- 4.12 CT-U focus for the 2011 fighting season is to hold onto what has been gained over the winter period.
- 4.13 Key points raised by CO MTF-2 were as follows:
- MTF-2 is currently mentoring four Afghan National Army (ANA) infantry Kandaks (battalions) and one Combat Support Kandak (Recon, Artillery and Engineers).
 - One of the Kandaks being mentored by MTF-2 is now assessed as able to operate independently. However, it still requires mentoring for key enablers.
 - MTF-2's current focus is on developing unit HQs, particularly personnel management and logistics. ANA access to leave and travel home are a key issue for retention and MTF-2 is mentoring HQs on this issue.
 - ANA literacy is a key issue to develop a professional army, for example, making it difficult to train them in specialist enabling skills such as artillery.
 - The force structure and numbers within MTF-2 were just adequate for tasks allocated to the force, and the unit struggled during the periods where personnel were released for their Relief Out of Country Leave (ROCL).
- 4.14 Key points raised by CO 4-70 Armour Battalion (US Army) were as follows:

- 4-70 focus is on Afghan National Police (ANP) Training and Mentoring.
- There are approx 2,500 ANP officers in Province.
- ANP is two years behind in the mentoring program in comparison to the ANA due to neglect. They have now received one year of concentrated mentoring by 4-70, which has resulted in an improvement.
- The new ANP Provincial Commander is leading the ANP effectively. He is enthusiastic and has addressed a number of logistical issues affecting the ANP including:
 - ⇒ provision of winter uniforms to all personnel;
 - ⇒ weapons and ammunition availability; and
 - ⇒ vehicle fuel and maintenance.

4.15 Key points raised by the Director PRT-U were as follows:

- Uruzgan is a difficult area for development due to its remote nature and harsh terrain. It is the poorest province in Afghanistan and its demographics are challenging. Specifically:
 - ⇒ literacy is a challenge; 10% literacy across the province and 0.2% for women;
 - ⇒ school attendance in Uruzgan is 20%, whereas it is 50% nationally;
 - ⇒ in Uruzgan 37% of children do not live to five years of age; and
 - ⇒ typically 50% of each village is under 18 years of age.
- The security situation is the most vital public need for the local population, followed by the proper administration of justice.
- Justice concerns focus on:
 - ⇒ land ownership disputes;
 - ⇒ commercial/inheritance disputes; and
 - ⇒ corruption.
- Uruzgan's economy is dominated by agriculture, which in turn is currently dominated by poppy. However, Uruzgan produces good quality almonds (supported by AusAID), wheat, pomegranates and watermelons.
- ISAF does not conduct poppy eradication, even though the drug trade provides key funding for the insurgency. The Afghanistan Government is responsible for eradication and is currently conducting these operations in the Province. A key issue facing the Government and

ISAF is identifying a substitute crop. The PRT had ordered wheat seed for this planting season; however it arrived five weeks too late to plant.

- A key issue affecting the agricultural economy is access to markets due to very poor transport/road infrastructure. The Dutch Government has funded the development of a bitumen road from Tarin Kowt up the Chora Valley. This road has had multiple benefits for the Province; it assists the economy, provides better access to health and schooling and supports security measures.
- The PRT is benefiting from work previously done by the Dutch and their continuing funding and efforts in the Province.

Observations from the Shura and Dinner with Local Uruzgan Leaders

4.16 The delegation attended an Uruzgan Provincial Leaders Shura and Dinner at PRT House. The key personnel in attendance were as follows:

- Provincial Governor: Governor Omar Shirzad;
- Commander 4th ANA Brigade (Bde): Brigadier General (BG) Zafar;
- Provincial Chief of Police (PCoP): Colonel Shirzad;
- Provincial Chief of the National Directorate of Security (NDS): Aziz Zakhariya;
- Director Rural Rehabilitation and Development (RRD): Engineer Mohammed Hashim; and
- CT-U personnel in attendance reflected the same group which attended the CT-U Round Table discussion.

Figure 4.2: Mr Stuart Robert MP and Senator Mark Furner meet Uruzgan's Provincial Governor, Omad Shirzad, at PRT House MNBTK



4.17 During the Shura and dinner the key discussion points were as follows:

- Governor Shirzad thanked ISAF, particularly Australia and Netherlands, for the efforts and sacrifices to date in the province and for Australia's ongoing commitment to the Province.
- The people of Uruzgan are very pleased at the development to the Tarin Kowt airfield to an all-weather airfield and the opportunities that this facility will provide for trade and travel.
- The Governor's priority for development of the province is the building of the all-weather road system throughout the key valleys of the province, in order to provide the people with improved access to markets for their goods and access to health and education.
- There was general consensus that by 2014 the ANSF needs to be able to stand up on their own for the security of the Province, and that there will also be a need for good governance and development in the Province by the national government to support this.
- All stated that the efforts of ISAF in the province in the past 12 months, particularly this winter, had led to an improved security standard in the Province which has allowed improved freedom of movement to Afghan Government agencies. Six years ago NDS and other Government agencies were unable to travel more than 500m from their compounds in Tarin Kowt due to the poor security situation, now they can travel to most places within the Province.

- It was recognised that there are three key areas of strength in the Uruzgan security apparatus between Afghan and ISAF:
 - ⇒ Communication
 - ⇒ Coordination
 - ⇒ Cooperation
- The Provincial Chief of Police, Colonel Shirzad, claimed that the relationship between ISAF and the ANSF was the best example of cooperation and coordination that he had seen between these forces in any of the six provinces that he has served in previously.
- The Provincial Governor recognised that as the security situation in Uruzgan has improved, the people should now expect that the national government should provide the key government services of education, health, a legal system and good governance.
- Women's issues in the Province were discussed, with key points being:
 - ⇒ Observing female Australian soldiers working in the Province has provided a great example to the people of Uruzgan and has sent a strong message to the men of villages that these women have travelled from many miles away to help their villages.
 - ⇒ In Tarin Kowt female doctors, nurses and maternity and fertility health programs exist, with the people in Tarin Kowt having good access to health services. However, in remote areas there is little access to health services and consequently there is a significant risk to maternal and child health.

Figure 4.3: Delegation at the Uruzgan Leadership Shura with Uruzgan's Provincial Governor, his deputy, the Provincial Chief of Police and Commander ANA 4th Brigade



Observations from the PRT-U Round Table Discussion

4.18 The delegation attended a round table discussion with PRT-U leaders at CT-U HQ. The key personnel in attendance were as follows:

- Director PRT-Uruzgan: Mr Bernard Philip, DFAT;
- Deputy Head of Mission, Australian Embassy Kabul: Adrian Morrison;
- Executive Officer PRT: Commander Jay Hildebrandt (US Navy);
- Political Adviser: Joel McGregor (DFAT);
- Development Adviser (AusAID): Michelle Tickle;
- Development Adviser (Netherlands): Wiesje Ellferich;
- Operations and Security Officer PRT: Major Ash Cogdon;
- Senior Project Engineer, PRT: Captain Ryan Orders; and
- Commander CT-U: Colonel Creighton.

Figure 4.4: The Delegation at the PRT round table meeting, attendees include the Director PRT Mr Bernard Philip (DFAT) and other Australian Government agency representatives and ADF members of the team



4.19 The first subject of discussion was the political situation within Uruzgan. It was argued that the quality of political leadership within the Province can only be improved through mentoring the political leaders and their Advisers. A key to mentoring is having an understanding of the complexity of the political situation in the Province. This complexity is due to the following issues:

- the influence of tribal loyalties and inter-tribal allegiances, rather than allegiances to the Province or to the nation and its government;
- the effect of 'Power Brokers' at all levels; and
- too much influence by the Beluchzi tribe; decreasing this influence is key for transition.

4.20 The next subject of discussion was the progress of development in Uruzgan. This discussion included the key development needs, the engineering capacity in the PRT and funding.

- There are four key development needs in Uruzgan:
 - ⇒ Changing agriculture from poppies to other crops, which is being addressed through the Developing Rural Alternative Program. Key to this is improving the almonds supply chain and provision of wheat seeds.
 - ⇒ Improving the administration of justice and adherence to the rule of law. Judges and prosecutors exist in the Province, however there are no defence lawyers.
 - ⇒ Development of all-weather roads, which are being constructed by Dutch and Australian Government aid programs.
 - ⇒ Health programs, with AusAID providing funding to 'Save the Children' to improve the health system.
- The PRT's military engineering capability is refocusing effort away from vertical construction to roads and bridges in accordance with the Provincial Governor's priority.
- The funding for development of projects in Uruzgan Province comes from the following sources:
 - ⇒ AusAID has \$30M available to spend in Uruzgan.
 - ⇒ The US Government has \$6M USD for development of roads in the Province.
 - ⇒ NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan (NTM-A) is building a \$150M USD ANA Headquarters in MNB-TK.
- Mr Benard Philip stated that the current funding available from AusAID, the Dutch and the US Governments for development in Uruzgan is about right for now. There is very little economic capacity for any additional funding. However, he argued that the Australian Government should remain flexible to ensure that funding is available for opportunity programs.

- 4.21 The final item of discussion was the development of the Afghan National Police (ANP) in Uruzgan Province. The key points from the discussion were as follows:
- The AFP's role in Uruzgan is to train the ANP at the Tarin Kowt Police Training Centre.
 - The Training Centre is funded by NATO Training Mission - Afghanistan (NTM-A), and the course syllabus is directed by NTM-A.
 - The AFP conducts a six week ANP Recruit training course, and are teaching and mentoring the ANP to conduct this course without assistance.
 - AFP is slowly changing focus to ANP leadership training for both senior non-commissioned officers and ANP senior leadership.
 - AFP provides liaison and support to the US Army's 4-70 Armour Battalion mentoring of the ANP.
- 4.22 Colonel Creighton stated that the PRT efforts are a key component to the CTU mission success as the PRT is the lead on two of CTU's lines of operation.

Observations from the Round Table Discussion with CO SOTG

- 4.23 Late in the evening the delegation moved to the SOTG camp within MNBTK to receive a classified brief from the CO SOTG Rotation 16. This briefing and subsequent discussion provided an in depth understanding of the capabilities that reside within the SOTG and those ISAF capabilities in which they were able to call upon in planning and conduct of their operations. The CO also provided an excellent briefing on the effect that SOTG were having in the Province and to its approaches.

Observations from the visit to Patrol Base (PB) Musaza'i, Mirabad Valley

- 4.24 On the morning of 16 May the delegation moved to the MNBTK airfield where the members were provided a tactical and safety brief and then flew by two US Army S-70 Blackhawk helicopters to PB Musaza'i in the Mirabad Valley, which houses the Operational Mentoring and Liaison

Team (OMLT) from Combat Team-Bravo (CT-B). The key personnel who accompanied the delegation were:

- Commander CT-U: Colonel Jim Creighton (US Army);
- Deputy Commander CT-U, outgoing: Colonel Dennis Malone;
- Deputy Commander CT-U, incoming: Colonel David Smith; and
- Director PRT- Uruzgan: Mr Bernard Philip, DFAT.

Figure 4.5: Delegation at PB Musaza'i receiving a ground brief from the OC OMLT CT-B, CAPT Kirby



4.25 On arrival at the Helicopter Landing Zone (LZ) at PB Musaza'i the delegation was met by the Officer Commanding the OMLT, Captain Kirby, and the CT-B Intelligence Officer, Captain Wallace. The LZ was outside of the protective walls of the Patrol Base and thus security was provided by the Australian Light Armoured Vehicles (ASLAVs) of CT-B. On the short walk down to the valley Captain Kirby provided the delegation a ground brief to point out the key geographical locations surrounding the Patrol Base, including the 'Green Zone', the main supply route and the local villages.

4.26 On arrival in PB Musaza'i the delegation moved to the Patrol Bases' Operations Room and received a classified Operations Brief on the Mirabad Valley. The key points from this briefing were as follows:

- In April 2010 the only way for MTF-1/ISAF to effectively move up the Mirabad Valley from TK was by helicopter. Now, with the improved security situation, ISAF can move up the valley in vehicles.

- PB Musaza'i was built in September 2010 by MTF-1, over a two week period, under hostile fire from the Taliban.
- Since February 2011 Insurgent/Taliban offensive actions against the PB have been very sporadic, with no effective action against MTF-2 elements for three months.
- The local insurgency is community/rural based, with fathers, uncles and brothers involved. It is very much an opportunity based insurgency.
- Due to increased Government and ANA effectiveness and the effect of increased ISAF numbers, the insurgency has lost relevance in the local area. However, this is very tenuous due to the need for further economic and social development and the possible effects of the Afghan Government's Poppy Eradication Program.
- The effectiveness of the ANA in the Mirabad Valley has improved. Some elements of the local ANA Kandak now operate independently of Australian Mentors. Of the four PBs in the valley, two are now manned by ANA only. However it should be noted that MTF-2 elements provide tactical overwatch and support as required.

4.27 On the completion of the Operations Brief and a question and answer session, the delegation moved to a fortified meeting area on the outside of PB Musaza'i for a Security and Development Shura with local leaders in the near vicinity of the PB. The following locals attended the Shura:

- Malim Habibullah - Village/ Local Leader/Elder;
- Malim Manan;
- Mohammed Sadiq;
- Haji Akatullah Khan; and
- Haji Ishaqzai Aka.

Figure 4.6: Delegation at the PB Masaza'i, Mirabad Valley local Security Shura



4.28 The key discussion points and observations were as follows:

- The local leaders discussed the positive outcomes of the MTF/ISAF and ANA presence in the Mirabad Valley and the improved security situation.
- The local leaders stated that they are very pleased with the Australian Army's professionalism and positive approach, which provided the local population with confidence.
- The local leaders are concerned that the international coalition will withdraw their forces too early, before the job is done and before Afghanistan is ready to stand on its own feet.
- The delegation confirmed that Australia had the political will and agreement between both major parties to stay the course.
- The local leaders believe that the visit of the Australian Parliamentarians sets a very good example to Afghan politicians about accountability and the need to see what is occurring 'on the ground'.
- The leaders are concerned about Pakistani and Iranian interference in Afghanistan's security and allege that these countries are harbouring terrorists. They asked that the delegation take back to the Australian Parliament the need to apply pressure on Pakistan and Iran to stop their interference in the internal affairs of Afghanistan.
- The leaders discussed the issue of the Afghan Government's lack of commitment to look after the remote and poor. They are concerned

about the Government's accountability and provision of services such as health, education and the judiciary. They also spoke of the desire for an all-weather road to be built up the valley to provide better access to markets, education and health services.

- When questioned by Bernard Phillip on why some farmers grew poppies, Malim Manah explained that due to the destruction of Afghan society and institutions and the lack of alternative livelihoods and options, farmers grow poppies to get money to survive. The Shura acknowledged that growing poppies and its products were against Islamic teachings; however, some people just did not have the choice.
- A key observation from the Shura was that the local leaders never spoke of their concerns for security; it was a notable absence from the discussion.

- 4.29 At the end of the Shura, COL Creighton informed the delegation of the unintended effects of growing opium poppies. Most poppy farming families have all members of the family involved in the growing process, including the harvesting of the poppy resin. This process requires the poppy to be cut and then the oozing resin collected. During this process the person conducting the operation is required to handle both the mature poppy and the raw opium resin. This opium resin is absorbed through the skin and symptoms of addiction develop. It has been the experience of ISAF medics that they need to provide large doses of morphine to wounded Afghans, including children.
- 4.30 Opium addiction in women was also raised at SOTG. It is understood there is a high level of addiction among the female population in Uruzgan who use opium as a pain killer, particularly during child birth.
- 4.31 On completion of the Shura, the delegation returned to MNBTK by US helicopters. On arrival at MNBTK the delegation was taken to Scan Eagle Hill and provided a ground brief of the layout of the base. The delegation then returned to the Australian canteen where they had morning tea with ADF personnel from across the Australian contingents in TK.

