



## Visit to Kandahar Airfield, Kandahar

### Background

- 5.1 Kandahar is the Provincial capital of Kandahar Province in southern Afghanistan. Kandahar is the birthplace of the Taliban and was the seat of Government when they ruled Afghanistan. The north of the province is dominated by the mountains and valleys of the southern edge of the Hindu Kush and the south by desert. To its west is the violent Helmand Province, to its North is Uruzgan Province and to its south and east it shares a border with Pakistan's restive tribal areas.
- 5.2 Kandahar Airfield (KAF) is the main ISAF base in Afghanistan's south, housing approximately 35,000 ISAF troops, and is the main airfield for ISAF's airpower in the south. HQ Regional Command South (RC(S)), the two star HQ commanding all ISAF forces in the Southern Region, is located on KAF. The airfield was initially developed by the Soviet Union during its occupation of Afghanistan and surrounded by legacy Soviet minefields. The base provides easy access into Regional Command South and its tarmac airfield is capable of C17 and jet fighter operations.
- 5.3 The ISAF capabilities resident on KAF are as follows:
- HQ RC(S), this is a Two Star General/ Divisional HQ currently based around the US Army's 10<sup>th</sup> Mountain Division;
  - HQ Combined Team-Kandahar;
  - Elements ISAF's air component, which includes fixed wing transport; rotary wing transport, aero-medical evacuation, reconnaissance and attack; UAVs and jet fighters;

- ISAF forces to protect KAF (and also responsible for the security of the province and for mentoring the ANSF);
- ISAF logistics units; and
- An ISAF Role 3 (surgical) Hospital.

5.4 Australia's force elements in KAF are based at CAMP Baker, which provides hardened accommodation for the members. Those based at CAMP Baker work in locations spread across the airfield. The following ADF elements were based on KAF at the time of the visit:

- Rotary Wing Group (RWG);
- Heron Detachment;
- Force Support Team;
- Elements of SOTG;
- Elements of FCU; and
- ADF, Defence Civilian and Other Government Agency (OGA) Embeds in various HQs on KAF.

Figure 5.1: Senator Furner, Dr Jensen MP, LTCOL Kenny and COL Maclean discussing CAMP Baker, KAF, with MAJ Peake, OC Force Support Team



## Purpose and Conduct of Visit to KAF

- 5.5 The purpose of the visit to KAF was to visit the ADF units and embeds based in KAF, develop an understanding of the issues affecting ADF operations from KAF 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.
- 5.6 The delegation was hosted by the Officer Commanding the Force Support Team/ Camp Commandant CAMP Baker, Major Neil Peake, and the delegation spent 25 hours at KAF. The conduct of the visit was as follows:
- The delegation flew by RAAF C130J aircraft from Tarin Kowt to KAF where it was met by Major Neil Peake;
  - the delegation had lunch at the Cambridge Dining Facility with members of the Force Support Team;
  - moved by ground convoy to RWG at Mustang Ramp, convoy journey provided an opportunity for a windscreen tour of KAF;
  - tour of RWG and viewing of US Army aviation capabilities;
  - moved by ground convoy from RWG to the Heron Detachment;
  - Heron operational brief and tour of Heron facilities;
  - moved by ground convoy from Heron Detachment to the KAF Role 3 Hospital;
  - operational briefing and tour of the Role 3 Hospital;
  - moved by ground convoy from the Role 3 to CAMP Baker;
  - dinner with Australian personnel at CAMP Baker;
  - overnight in hardened accommodation at CAMP Baker;
  - AUSAID and OGA round table discussion;
  - tour of CAMP Baker and Force Support Team operational briefing; and
  - departed KAF by RAAF C-130J for Kabul.

Figure 5.2: Ms Brodtmann MP receiving a brief on the self-protection capabilities of a RWG's CH47D.



## Observations from the visit to Rotary Wing Group

5.7 The key personnel hosting and briefing the delegation were as follows:

- Commanding Officer RWG: Lieutenant Colonel Monaghan;
- Executive Officer RWG: Major Lewis;
- Officer Commanding Technical Support Troop: Captain Wing;
- Troop Commander and Pilot: Captain Weatherstone; and
- Pilot: Captain Hodda.

5.8 On arrival at Mustang Ramp the delegation was met by Lieutenant Colonel Monaghan. He led the delegation for a tour of the RWG facilities, followed by a CH47D capability briefing and walk around of the aircraft. Key unclassified discussion points were as follows:

- RWG only has 2 x CH47D (Chinooks) in theatre and they operate as part of a larger US Army Combat Aviation Brigade (CAB) based out of KAF. The CAB is made up of lift helicopters, reconnaissance and attack aviation capabilities and provides support to all RC(S) ISAF units.
- RWG only deploy for 9 months of each year to coincide with the summer fighting season.

- RWG raised the issue that they are only allocated 720 flying hours between two airframes for the deployment. These hours are not an additional operational allocation, rather they come out of the normal budget allocated for raise, train and sustainment of the capability in Australia.
  - This constraint is due to the servicing requirements of the CH47 and its associated costs. The deep maintenance servicing is only conducted in Australia, whereas the US Army conducts its equivalent servicing at KAF via a contractor, thus negating the need to return the aircraft to the US for this service.
  - RWG personnel discussed the impending replacement of the CH47D with CH47G in 2014 for the Australian Army. The current 6 x CH47D will be replaced by 7 x CH47G. The staff raised the preference for 13 x CH47G which would provide a more sustainable capability. The additional airframes would improve the current raise, train and sustain issues being faced by their home unit due to the operational tempo of the airframes and this increase would provide the Australian Government with additional flexibility for operations in the future.
- 5.9 The delegation was also provided a classified brief by embedded Australian Staff within the HQ of the CAB. This was followed by a walk around and brief on the US Army's Apache attack helicopter and its Kiowa Warrior reconnaissance helicopter.

## **Observations from the visit to the Heron Detachment**

- 5.10 The key personnel hosting and briefing the delegation were as follows:
- Commanding Officer Heron Detachment: Wing Commander McMullan;
  - Administration Officer: Flight Lieutenant Rinaldi; and
  - Senior Intelligence Officer: Flight Lieutenant Wilson.
- 5.11 On arrival at the Heron Detachment's location the delegation was met by Wing Commander McMullan. The delegation was provided a classified brief followed by a tour of the Detachment's classified capabilities and facilities.
- 5.12 The key unclassified discussion points were as follows:

- The Heron is an unmanned aerial vehicle used for over ground Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), and is tasked to only support Australian forces in Uruzgan and surrounding provinces.
- RAAF have 3 x Heron airframes on lease in theatre.
- The capability available can fly 2 x Heron airframes simultaneously.
- The Detachment's pilots have to comply with normal ADF flight rules, e.g. flying hours per day.
- The Heron Airframe has a very effective day and night capability.

Figure 5.3: The Delegation observing the Heron UAN Ground Control Station



## Observations from the visit to the Role 3 Hospital

5.13 The key personnel hosting and briefing the delegation were as follows:

- Nursing Officer: Flight Lieutenant Danby (RAAF); and
- Hospital Administrator: Lieutenant Commander Boland (US Navy).

5.14 A Role 3 Hospital has specialist surgical and medical capabilities, diagnostic resources and capabilities, preventative medicine, dentistry and operational stress management teams. It has the holding capacity to allow for diagnosis, treatment and holding until able to return to duty or be on forwarded to a higher level of care.

5.15 The key discussion points were as follows:

- The Role 3 Hospital at Kandahar is a Multinational Medical Unit and a world class trauma hospital, which provides significant surgical capability including in Neurosurgery.
- The hospital building was built by NATO, however it is run predominately by the US Navy and reinforced by professional staff from Canada and the Netherlands. It is the only Role 3 Hospital in Southern Afghanistan.
- The hospital has a 98% survival rate for all soldiers who enter the hospital alive.
- The hospital also treats local nationals injured due to the war.
- The Dutch and Canadian staff depart the hospital later this year. This will provide an opportunity for the ADF to provide staff, if deemed appropriate. These impending vacancies could provide an opportunity to train and develop ADF medical staff in trauma treatment.

Figure 5.4: Delegation at the KAF Role 3 Hospital being briefed on its capability.



## Observations from the AUSAID/OGA round table discussion

5.16 The key personnel at the round table discussion were:

- Tim Millikan: DFAT Representative and Embed at HQ Regional Command South (RC(S));
- Liz Abbott: Defence Department Liaison Officer (LO) and Embed at HQ RC(S);
- Chloe Robison: Defence Department LO and Embed at HQ RC(S);
- Rita Erfurt: Defence Department LO and Embed at HQ RC(S); and
- Tyson Sara: IP Division and Special Advisor to Commander RC(S).

5.17 The round table discussion was held at CAMP Baker with the AUSAID and OGA Staff that are deployed as embeds within RC(S). The key discussion points were as follows:

- The key terrain districts in Southern Afghanistan, that make up the main effort of ISAF to clear, hold and develop, are those districts within and surrounding the city of Kandahar and in Central Helmand province.
- The key challenge to develop the key terrain districts is to ensure that 'Governance' capabilities from the Government of Afghanistan are placed in behind the ISAF and ANSF once they have secured the districts. The Afghan Government has a challenge in recruiting appropriately skilled officials, from district governors to school teachers. Currently only five of ten District Governor positions in Kandahar City are filled.
- Those districts in Southern Afghanistan which are successful/improving tend to be only one person deep. This situation means that the loss of that one key player could cause those districts to regress significantly.
- A vital governance requirement for Afghanistan and the success of the COIN strategy is the requirement for the development of the rule of law. However the success of the administration of the justice system is effected by the following:
  - ⇒ Centralised law decided by central government versus local law. In Afghanistan local law has historically taken precedence.
  - ⇒ The effect of the Pashtun cultural practices of 'Pashtunwali', where such things as 'Honour Killings' are practiced.



- ⇒ Many of the justice issues facing the Afghan Government and ISAF are not purely 'conflict' related; rather, they are often 'under developed nation' issues – much like many nations in Africa. These issues will take years to resolve and will not be resolved by the time ISAF transitions security to the ANSF.
  - AUSAID has a very good reputation in RC-S, however there is an issue of how long it takes AUSAID to commence a project due to the need for detailed research prior to project commencement.
  - Misuse of locally engaged staff by the international community and ISAF through the human resource management practices of these organisations. These include paying interpreters and drivers more than doctors and teachers. These practices lead to educated people working outside of their profession, at the expense of nation building.
- 5.18 On the completion of the round table discussion the delegation was provided with a short brief on CAMP Baker and then moved to the air terminal for its flight by RAAF C130J to Kabul.

