

Chapter 8

Civil/Military development assistance

8.1 In Afghanistan, Australia's strategic approach to aid involves 'interlinked diplomatic, development and military elements'.¹ Australia's mission brings together the work of these three elements with the aim to:

- train an Afghan National Army (ANA) brigade in Uruzgan province to assume responsibility for security;
- help to train the Afghan National Police (ANP) to assist with civil policing functions in Uruzgan; and
- strengthen the ability of the Afghan Government to deliver basic services and to assist with capacity building in Uruzgan, so that the provincial administration can in time also assume responsibility for civil roles.²

8.2 In the previous chapter, the committee described the combined effort of DFAT, AusAID, ADF and the AFP in Uruzgan, particularly as members of the Uruzgan PRT. While considering the positive results achieved through Australian aid to date in Uruzgan, the committee also looked critically at some elements of the effectiveness of this aid. The committee now turns to look at concerns raised about the military's dual role in Uruzgan as combatants and as part of the reconstruction team and the implications that ADF's engagement in delivering assistance has for aid effectiveness.

Winning hearts and minds

8.3 In 2010, an evaluation by the Afghan Ministry of Finance noted that an added complication to the effective delivery of aid stemmed from the widely held assumption among policy-makers and practitioners that development assistance could serve as a 'soft power' tool to promote stability and security in Afghanistan. It found that this assumption:

...results in aid flow largely for protection of military interests through hearts and minds win of people, argued to be required for promotion of security.³

8.4 AID/WATCH termed the military's engagement in such activities as the 'militarisation of aid'.⁴ It saw this mode of delivering assistance as part of a broader

1 AusAID, *Australia's strategic approach to aid in Afghanistan 2010–2012*, December 2010, p. 3.

2 AusAID Afghanistan, <http://www.ausaid.gov.au/countries/southasia/afghanistan/Pages/home.aspx#aid> (accessed 10 September 2012).

3 Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Ministry of Finance, *Joint Evaluation of the Paris Declaration: Phase 2: Islamic Republic of Afghanistan*, 2010, Baawar Consulting Group, p. 8.

4 *Submission 23*, p. [1–2].

trend to use international development aid as a 'soft power' tool of foreign policy.⁵ According to AID/WATCH, Western donors in Afghanistan have directed significant components of their aid budget to winning the 'hearts and minds' of local people in areas in which its military forces are operating.⁶ Professor Howe and Mr Pryke explained that where the strategic objective is to win hearts and minds through development assistance, the essential aim is 'to undermine insurgency and build support for the existing, but threatened, government and/or its international allies'.⁷ Under the inquiry's terms of reference, the committee is not required to consider in detail Australia's military combat role in Afghanistan. The ADF, however, became actively involved in non-combat activities in Uruzgan intended to assist local people to improve their situation, which was part of the broader counterinsurgency mission.

Australia's counterinsurgency strategy in Uruzgan

8.5 Although significantly weakened, the Taliban did not formally surrender after their defeat in 2001 and by 2005 there were troubling signs that their remaining members and other extremist groups were reorganising.⁸ Australia's military involvement in Afghanistan, which had fallen to a few staff officers in headquarters, picked up again in September 2005 with the deployment of a Special Operations Task Force.⁹ According to Major General Peter Cosgrove:

Late in 2005 and early 2006, the pacification campaign in Afghanistan was faltering and it was decided by Australia and a number of other countries that they had to beef up the forces in Afghanistan. Being in on the ground floor, so to speak in 2001, it was natural that Australia would provide a bigger contingent the second time around.¹⁰

8.6 Since 2006, the ADF has not only been actively engaged against the Taliban, but has been working through its Mentoring and Reconstruction Task Force with the people and Afghan security forces to deliver better services.¹¹

5 *Submission 23*, p. [1].

6 *Submission 23*, p. [1].

7 *Submission 14*, p. 15.

8 See for example, United Nations, General Assembly, Security Council, A/56/100–S/2002/737, 11 July 2002, paragraph 61. United Nations, General Assembly, Security Council, A/60/224–S/2005/525, 12 August 2005, paragraph 60 and 'SAS put on the squeeze', *Army The Soldiers' Newspaper*, 28 March 2002, <http://www.defence.gov.au/news/armynews/editions/1047/story02.htm> (accessed 15 October 2012).

9 *Submission 16*, p. 13.

10 *Asia Pacific Defence Reporter*, 'The Australian Army has certainly evolved a very strong COIN doctrine', Exclusive Interview with General Peter Cosgrove, 1 September 2010 <http://www.asiapacificdefencereporter.com/articles/78/The-Australian-Army-has-certainly-evolved-a-very-strong-COIN-doctrine> (accessed 30 August 2012).

11 Senate Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Legislation Committee, *Committee Hansard*, Estimates, 21 October 2009, p. 34. See paragraphs 7.7–7.8 of this report.

8.7 When Australia took charge of the Uruzgan PRT in August 2010, the ADF was presented with increased opportunity to engage in construction projects in the province.¹² Indeed, the announcement of Australian leadership foreshadowed a significant escalation in Australia's overall contribution to development work in Uruzgan and ushered in a new phase of Australia's engagement in the province. The then Minister for Defence explained that Australia's larger part in the PRT was vital to the entire Coalition's efforts in Uruzgan—the heart of its counterinsurgency effort.¹³ He noted that PRTs were:

...key to delivering the 'build' part of ISAF's counterinsurgency strategy of 'shape, clear, hold and build'. By mentoring and assisting local officials, and by supporting economic and infrastructure development, the PRT helps extend the reach of the Afghan Government in Uruzgan, and win the hearts and minds of the people. The PRT is fundamental to the stabilisation efforts across the province and the eventual transition of responsibility to Afghan authorities.¹⁴

8.8 In this regard, Mr Brendan Sargeant, Defence, made clear that the ADF's construction and development work 'complements its efforts to develop security across Uruzgan'. The development activities help to create a safe environment in which the ADF is able to conduct operations, which is a key part of the ADF strategy in Uruzgan. He explained:

Development projects help to build relationships and goodwill with the local population, increasing support for both the ADF and Australian civilian agencies in Afghanistan.¹⁵

8.9 There is no doubt that the ADF's reconstruction work on the ground in Uruzgan has achieved impressive results. In 2010, local feedback to the TLO found that:

Due to their more visible and hands-on approach, going out to build schools and clinics, they [ADF] are generally considered to be 'more serious' and productive when it comes to both development and security. This leads to the overall perception that the Australian military is best about delivering what they promise, and best about monitoring their projects. This exemplifies that sometimes 'small is beautiful' as the Australians overall do less projects than the Dutch, but their visibility and quality control gives them a lot of credit.¹⁶

12 *Submission 17*, p. [2].

13 Senator the Hon John Faulkner, Minister for Defence, Ministerial Statement on Afghanistan, 23 June 2010 and Senate *Hansard*, 23 June 2010, p. 4185.

14 Senator the Hon John Faulkner, Minister for Defence, Ministerial Statement on Afghanistan, Senate Debates, 23 June 2010, <http://www.openaustralia.org/senate/?id=2010-06-23.158.2> (accessed 3 December 2012).

15 *Committee Hansard*, 3 December 2012, pp. 48–49.

16 TLO, *The Dutch Engagement in Uruzgan: 2006 to 2010*, August 2010, p. 53.

8.10 Even so, this 'winning the hearts and minds' policy: this mixture of combat and development activities drew criticism. Thus, while Uruzgan shows tangible signs of benefitting from development assistance delivered through the combined civilian-military-police effort, a number of reports, supported by evidence from witnesses, identified a potential down side to the military engagement in delivering aid.

Blurred perceptions

8.11 The 2009 TLO report recorded that when the NATO-mandated Dutch troops, supported by a significant contingent of Australians, took command of Uruzgan PRT in August 2006, they entered a 'charged political minefield'—a deeply divided and polarized environment.¹⁷ At the time, the TLO observed:

The operations of international forces, often perceived (rightly or wrongly) as heavy handed and culturally offensive by the local population, has added water to the mill of insurgents' propaganda. The fact that international forces are perceived as having made a number of wrongful arrests over the last years as a result of incorrect or manipulated intelligence has also contributed to a general feeling of discontent that insurgents have been quick to capitalize upon.¹⁸

8.12 The report found that this perception had 'led some communities and their leaders to withdraw support from the Afghan Government and/or seek active engagement with the Taliban'.¹⁹ With regard to the ADF, the TLO observed:

The local population mostly perceives a contradiction between the more 'hands off' Dutch approach of 'reconstruction where at all possible, military action where necessary' and the more aggressive counter-terrorism stance of the Americans troops. Australians are in between, supporting both Dutch development efforts as well as providing Special Forces to the American-led contingent in capture and kill missions.²⁰

8.13 Some argued that associating military aid with development assistance not only created confusion in the minds of the local population but also influenced their attitudes toward aid. For a number of witnesses, the problem, however, went way beyond simply blurred understandings to actual behaviours that compromised the delivery of aid.

Counterinsurgency objectives

8.14 Professor Maley, who described Uruzgan as a pretty tough province, was of the view that the Australian military had done some very good work there in terms of skilling local elements of the population and in construction activities in Tarin Kowt.²¹

17 TLO, *Three Years Later: A socio-political assessment of Uruzgan Province from 2006–2009*, 18 September 2009, p. 16.

18 TLO, *The Dutch Engagement in Uruzgan: 2006 to 2010*, August 2010, p. 50.

19 TLO, *The Dutch Engagement in Uruzgan: 2006 to 2010*, August 2010, p. 50.

20 TLO, *The Dutch Engagement in Uruzgan: 2006 to 2010*, August 2010, p. 50.

21 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 9.

He suggested, though, that there was very little evidence indicating that developmental activity would win a political dividend for the Afghan Government or its international backers. In his view, this was due in part to Afghans rationally aligning themselves politically 'not on the basis of gratitude for what has been done for them in the past, but rather on the basis of what alignments are likely to protect their interests in the future'.²² Indeed, he concluded that if a province or region remains unstable, the fruits of reconstruction spending may prove negligible in the long run.²³

8.15 Nonetheless, the overall major concerns about the military providing development assistance related to its potential to undermine aid effectiveness.

Effectiveness

8.16 A number of witnesses questioned the extent to which the military's direct involvement in delivering aid made a positive contribution to development. Save the Children, Oxfam and World Vision referred to a growing body of research that questioned the effectiveness of development assistance implemented by military actors. It cited a 2010 study by a number of aid agencies, *Quick Impact, Quick Collapse: The Dangers of Militarized Aid in Afghanistan*, which reported:

...military institutions often lack the capacity to effectively manage development initiatives, and are unable to achieve the level of local trust, engagement and community ownership required to achieve positive and lasting improvements.²⁴

8.17 Mr Denis Dragovic, who is familiar with working in conflict areas, wrote that there was no basis for claims suggesting that improved development outcomes had been achieved 'as a result of closer integration on the ground between civilian and military personnel'. He stated further:

The unnecessary extension of the whole-of-government concept to the coal face in a way that includes the establishment of PRTs and Australian Civilian Corps personnel being seconded or integrated into military units is largely driven by a misguided idea that cost and operational efficiency across all levels equates to improved developmental results.²⁵

8.18 In particular, some witnesses referred to aid in Uruzgan as short-sighted, 'quick fix' projects that address immediate tactical concerns without due consideration to longer term consequences—schools without teachers or materials.²⁶

22 *Submission 4*, p. [4].

23 Attachment to *Submission 4*, William Maley, 'Reconstruction: A Critical Assessment' in Amin Saikal (ed.), *The Afghanistan Conflict and Australia's Role*, Melbourne University Press, 2011, p. 91.

24 *Submission 6*, p. 12. The study was Ashley Jackson, *Quick Impact, Quick Collapse: The Dangers of Militarized Aid in Afghanistan*, Oxfam International et al, 2010, p. 1.

25 *Submission 2*, pp. 2–3.

26 See *Submission 18*, p. [2], *Submission 23*, p. [1] and paragraphs 7.27–7.34.

Distribution of aid

8.19 By the very nature of its combat role, the military tend to be concentrated in areas of perceived, potential or actual insecurity. Professor Maley observed that aid funds have a tendency to follow the military. He explained:

This is a product of combining a 'whole of government' philosophy of integrated operations with a military effort on the ground in Afghanistan that is focused on counter-insurgency in unstable parts of the south and east. The result (quite apparent, for example, in Australia's involvement in Oruzgan) is that aid funds can be channelled into the least stable parts of the country, with the intention of reinforcing military achievements with reconstruction activity.²⁷

8.20 Professor Maley referred to this situation as a 'moral hazard' problem, which could arise easily if developmental activity were designed to complement the efforts of the military. Local people then gain the impression that the way to get project funding 'is to create an atmosphere of ambient *insecurity*'.²⁸ He observed:

The risk is that areas in which ordinary Afghans have done their best to produce local security will be neglected by aid agencies, and that this will send the signal that the way in which to secure aid money is to generate local insecurity.²⁹

8.21 He also spoke of the uneven distribution of support on the ground that does not necessarily reflect variations in need among the many PRTs in Afghanistan due to the resources expended by the respective forces. As an example, he noted that US-led PRTs had been generously supported by US aid funds unlike the Romanian and Lithuanian PRTs. As smaller and less wealthy countries, Romania and Lithuania were simply not able to marshal resources on a comparable scale.³⁰

8.22 Mr Jim McMurchy, who has visited Afghanistan four times over the last five years, was similarly concerned with the military absorbing and tying aid projects to their PRTs as part of the counterinsurgency strategy. In his view, this practice blurs the line between humanitarian aid and military assistance:

27 Attachment to *Submission 4*, William Maley, 'Reconstruction: A Critical Assessment' in Amin Saikal (ed.), *The Afghanistan Conflict and Australia's Role*, Melbourne University Press, 2011, p. 91.

28 Attachment to *Submission 4*, William Maley, 'Reconstruction: A Critical Assessment' in Amin Saikal (ed.), *The Afghanistan Conflict and Australia's Role*, Melbourne University Press, 2011, p. 91 (emphasis in original).

29 *Submission 4*, p. [4] and *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, pp. 9–10.

30 Attachment to *Submission 4*, William Maley, 'Reconstruction: A Critical Assessment' in Amin Saikal (ed.), *The Afghanistan Conflict and Australia's Role*, Melbourne University Press, 2011, p. 91.

Such aid projects tend to be short sighted projects, located in the areas of greatest insurgency to gain the 'hearts and minds' of the local population in an attempt to lure them from the fear or attraction of the insurgents.³¹

8.23 AID/WATCH, one of a number of NGOs highly critical of the military's 'winning hearts and minds' approach, also referred to the problem of military aid causing distortions in the allocation of assistance towards regions experiencing conflict.³² It stated that while militarised aid could advance the short-term tactical goals of the military, in the long term it 'tended to intensify conflicts associated with the war in Afghanistan'.³³

8.24 Some witnesses, including AID/WATCH, were concerned that projects may not only produce immediate, quick-fix benefits but detract from the important long-term development objectives or humanitarian matters. It noted that by favouring projects that support the security objectives of ISAF, military aid displaces poverty-oriented projects thereby overshadowing the 'goals of poverty alleviation, self-determination and human rights'.³⁴ It argued:

The mandate, for instance, to reduce the incidence of poverty gets undermined by the relationship that the aid agency is required to construct with the military in order to deliver the aid.³⁵

8.25 PRTS were singled out for this type of criticism.³⁶ Save the Children, Oxfam and World Vision drew on a body of research suggesting that 'militarised aid' tended to focus on winning hearts and minds rather than on poverty alleviation and may prove ineffective.³⁷ It cited a report that found:

As political pressures to 'show results' in troop contributing countries intensify, more and more assistance is being channelled through military actors to 'win hearts and minds' while efforts to address the underlying causes of poverty and repair the destruction wrought by three decades of conflict and disorder are being sidelined.³⁸

8.26 Mr Poulter spoke of the focus on stabilisation and strengthening of government, which, although understandable, could divert attention from the humanitarian crisis in Afghanistan for example the large numbers of displaced people.³⁹

31 *Submission 18*, p. [2].

32 *Submission 23*, p. [1].

33 *Submission 23*, p. [1].

34 *Submission 23*, p. [2].

35 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 46.

36 *Submission 23*, p. [2].

37 *Submission 6*, p. 12.

38 *Quick Impact, Quick Collapse, the Dangers of Militarized Aid in Afghanistan*. This paper is paraphrased from a speech given by Kai Eide to the UN Security Council on 3 January 2010.

39 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 36.

8.27 It is important to note that the ADF does not receive money from AusAID. Any funds spent by the ADF on development assistance is not ODA money allocated to the ADF rather the ADF uses its own funds and resources when delivering development assistance.⁴⁰

Local institutions

8.28 In Dr Bizhan's view, the military approach of winning hearts and minds in Afghanistan had undermined institution building and state and society relations. He gave the example of where a local community approaches a military general who accedes to its request for important infrastructure such as a bridge. Dr Bizhan argued that this military response to a community's request 'distorts the relationship between the local government and the local community'. He explained that when there is a problem with the project, the local community will take it to the local government. According to Dr Bizhan, this 'quick fix' practice ignores local institutions and is not a viable approach for Afghanistan. He reasoned that bypassing local institutions removes opportunities to build capacity and is not part of an exit strategy—it is more like a counterinsurgency approach.⁴¹ AID/WATCH also referred to military development assistance creating greater barriers to community participation in decision-making processes.⁴²

Risk of attack

8.29 Dr Bizhan also noted that while the military were looking to contribute some visible outcomes to win the hearts and minds of locals, those visible outcomes could also become visible targets for the insurgents.⁴³ Mr Poulter shared this concern that school buildings constructed with military aid could be more susceptible to attack than those built by NGOs or by the communities themselves with support from civil society.⁴⁴ Professor Maley similarly observed that if the military were engaging in construction one day and in combat activities the next day:

...the real danger would be that the school that they may have been building on the first day will end up being burnt down by the insurgents because they see it as something which symbolises the activities of the military.⁴⁵

8.30 Mr Loewenstein acknowledged that in certain areas some Western forces have provided positive outcomes but, from his experiences and conversations with NGO and foreign NGO workers, he learnt that military aid carries danger. He explained that a lot of the established health centres:

40 *Committee Hansard*, 22 March 2013, pp. 18 and 20.

41 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 25.

42 *Submission 23*, p. [1].

43 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 24.

44 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 41.

45 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 9.

...were not very well frequented because of the sense that if someone sees you going into that centre, whether or not you support the occupation, the fear is that it is a very tribal culture and that people are worried that they would suffer a consequence of doing so.⁴⁶

8.31 Save the Children, Oxfam and World Vision also noted that 'militarised aid' could put beneficiaries at 'risk of attack'.⁴⁷ A more recent study came to the same conclusion finding that 'poorly conceived aid projects aimed at winning "hearts and minds" have proved ineffective, costly, and have sometimes turned beneficiary communities into targets of attack'.⁴⁸ In addition, aid workers are exposed to the same dangers.⁴⁹

Risk to non-military aid organisations

8.32 The TLO Profile noted that some aid organisations raised concerns about Australian military forces directly participating in development activities, which blurred the civilian-military lines and potentially placed other non-military related organisations at risk.⁵⁰ This observation has relevance for PRTs. The TLO reported several NGOs indicating that they 'tried to stay away from the PRT as much as possible, even seeing the location of the airstrip inside the PRT as an easy way to tarnish a neutral image'.⁵¹ It also mentioned that some NGOs were frustrated with the unwillingness of international military forces to coordinate with NGOs.⁵²

8.33 A number of witnesses shared this concern about the military delivering aid and spoke forcefully about the dangers it posed to aid workers operating in the same area.⁵³ Professor Maley noted:

Many aid agencies are working cheek-by-jowl with military forces, and face the expectation that their humanitarian and development work will complement the security-building activities of the security sector.⁵⁴

46 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, pp. 30–31.

47 *Submission 6*, p. 12. AID/WATCH also voiced concern about risks to the safety of communities as projects are drawn into existing conflicts and become targets. *Submission 23*, p. [1].

48 *Submission 6*, p. 12. The quote taken from Oxfam, *Whose Aid is it Anyway? Politicizing aid in conflicts and crises*, 124 Oxfam Briefing Paper—Summary, p. 2.

49 *Submission 6*, p. 12.

50 TLO, *Uruzgan: 18 months after the Dutch/Australian Leadership Handover*, A TLO Provincial Profile, April 2012, p. 13.

51 TLO, *Uruzgan: 18 months after the Dutch/Australian Leadership Handover*, A TLO Provincial Profile, April 2012, p. 13.

52 TLO, *Uruzgan: 18 months after the Dutch/Australian Leadership Handover*, A TLO Provincial Profile, April 2012, p. 13.

53 *Submission 6*, p. 12; *Submission 23*, p. 1.

54 *Submission 4*, p. [4].

8.34 He explained that a lot of Afghans will not easily distinguish between military personnel who are engaging in a building project or in the protection of NGOs doing development work. Mr Loewenstein noted that in an environment where the military are delivering aid to local communities, 'NGOs and soldiers become indistinguishable, a danger to the former'. According to Mr Loewenstein:

Resistance to the Australian presence will only deepen in the coming years if we both deliver aid while at the same time conduct destructive and futile night raids against supposed insurgents.⁵⁵

8.35 Mr Dragovic also highlighted the problems created by the cohabitation and overt collaboration between military and civilian personnel, which, in his view, exposed the 'majority of foreign aid workers, current and future, to unnecessary harm'.⁵⁶ AID/WATCH similarly voiced concerns about risks to the safety of aid workers as projects are drawn into existing conflicts and become targets.⁵⁷ It was also concerned about what it perceived as the 'progressive narrowing' of the humanitarian space.⁵⁸ Dr James Goodman argued that:

...the humanitarian space is a space in which the aid agencies exist and which they rely upon. If that humanitarian space is in any way undermined then their mandate [to reduce the incidence of poverty] is undermined and very directly the security of their people on the ground is undermined and so is the effectiveness of the aid. The aid is tainted by its political associations. So the humanitarian space is crucial for the effectiveness of any aid program so that it does not get contradicted by what may be seen as political goals.⁵⁹

8.36 NGOs that share this space also gave evidence before the committee. Mr Poulter, CARE Australia, noted that people in areas where the military is delivering development assistance sometimes perceive NGOs as part of a general 'Western effort', which includes military aspects.⁶⁰ He stated that this situation 'can place our staff at risk on the field':

...as a humanitarian organisation we are there to respond based on need alone, to try and work independently of the different armed actors and to negotiate access to the areas to assist the most affected. In a situation where there are military assets in an area there can sometimes be that challenge, that you will be seen to be along with them. That is why we have a policy around not working closely with provincial reconstruction teams, for example.⁶¹

55 *Submission 8*, p. 1.

56 *Submission 2*, p. 2.

57 AID/WATCH, *Submission 23*, p. [1].

58 Mr Bryant, *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 43.

59 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 46.

60 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 36.

61 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 41.

8.37 The committee notes and understands that neutrality is vitally important to NGOs providing development assistance and humanitarian aid.⁶²

8.38 Dr Bizhan noted that the militarisation of aid in Afghanistan has 'been one of the major challenges for development actors and foreign aid actors in Afghanistan'.⁶³ He did note, however, that there were areas where the government did not have mechanisms to deliver aid or where development actors could not reach but where military actors could provide assistance. He submitted that even though such military aid made development actors a little sceptical, that kind of contribution should be appreciated.⁶⁴

8.39 In its submission, the Australian Civil-Military Centre suggested that the military and police must, in their planning, take into account that NGOs and other actors may be providing similar support and that locals may perceive them as having intentions associated with the military. It stated further that military and police should be careful to distinguish their assistance from that of humanitarian and development workers, so as not to put such workers at risk of being seen as part of, or supporting, the military and police.⁶⁵

Defence's perspective on civil-military relations in Afghanistan

8.40 Defence responded to the concerns that the ADF's 'win hearts and mind' strategy overrode long-term development objectives. Mr Sargeant explained that the ADF engaged in range of operational undertakings—fighting and stabilisation activities—some of which, as part of a broader ISAF counterinsurgency strategy, included the provision of aid projects. He accepted that they were likely to be tactical because they would be conducted quickly on the spot in response to local situations. This approach was in contrast to long-term capacity-building development programs of the sort that AusAID would do. According to Mr Sargeant, the ADF was in Afghanistan primarily to support the development of the country's security by training the ANA 4th Brigade. As part of that, the ADF involved itself in a range of activities including support for AusAID and the provision of some projects categorised as development. He stated:

The criticisms make sense from one set of perspectives but they also, in a sense, do not recognise the nature of the ADF mission and what it is actually doing. It is very important to recognise that the ADF is not an aid-delivery organisation in its primary mission. It has the capacity to do some things which can be categorised as aid or project development because it has those skills and capabilities.⁶⁶

62 See for example, Professor Howes and Mr Pryke, *Submission 14*, p. 13.

63 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 24.

64 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 24.

65 *Submission 21*, p. 5.

66 *Committee Hansard*, 3 December 2012, p. 55.

8.41 Mr Sargeant also informed the committee that the ADF was aware of the potential for military operations to compromise aid programs and that its personnel worked with AusAID and international humanitarian organisations to try to ensure that ADF's activities did not put aid workers in danger. He told the committee that Defence adheres to international guidelines developed for the use of military and civil defence assets to support humanitarian organisations in complex operations.⁶⁷ He explained that the ADF tries to reduce the level of risk to non-combatants and to ensure that innocent people are not caught up in the conflict. Even so, he noted:

One of the difficulties in this conflict is that it is a civil war and that the enemy will exploit circumstances to try to persuade or coerce parts of the population to either not cooperate with the government or to support them. That is one of the unfortunate things that happen. In our approach to it we try to avoid or minimise that happening, but it is part of the nature of the conflict.⁶⁸

8.42 Mr de Groot explained that while Caritas agencies have very clear mandates separate from those of the military forces in country, there is open and transparent communication between them on all facets of safety.⁶⁹

Committee's previous consideration

8.43 The committee gave detailed consideration to civil-military engagements in its 2008 report on Australia's involvement in peacekeeping. It recognised that the failure to establish effective and appropriate civil-military relations not only created inefficiencies but could also have more serious consequences for the mission. The committee's findings on the ADF's involvement in development assistance have changed little from 2008.

8.44 Clearly, the complex foreign policy space in which stabilisation and development operations occur brings different pressures on the relationship between humanitarian and security agencies. The committee recognises the critical role of the ADF in creating a secure environment and the important work of aid agencies in providing assistance in conflict-affected countries such as Afghanistan. Together the military and civilian agencies create the conditions necessary for rebuilding a state.

8.45 In some instances, due to the level of security risk or the lack of existing infrastructure, the military may be the only, or the most able, organisation in a position to provide humanitarian relief or development assistance. The committee considers it appropriate that the ADF use available resources, including the military's material and logistical resources and the skills of its members where required, to meet local needs.⁷⁰ It also only makes sense for the military to try to build good, solid relations with, and to assist where possible, the people it is protecting.

67 *Committee Hansard*, 3 December 2012, p. 52.

68 *Committee Hansard*, 3 December 2012, p. 52.

69 *Committee Hansard*, 4 December 2012, p. 54.

70 See Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's involvement in peacekeeping operations*, August 2008.

8.46 Nonetheless, it is clear that when engaged in humanitarian or development work, the ADF needs to appreciate and respect the concerns of NGOs, and be especially sensitive to the importance they attach to neutrality and impartiality. On the other hand, NGOs need to understand the reasons the military becomes involved in delivering assistance. Mutual understanding and close liaison based on regular consultation, joint planning and training would help the ADF and NGOs to resolve tensions. On a practical level, these would also encourage a more economical, efficient and better-targeted use of resources.⁷¹

Evaluation

8.47 AID/WATCH argued that the extent to which problems with military aid apply to Australian assistance was unclear due to 'a lack of transparency' in aid delivered by the ADF.⁷² In this regard, the committee asked Defence whether it had assessed its development assistance and its effect on the safety of aid workers or those intended to benefit from the aid. Mr Sargeant indicated that he was not sure whether the ADF had undertaken such an evaluation.⁷³

Committee view

8.48 The ADF has been deeply involved in delivering development assistance in Afghanistan since 2006. The committee believes that the Australian Civil-Military Centre has a clear and important role in assessing, evaluating and reporting on Australia's civil-military-police activities in conflict-affected countries. Australia's engagement in Afghanistan reflects a heavy commitment of personnel and funds to help Afghanistan become self-reliant, yet it appears that it has undertaken little research on the effectiveness of its integrated civil-military mission in Uruzgan. The committee believes that the lack of research and analysis is a significant weakness, especially in light of the seriousness of the concerns raised in a number of reports and by witnesses to this inquiry, including NGOs operating in Afghanistan.

Conclusion

8.49 The committee recognises that many organisations and individuals remain concerned about the ADF's involvement in providing development assistance in Afghanistan. As in 2008, the committee is convinced that greater attention should be given to civil-military engagements of this nature in order to better understand the effect of the ADF's involvement in delivering aid, how to mitigate any adverse consequences and build on the positive.

8.50 The committee believes that Australia's mission to Afghanistan, especially its pivotal role as leader of the Uruzgan PRT, warrants a comprehensive and independent evaluation to determine its strengths and weaknesses. The Australian people deserve to have a much better understanding of the work undertaken by Australians in

71 See Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's involvement in peacekeeping operations*, August 2008.

72 *Submission 23*, p. [2].

73 *Committee Hansard*, 3 December 2012, p. 52.

Uruzgan. Clearly, it is well overdue for the Australian Civil-Military Centre to undertake or commission such a review. With this in mind, the committee makes the following recommendation.

Recommendation 1

8.51 The committee recommends that the Australian Civil-Military Centre undertake a comprehensive review of Australia's civil-military-police mission in Uruzgan Province that includes taking submissions from NGOs, local NGOs and civil society organisations working in the province. The scope of the review to include whether, or to what extent, the ADF's involvement in delivering development assistance in Afghanistan has:

- **served counterinsurgency objectives;**
- **affected sustainable development by having short-term, tactical objectives;**
- **influenced the distribution of development assistance with more funds directed to insecure areas;**
- **diverted development effort away from poverty alleviation;**
- **placed facilities built with military aid, and those using them, at increased risk from attack by anti-government forces; and**
- **undermined the perceptions of NGOs as neutral and impartial thereby placing the safety of their aid workers at greater risk.**

8.52 The committee also believes that it is important for the review to consider whether Australian development assistance had any role in empowering local individuals in Uruzgan and, if so, the lessons to be learnt from it.

8.53 The committee now turns to consider a number of specific projects in Afghanistan that have drawn particular criticism.