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COMISAF's New Counterinsurgency (COIN) Contracting Guidelines **By: Chelsea Plante**

The NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan has issued a new set of contracting guidelines aimed at decreasing corruption and reducing the amount of funds that indirectly flow into the hands of insurgents and criminals. Currently, it is estimated that \$14B USD a year is being paid to contractors.

Background:

The international contracting process in Afghanistan has been criticized by many, including President Hamid Karzai who often states that the process fails to employ an adequate amount of Afghans, and denies many of the benefits of foreign spending because much of the contracting money goes to over-priced, corrupt contractors, subcontractors, power brokers, and foreign contractors. Many Afghans feel overlooked when NATO forces hire companies that are completely staffed by foreign workers.

On numerous occasions contracts have ended up aggravating Afghanistan's problems by empowering warlords and established power brokers, favouring certain tribes over others, lining the pockets of corrupt local leaders, and delivering services like security by paying off gunmen for illegal armed groups. In other cases, contractors are paid who are inefficient and perform poorly on anything from delivering military supplies to construction projects. Not only does this undercut the trust of average Afghans who see money being spent but never see the results, it undermines the faith of Afghans in NATO and in their own government.

New Guidelines:

In view of these points, the guidelines issued last week by Gen. David H. Petraeus define contracting as a "commanders business", one where commanders must consider the effects of contract spending and ensure those who NATO works with, work for the best interests of the Afghan people.

General Petraeus urges NATO commanders to look at contracting through an unconventional lens, instructing them to work with a broader range of Afghan companies to help break monopolies and weaken patronage networks. Using local firms will also significantly reduce costs and timetables because products do not have to be shipped from foreign factories. If unable to find qualified contractors, however, NATO must encourage foreign companies to employ Afghan workers to carry out the terms of the contract. In situations where there is no alternative to companies with links to criminal networks, Petraeus insists that "it may be preferable to forgo the project".

He also emphasizes the importance of contracting with vendors who have fewer sub-contractors in order to maintain visibility of the sub-contractor network. Lead contractors should also be held responsible for their sub-contractors, warned General Petraeus, as "excessive sub-contracting tiers provide opportunities for criminal networks and insurgents to divert contract money from its intended purpose".

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As a final point, the General maintains that intelligence resources must be used to determine the effect of each contract on “security, local power dynamics and the enemy”. When links are found between contractors and criminal networks, appropriate actions must be taken, including suspension or debarment of the individual or company. If the contractors cannot perform sufficiently, they will be put on notice and run risk of losing the contract completely.

The hope is that with appropriate oversight, contracting will increase development, assist the Afghan government and support NATO’s operational goals.

Looking Forward:

Following the new guidelines, NATO recently contracted with three Afghan companies all owned by women. At a cost of roughly USD\$300m, the contractors will be providing boots, t-shirts and other clothing to 125 000 Afghan soldiers. This is significantly less than the would-be cost of buying the items from foreign firms, which would range upwards from \$1.4B USD.

In addition to this, Afghanistan’s Ministry of the Interior has developed a phased approach to disband firms that operate illegally, are not registered properly with the government, have been criticized for reckless behaviour, and those that protect private businesses and dignitaries. The approach is expected to help curb corruption while decreasing serious threats to the government’s national sovereignty.

These contracts and policies represent the kind of action NATO commanders would like to see more of in the future.

Further Reading: [COMISAF’s New Counterinsurgency \(COIN\) Contracting Guidelines](#), [Eliminating Afghan Corruption](#), [New Guidelines for Afghanistan Contracts](#), [International Contracts in Afghanistan](#), [Petraeus Issues Guidance for Afghan Contracting](#)

Afghanistan’s Parliamentary Elections: Business as Usual?

By: Jonathan Preece

On September 18th more than 2,500 candidates including 400 women vied for 249 seats in Afghanistan’s lower house of parliament formally known as the Wolesi Jirga or “House of the People.” In what has become a matter of custom in Afghanistan, the run up to these parliamentary elections were shaded with pessimism: analysts were quick to forecast low voter turnout, widespread fraud and voter intimidation. Consistent with such predictions, initial reports seem to indicate that it was business as usual this time around.

As of September 22 it had been reported that at least 17 people had died in election related violence last weekend. The Taliban is thought to be responsible for a string of assaults which included an estimated 33 bomb explosions and 63 rocket attacks nationwide. Additionally, at least one candidate and several election workers were kidnapped on Saturday, with the bodies of three election workers later found in northern Balkh province. As a result of such violence and extensive threats from the Taliban and other belligerents, a number of polling stations were forced to close and voter turnout was significantly reduced. Election officials have put national turnout at 36% with – as predicted – rates being much lower in the conflict ridden provinces of southern Afghanistan.

Making things worse, the United Nations backed Electoral Complaint Commission (ECC) has stated that it has received more than 4,000 complaints of fraud and irregularities across 34 provinces. An estimated 1,700 informal complains were also received by phone and verbal communication. In agreement with these complaints, independent election monitors and campaigners have reported irregularities linked to ballot-stuffing, double voting and underage voters. Abdullah Abdullah, leader of Afghanistan's main opposition group, said Wednesday that his team has compiled evidence of "massive fraud and massive rigging." There have also been reports of fraudulent voting cards produced in Pakistan and smuggled into Afghanistan in the days leading up to Saturday's election. These allegations have fuelled fear that widespread fraud will undermine the legitimacy of this election and ultimately, the Afghan government.

While the mood surrounding this election is decidedly negative, there may nevertheless be cause for sanguinity. For instance, despite extensive threats and fears of violent reprisal, more than four-million Afghans defied the Taliban and local powerbrokers by casting their ballots. Although a 36% turnout is lower than last year's presidential election, some observers have pointed out that this rate is still comparable with those of many established democracies. Given the circumstances, the fact that so many people were willing to risk their personal safety for the sake of a vote that most assumed would be less than free and fair, could be seen as a significant step towards democracy. At very least this turnout speaks to the determination of many Afghans to have a say in the future of their country and reject a return to Taliban rule. Finally, it is worth nothing that while much emphasis has been placed on the importance of a free and fair democratic process, elections, in and of themselves, may not bring peace and stability to Afghanistan. For instance, dozens of candidates in Saturday's election represent a party linked to Gulbuddin Hekmatyar, a former Afghan politician turned warlord. There is concern that interference by individuals such as Hekmatyar would undermine any attempts at uprooting the corruption that currently plagues the Afghan government. Perhaps there is a fly in the ointment.

The final results of these parliamentary elections are not expected until late October, however preliminary results could be declared as early as next week.

Further reading: [Afghan Poll Panel gets 4200 Complaints, A Flawed Election, but Courageous Voters](#), [Afghan Poll Workers Found Dead, Afghanistan's Election Fairness under Fire](#), [All Eyes on Security on eve of Parliamentary Elections in Afghanistan](#), [Afghan Warlords Hedge Bets, Contest Elections](#), [Scenarios: How Afghanistan's Parliamentary Poll might play out](#), [Are Afghanistan Elections Hurting Democracy?](#), [Afghans Vote amid Attacks](#), [Afghanistan's Unpromising Elections](#).

Dangerous Waters: NATO and Maritime Piracy

By: Chelsea Plante

According to the International Maritime Bureau's (IMB) Piracy Reporting Centre, the number of maritime piracy attacks has seen a dramatic increase in recent years. It was not until 2008, however, that piracy drew the attention of the international community when the *Faina*, a Belize-flagged vessel transporting 33 T-72 tanks and ammunition to Kenya, and the *Sirius Star* supertanker, carrying more than USD \$100m in oil to the United States, were hijacked by pirates operating off the coast of Somalia. By the end of the year, more than 120 pirate attacks occurred in the Gulf of Aden, fetching a booty of more than USD \$100m – a figure that is large for a country experiencing economic ruin. By early 2009, navies had been deployed to the Gulf of Aden by more than a dozen countries, and four resolutions were passed by the United Nations condemning all acts of piracy and armed robbery against vessels off the maritime coast.

Despite the resolutions to bring the fight against them to shore, and the intense international naval presence in the region, including the deployment of EU and NATO multilateral counter-piracy forces and naval resources from the US, UK, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Pakistan, India, Iran, Russia and Canada, maritime pirates carried out a unprecedented number of attacks and hijackings in 2009. In April, the killing of three Somali pirates by the US Navy during a rescue operation of a US cargo ship drastically raised the stakes. By October 2009,

confrontations with pirates far surpassed levels in 2008, and their use of guns had increased by 200 percent. Since the start of 2010, more than 30 ships have been hijacked and tens of millions of dollars have been collected by pirates in ransoms. It is also believed that as much as 50 percent of all attacks go unreported because of ship-owners' fears of increased premiums and costly post-incident investigations, making losses per year a substantial understatement.

In addition to the direct danger that piracy puts ships and their crew members in, it also poses significant geopolitical threats, as well as threats to industries, and the environment. As maritime security decreases around coastal states, it often undermines the legitimacy of local governments. Also, though the exact economic tolls are uncertain, the yearly cost of piracy is estimated to be in the billions. Lastly, when 60 percent of the world's crude oil is carried by ships, it is not inconceivable that an act of piracy could lead to serious environmental damage. It is clear that curbing this problem is necessary for both global trade and security.

In light of this issue, 70 experts from NATO, Partner and Mediterranean Dialogue countries met at a NATO-funded Advance Study Institute in Hammamet, Tunisia (a coastal and maritime country), between September 20-25. The purpose of the meeting was to examine ways by which a collaborative, human-centric information system could increase the ability of states to predict and prevent piracy occurrences, and if unsuccessful, would enable states to quickly recognize the nature of an event for an efficient collective response. Specific achievements include a better understanding of the maritime environment's vulnerabilities, a formulated evaluation criteria, and crew security awareness and detection training support.

With maritime security and piracy issues increasingly becoming a top priority, the hope is to create a significant risk for pirates that will, in the end, deter and considerably reduce piracy.

Further Reading: [Suppressing Maritime Piracy](#), [Piracy at Sea](#), [Nature and Severity of the Threat](#), [Predicting Recognizing and Detering Maritime Piracy](#)

Use it or Lose it: Artic Sovereignty Heats Up

By: Monika Wyrzykowska

Prime Minister Stephen Harper recently returned from his five-day long tour of Canada's Arctic region, an annual event designed to emphasize the current government's commitment to Arctic sovereignty.

Harper's trip coincided with a series of military exercises in the region – Operation Nunavut in the High Arctic, Operation Nunakput in the western Arctic, and the largest of the three, Operation Nanook, in Canada's Eastern and High Arctic. Operation Nanook began on August 6th and concluded on August 29th, involving approximately 900 troops and demonstrating an increased capacity to conduct and sustain Canadian Forces operations in the north. Among the Operation's achievements was the northern-most deployment of the Arctic Response Company Group as well as the first deployment of the Maritime Component Command in the Arctic. Conducted by Joint Task Force (North), the joint operation also featured sovereignty and presence patrols, Composite Dive Team exercises, Arctic survival training, and included the participation of ships, aircraft, and personnel from the Canadian Rangers, Army, Navy, Air, and Special Forces. The Operation ended with a whole-of-government spill response training exercise that included the remediation of a simulated petrochemical leak in the Resolute Bay area of Nunavut. "All these efforts are towards one non-negotiable priority and that is the protection and promotion of Canada's sovereignty over what is our north," said Harper in a speech to the troops.

Canada's sovereignty has been one of Harper's main policy focuses since winning the 2006 federal elections. In May of 2008, the Harper government released its "*Canada First Defence Strategy*", identifying six core missions, first among them being the conduct of daily

domestic and continental operations, including tasks in the Arctic and operations as a part of the North American Aerospace Defence Command (NORAD).

The Arctic has become a hot issue, so to speak, as Canada is formally involved in territorial disputes with two other Arctic claimants: the United States over the Beaufort Sea lying between the Northwest Territories, the Yukon Territory and the American state of Alaska, and Denmark over Hans Island, between Canada's Ellesmere Island and Denmark's Greenland possession on the other end of the Arctic. The status of the Northwest Passage, a sea route through the Arctic Ocean, which is becoming more accessible with the melting of the polar ice cap, is also in dispute. The United States, Canada and Denmark, three of the 12 founding members of NATO, coordinated their strategies and in this year's Operation Nanook have for the first time collectively participated in military exercises in the Arctic region.

The scramble for the Arctic is bound to intensify, as it reportedly contains 30 percent of the world's undiscovered natural gas and 13 percent of undiscovered oil. The effects of global warming are making access to these resources ever more possible and thus a pressing geopolitical issue. The five Arctic-shore countries – Canada, the US, Denmark, Norway, and Russia – are equally interested in extending their Arctic territories and need a consensus legitimizing the contours of their possessions. In January 2009, NATO conducted a two-day Seminar on Security Prospects in the High North, hosted by the Icelandic Government, to address these emerging challenges. Then Secretary General Jaap De Hoop Scheffer pointed to a number of contributions that NATO could make in this respect, including relief operations, search and rescue missions, as well as serving as a forum of discussion and utilizing the opportunities inherent in the NATO-Russia Council.

Indeed Russian exercises in the Arctic were highlighted during Harper's Arctic tour. Canada dispatched CF-18 fighter jets to allegedly ward off two Russian Tupolev Tu-95 strategic bombers that were patrolling off Canada's northern border, but never breached Canada's sovereignty. The ability to actually exercise sovereignty in the Arctic has prompted the Harper government to make investments in the next generation of Radarsat advanced sensing satellites as well as committing to replace Canada's aging fighter jets. Although Harper's Arctic tour brought much needed attention to Canada's northern border, if Canada wishes to "not lose it", it must "use it" – not only for military exercises or for resource extradition, but as a viable economic and cultural part of Canada.

Source: [Canada Opens Arctic to NATO, Plans Massive Weapons Buildup](#), [NATO Discusses Security Prospects in the High North](#), [Speech by NATO Secretary General Jaap de Hoop Scheffer on Security Prospects in the High North](#), [Operation Nanook Reaches Successful Conclusion](#), [Canada First Defence Strategy](#), [Canadian Troops Flex Muscle in Arctic Exercise](#), [The Russians Aren't Coming](#), [Russia's Deepest Interests are Linked to the Arctic](#)




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