Australian Government

Australian Civil-Military Centre

Submission to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade
by the

Australian Civil-Military Centre

Inquiry into the administration, management and objective of Australia's overseas development programs in Afghanistan in the context of the 'Transition Decade'

Introduction

This submission by the Australian Civil-Military Centre is to the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Inquiry into the administration, management and objective of Australia's overseas development programs in Afghanistan in the context of the 'Transition Decade'.

The Australian Civil-Military Centre (formerly the Asia Pacific Civil-Military Centre of Excellence) was established in November 2008, in recognition of the growing importance of civil-military interaction and is evidence of Australia's commitment to sustainable peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond.

The Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee [the Committee] played an important role in promoting the establishment of the Centre. In its report on *Australia's involvement in peacekeeping operations* of 1 August 2008, the Committee highlighted the "need for a whole-of-government and whole-of-nation approach to peacekeeping operations at strategic and operational levels." The Committee recommended that the Australian Government "establish a task force to conduct a scoping study for the Asia–Pacific Centre for Civil–Military Cooperation, focusing on best practice."

The National Security Committee of Cabinet defined the Centre's mission in terms broader than a focus on peacekeeping, directing that the Centre 'support the development of national civil-military capabilities to prevent, prepare for and respond more effectively to conflicts

and disasters overseas'. The Centre is an interagency cooperative organisation that consists of staff drawn from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the Australian Agency for International Development [AusAID], the Department of Defence, the Attorney General's Department, the Australian Federal Police, the Australian Council for International Development, the Government of New Zealand and other parties that agree to contribute resources and personnel.

The Centre promotes the development of national and international cooperative capability within Australian Government Agencies by fostering an open and mutually supportive learning environment for all participants in its programs. It does this by promoting internationally agreed policies, guidelines and effective approaches, and by supporting and encouraging associated agencies to achieve best practice in civil-military coordination

Through its research program, the Centre seeks to identify best practice responses to key lessons learned – important for developing doctrine and facilitating training programs – to contribute directly to the ability of the Australian Government to develop a more effective civil-military capacity for conflict prevention and disaster management overseas.

Within this context, the Centre addresses this submission to those issues related to Australia's civil-military cooperation in Afghanistan in which the Centre has been involved. The submission briefly identifies the civil-military issues that may affect administration, management and objectives of Australia's overseas development programs in Afghanistan in the context of the 'Transition Decade'.

The Centre's work on drawing civil-military issues together for policy makers

Australia's operational commitments in Afghanistan have been unique in many respects, and have posed a number of civil-military challenges. Civil-military interaction in Afghanistan has prompted whole-of-government engagement and consultation and the Centre has sought to assist its stakeholder agencies without replicating the work of line policy or operational agencies.

The Centre has published papers and hosted in-house consultative workshops on issues as diverse as policing in a civil-military context, counterinsurgency, detention of non-state actors, national civilian capacity arrangements for conflict environments, and re-integration as central to operational design.[1]

The Centre has not been called upon to address directly the complexities of civil-military engagement in aid delivery or development in Afghanistan. However, we have undertaken a number of activities which relate broadly to the Afghanistan operational context and which have influenced interaction between civil and military components of government and with non-government organisations [NGOs]. More details are given below.

[1] The papers can be found on the Centre's Publications website: http://acmc.gov.au/publications/

Workshop on Afghanistan and civil-military interaction, 2011

The Centre hosted a workshop with the Asia-Pacific College of Diplomacy at the Australian National University in July 2011, which addressed some of the following questions: Did the strategic national objectives which drove Australia to commit to Afghanistan shift over time, and if so, with what consequences for the form of the intervention? What specific forms did civil-military cooperation take, and what factors led to these specific forms being taken rather than some others?

Given the complexities of the security and civil-military environment outlined above, the workshop did not cover all of the issues related to civil-military interaction, but it did consider what practical policy recommendations might flow from the Afghanistan experience. The outcomes of the workshop will be shortly published in a book co-edited by William Maley and Susanne Schmeidl, which should be launched at the Centre in late 2012.

This work did not seek to achieve direct policy or capability outcomes. Part of the Centre's mission is to provide a forum for government departments and agencies, non-government organizations, international organizations and counterpart international agencies involved in civil-military coordination to meet on neutral ground to work to build understanding and identify opportunities for future cooperation.

Civil–Military Interaction Seminar, 2011

The Centre hosted the third annual Civil–Military Interaction Seminar at Walsh Bay in Sydney from 7 to 10 November 2011.[2] Framed by the theme 'Civil–Military Effectiveness: building tomorrow's capabilities', the seminar highlighted current trends in civil–military practice and discussed future needs in seeking to avert, mitigate and respond to conflicts and disasters. The seminar brought together 125 experts from 21 different countries, among them Afghanistan, Pakistan and the United States. The seminar's objectives were to: identify major capabilities for promoting future civil–military effectiveness; highlight opportunities for overcoming capability constraints; and advance practical, innovative methods of improving civil–military practice. Given its contemporary significance, the international commitment to Afghanistan was considered in all sessions. Consideration of the concept of capabilities encompassed: areas of knowledge; tools, technologies and practical initiatives; the civil–military community itself; principles, guidelines and doctrine; resources; and time. The lessons gathered from this high-level seminar were shared among participants.

The seminar determined that the experiences of war-torn states moving towards peace and development demonstrate the need for greater attention to be given to the economic dimensions of the civil–military space. For countries moving away from chaos such as Afghanistan fragility is the reality. Before attaining a normal development path, they must transition from the 'economics of war' to economic reconstruction.

[2] The summary reports from the first and second annual **Civil–Military Interaction Seminars** are available at http://acmc.gov.au/publications/. The third annual seminar report will be available shortly.

The development sector has a key role to play in this regard. Importantly, decisions have to be made about the use of security and military forces in the provision of aid and development. A direct consequence of the securitisation of aid is that the boundaries between humanitarian and military actors and agendas are more uncertain than ever before. This is an unavoidable reality in conflict-affected environments such as Afghanistan where development projects and humanitarian assistance have become a central tool in the military and political efforts of the coalition, including Australia. This blurring of boundaries is reflected in trends in attacks against aid workers, who might not be acting with the military, but are perceived as being part of a Western agenda.

National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security 2012

Australia's experiences in places such as Afghanistan have shown us the power of women as advocates of change. The Centre contributed to the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security to integrate a gender perspective into peace and security efforts. It consolidates and builds on the broad program of work already underway in Australia to integrate a gender perspective into peace and security efforts. The objective of the Centre is to assist all departments and agencies to develop policy that protects women and girls' human rights — particularly in relation to gender-based violence, and promotes their participation in conflict prevention, management and resolution.

In support of the National Action Plan 2012 the Centre has produced a documentary in partnership with UN Women titled *Side By Side: Women, Peace and Security*. The 30-minute documentary involved contributions from the Office for Women at the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Australian Federal Police International Deployment Group. The DVD is accompanied by an educational toolkit, with exercises, lesson plans, and facilitator's notes for trainers and educators of pre-deployment peacekeepers. This work built on the Centre' earlier documentary *Mandated to Protect* which examines the obligations in international law to protect all civilians in areas of conflict.

The Centre commends the National Action Plan to the Committee in its consideration of its impact on development assistance in Afghanistan.

Senior Working Meeting on Afghanistan and security sector transition, 2012

In April 2012, the Centre hosted a roundtable of mid level policy and operations staff from: Defence; Foreign Affairs and Trade; AusAID; the Attorney General's Department; and aid and development NGOs active in Afghanistan. The meeting was held under the Chatham House rule. The theme of the roundtable was security sector transition in Afghanistan and covered professionalization of the Afghan National Security Forces, policing, rule of law, as well as related development and humanitarian protection issues. The outcome was a short list of consensus points for participants to use to inform their work within their own organisations.

International Lessons Learned Conference, 2012

From 3-6 December 2012, the Centre and the Australian Defence Force's Headquarters Joint Operations will host the 8th International Lessons Learned Conference in Sydney, Australia. This annual conference brings together the practitioners and scholars to share and discuss evaluation methodologies and lessons identified through real-time analysis of recent and ongoing missions in countries such as Afghanistan. The overall theme for the conference is 'Transitions', which is particularly applicable to Afghanistan. A range of papers to be delivered at the conference will touch on transition in Afghanistan from military to civilian responsibility in stabilisation and reconstruction projects — including aid projects. This conference and its proceedings will be open to members of the public as well as government representatives and has the potential to influence policy developments in the future.

Considerations for future aid and development programs and civil-military interaction

In reviewing Australia's development programmes in Afghanistan in the "transition decade", it will be difficult to fully predict the variables affecting these programmes over the ten year period. It is likely that humanitarian and development programs will be implemented concurrent with open conflict or while peace is fragile. In these circumstances, there will be a range of actors involved including host country, multinational and peacekeeping military forces and police units, international organisations and NGOs, as well as private sector actors. Coordination, consultative planning and good working relations are crucial for effective and safe operations to ensure that development assistance and humanitarian aid are delivered in a coordinated way, avoiding overlapping, blurring of mandates and danger to staff providing such assistance.[3]

Humanitarian and development aid, once provided primarily by aid agencies, may now be provided by more non-traditional stakeholders such as military and police. This aid may be in support of counter-insurgency strategy, larger stabilisation efforts or peace building initiatives – all of which are legitimate. However, the military and police must take into account in their planning that NGOs and other actors may be providing similar support and may be perceived to have similar intent by locals. The military and police should be careful to distinguish their assistance from that of humanitarian and development actors, such as NGOs or UN agencies, so as not to put those actors at risk of being perceived to be part of or supporting the military and police. Similarly, the challenge to aid agencies is how to work with other stakeholders without compromising the principles of neutrality, impartiality and independence and thus risk being targeted or losing acceptance from the local population. Development agencies, while not aiming to be as neutral as humanitarian organisations in

[3] A good reference guide which the Centre and the Australian Council for International Development have jointly produced sets out the broader challenges and solutions to civil-military interaction: *Same Space - Different Mandates: A Civil-Military Guide to Australian Stakeholders in International Disasters and Conflict Response* (2012): http://acmc.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/11966_ACMC_Same-Space_DifferentMandates_FORWEB.pdf.

times of conflict and post-conflict, still need to achieve acceptance from the local population and often need to be able to maintain distance to the parties to a conflict.

In circumstances of extreme insecurity, military forces may be required to contribute to wider civil tasks in addition to establishing a robust security framework. Civilian expertise should be integrated into operational planning and execution of civil tasks whenever possible. As permissiveness increases, civil tasks should be handed over, as soon as is practicable, to the host country government and/or other civilian agencies.

While there is often a political imperative to do something quickly in fragile and conflict-affected states, this must be balanced with the need to incorporate appropriate monitoring and evaluation frameworks to measure progress and accountability. If monitoring and evaluation is integrated throughout the planning process, instead of being 'retro-fitted', it is best positioned to align strategic goals and operational planning and to be able to better demonstrate whether or not an intervention is achieving its objectives. Monitoring and evaluation should also be integrated at the strategic level to help facilitate the achievement of strategic objectives.

Effective stabilisation operations reflect the interests and requirements of multiple actors, including those of the host nation. Accordingly, monitoring and evaluation should be developed with a common understanding of the roles and responsibilities of participating actors and of the reality of the situation on the ground and in collaboration with local actors. Such local engagement is vital both to test and verify the validity of external assumptions and hypotheses and to enhance the realism and appropriateness of objectives and measures.

Conclusion

The Centre supports and endorses the submissions to this Committee of the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID) and the Department of Defence. The Centre exists to promote dialogue and interaction between civilian, police and military participants to support effective coordination and consistent approaches, avoid duplication, and, when appropriate, pursue common goals. It does this by working to ensure that all participants in the provision of government support, whether in security, humanitarian aid, governance reform or development assistance achieve complementary effort. This work requires ongoing effort to ensure that personnel across government are kept informed of developments in civil-military-police coordination best-practice. The Centre's work focuses on making Australian whole-of-government coordination more robust and efficient and represents an investment in the administration and management of Australia's offshore programs and operations.

The success of Australia's efforts to support peace, stability, development and humanitarian assistance overseas relies on effective coexistence and cooperation by Australian Government Agencies with humanitarian relief and development organisations and international partners. Future activities and operations must seek to optimise the efforts of all contributing agencies and systems. The Australian Civil-Military Centre is established to assist Australian

Government Agencies shape that common effort. While the Centre has not been tasked to address directly the policy complexities of civil-military engagement in aid delivery or development in Afghanistan, it trusts that the information provided on projects and principles related to civil-military interaction will assist the Committee.