After Action Review Report

NATO-Afghanistan Transformation Task Force (NATTF)

HQ ISAF

Kabul, AFG

2013

LTC Jeremy Kotkin / HQ ISAF / 4 Oct 13 / DSN 318-449-5508

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<u>Introduction</u>

This After Action Review (AAR) for the NATO-Afghanistan Transformation Task Force (NATTF) will satisfy a two-fold requirement. First, as customary with AARs, this report will provide unit feedback on operational performance. It will identify how to better deal with expected challenges in order to avoid future pitfalls and reinforce strengths to ensure future successful strategies through focusing on commander's intent, objectives, and missions.

The second requirement this AAR will satisfy is to enable the further discussion and possible generation of NATO and US doctrine on Transfer of Tasks. This would logically nest and build upon standard doctrinal functions in Phase 3 through 5 (in US Joint Doctrine for Operations), Stages E through G in NATO Allied Doctrine for Joint Operations, AJP-3(A) (Ch. 4, Section 7, Termination and Transition) for warfighting functions, and Phase 5 to 6 in NATO Comprehensive Operational Planning Directive (COPD) for operational planning. This is necessary to create shared understanding of Transfer-of-Task (ToT) requirements and missions and how that can aid successful mission completion as combat or stability operations transition to civilian-led, host nation-responsibilities from a given campaign. This will require more transparency and definition in the process to provide a common frame of reference; how possible future ToT missions will contribute to campaign effectiveness. A doctrinal result can

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standardize operations and facilitate readiness by creating regular ways of accomplishing task transfer with a Host Nation.

The end result of the NATTF AAR process will be to ensure that a structured approach has been taken to implement insights through an iterative process of reflective learning (gained from candid feedback, insights critical to performance, and experience). This will allow future commanders to make use of ISAF and NATTF lessons learned in order to correct deficiencies, socialize discussion throughout the chain of command, and improve unit performance to efficiently and successfully execute future missions. Ultimately, the goal of this AAR is to enable future commanders to achieve mission objectives without the trial and error of the learning process NATTF experienced in developing a ToT process and framework. Transfer of Tasks is a critical factor towards successful mission accomplishment for many types of operations and forethought should be given to its requirement and process in a given campaign.

Transfer of tasks methodologies can be critical to responsibly ending combat, counterinsurgency, stability, and security force assistance operations. They can be planned in advance, with the correct mechanisms, through proper assumptions and planning elements, for feasible and achievable results. This AAR, and expectantly joint and combined doctrine, will factor into overall mission success of relevant future campaign plans.

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The format of this report will follow the standard AAR template of four primary questions:

1) What Was Expected To Happen

2) What Actually Occurred

3) Identify What Was Right Or Wrong

4) What Can Be Improved and How

What Was Expected to Happen

NATTF Mission Statement:

> NLT 1 January 2013, the NATO-Afghanistan Transformation Task Force (NATTF) will identify and update the list of ISAF tasks; recommend when and which tasks will be terminated or transferred; plan, negotiate, implement, and monitor all transfers or terminations to enable the transition from ISAF to the post-2014 NATO Resolute Support mission.

An important preliminary fact to consider before diving into the After Action Review is that the NATTF, in concept, implementation, and execution was new; new for the US military, new for NATO, and new for combined planning efforts and operations. As an experiment in synchronizing Phase IV (Stabilize the Environment) and Phase V (Enable Civil Authority) of the Continuum of Military Operations Cycle with external/international, Host Nation, and military medium and long-term objectives and end states, the NATTF was breaking new ground in dedicated planning. It was chartered with a mission that militaries often do not give due consideration to: planning for the peace to follow.

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A key aspect of that peace was the transfer of military-executed tasks to a host nation government, where capacities and capabilities were present, or the international community when they were not as requested by the host-nation. This, ultimately, is accomplished in order to build and transition sovereignty where it had not existed before. In a counterinsurgency operation and the subsequent security force assistance, stability, and normalizing of relationships and frameworks, this transfer of functions and responsibilities is critical. Without a task transfer planning effort that was inherent to the campaign plan itself, a discrete line of operation for the larger and ongoing military effort, this transfer and build-up of sovereignty would be at risk. With this threatened, all further long-term goals for Afghanistan would be similarly vulnerable. NATO and the US both realized that an organic and integrated organization to plan, manage, and execute transfer of military tasks was a key factor to enabling that future and enduring success.

What followed was initially orchestrated by a handful of temporarily-assigned individuals from outside of the command to start from the ground up. While ISAF was already well underway into Phase III of its campaign plan, the organization that would become the NATTF started with nothing and built a process and achieved command, NATO, and international buy-in in a matter of months. After 6 months of effort the primary goal was achieved: to account for and recommend disposition of all ISAF specified tasks being executed under existing operational plans and fragmentary orders.

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<u>What Did The NATTF Set Out To Do?</u>

As ISAF nears the end of its mandate of 31 December 2014, NATO is responsible to report to the United Nations Security Council on the overall success or failure of the mission. A key factor in determining success or failure of the mission will be an assessment of if and how all of the tasks as defined in the ISAF campaign plan and associated documents have been completed. Towards that end, all Specified Tasks in the ISAF Operational Plan (OPLAN) Rev 6.1 and Rev 6.2 and published fragmentary orders (FRAGOs) had to be accounted for.

Furthermore, the disposition of all ISAF tasks would be the next logical step in an overall transition process that was already well underway by late 2012. The desired end-state necessitated that all specified ISAF tasks would be transferred to capable entities or responsibly terminated before the end of the ISAF mission. This was thought to be a key step in ensuring Afghanistan's future stability as well as responsible mission termination for ISAF.

In order to enable the command to gather, assess, and mitigate any gaps in this requirement, both USCENTCOM and COMISAF determined that a new, standalone organization within the ISAF command must be established to perform a detailed task analysis. This organization would ultimately plan, negotiate, implement, and monitor the transfer of residual and incomplete ISAF tasks to the follow-on NATO commitment in Afghanistan, the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) itself, or other external agencies and international actors amongst the international community (IC).

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Lessons learned from previous operations, namely the US military campaign in Iraq, suggested that if the transfer of tasks process is not started early enough (approximately 18 months out from end-of-mission in Operation Iraqi Freedom's case), the transition from wartime to peacetime/post-conflict will not be either stable or enduring. Risks of starting the task transfer process too late are that 1) the process may be not complete in time, 2) it may risk overwhelming intended receiving organizations, and, ultimately, 3) may endanger the future stability of the Host Nation. To address these risks, a dedicated transfer of task organization was mandated.

Intended Outcomes and Outputs:

The outcomes for the NATTF were decidedly large; "The desired end-state is that all specified ISAF tasks are transferred to capable entities or responsibly terminated before the end of the ISAF mission." This, for a new, standalone organization comprised of an ad-hoc group of staff officers with largely no planning background at the strategic or operational level, familiarity with the ISAF campaign plan or its development, or relationship with the ISAF or IJC CJ5 plans offices or other relevant stakeholders, would be a 'tall-order.'

Early on, the outputs of the NATTF were defined as:

1. A plan that defines the totality of tasks performed by ISAF/USFOR-A and the recommended disposition of those tasks.
2. A design for the NATTF to include a request for modification to the existing CE.
3. Products that will inform the US Interagency Stakeholders Conference to be hosted by CENTCOM in Washington DC; in addition, the IOPT (*Interagency Operational Planning team; the temporary predecessor of the NATTF, to be explained later*) will provide input for a briefing to the NATO OPC.

4. A Strategic Communications Plan to include key leader engagements to jumpstart a combined planning effort with the Afghans that can be transferred to the NATTF.

Obviously, number one in the above list would be the ultimate deliverable for the command. The second was intended to generate an organic CE manning capacity staffed with dedicated action officers, a support staff, and leadership (Director, Deputy Director, Chief of Staff, and O6/OF5 section chiefs). The third deliverable was intended to inform the higher headquarters planning efforts as ISAF neared end-of-mission and began preparing for defining the scope and mission of the follow-on RESOLUTE SUPPORT NATO commitment. Finally, the fourth deliverable was added to ensure that the NATTF and ISAF process for transfer of tasks was socialized properly with the larger community of interest and affected stakeholders.

The purpose and objectives of NATTF's efforts and above deliverables was to help maintain a stable and secure Afghanistan while increasing GIRoA's confidence and self-reliance as GIRoA, the IC, and NATO begin the Decade of Transformation (2014-2024; post security responsibility transition). The NATTF was initially intended to:

- Give priority to the transfer of tasks critical to the post-2014 environment while assisting in coordinating the termination of those tasks that will no longer be required.
- Coordinate and synchronize the transfer of tasks and associated resources between the task owners and the receiving organizations.
- Develop policies and plans that ensure GIRoA and other organizations transferring tasks and activities, are proportional to capacities, resources and authorities.

From the beginning, the NATTF was intended to conduct this work openly and transparently with GIRoA as well as all other stakeholders. Towards that end, initial key tasks for the NATTF to accomplish were documented as:

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- Conduct coordination outside of military channels through three primary gateways: the US Embassy Transition Office, the Senior Civilian Representative Office, and with GIRoA's Lead for Transformation Coordination,
- Assess the absorptive capacity of receiving organizations, identify the authorities and prerequisites required and the timeframe necessary to set the conditions for successful transfer to support ISAF's campaign plan.
- Observe and continue to coordinate with task recipients post-transfer and during the post-2014 mission to help identify and mitigate resource and capability shortfalls until the end of the NATTF mission.

These tasks were to be accomplished through a series of Lines of Operation and Effort.

NATTF's plan had 3 lines of operation and included 7 lines of effort. It was designed to include

all aspects of effective handover of responsibility:

1. Line of Operation 1: Strategic Partnering begins with the NATTF-led identification of contributing partners, agencies, organizations, and countries willing and able to execute identified ISAF tasks. It ends when agreement on the execution of tasks is complete.
   a. Line of Effort 1: Resourcing Determination. Full accounting for all resources required to conduct the pending transfer of tasks to include, funding, personnel and infrastructure.
   b. Line of Effort 2: Contributing Partner Identification. Identify contributing partners willing to accept responsibility for executing current ISAF tasks. Contributing partners will review conduct of current tasks with the ISAF entity conducting the task to ensure full understanding of scale and scope of agreed upon tasks.
   c. Line of Effort 3: Task Assumption Agreement. Identified contributing partner accepts and publishes agreement on the execution of transferred tasks.
2. Line of Operation 2: Transition begins when the GIRoA and contributing partners agree on distribution of tasks and ends when the responsible parties begin executing the agreed tasks. Identified tasks for termination will no longer be conducted by the executing unit.
   a. Line of Effort 4: Transfer of ISAF Tasks. In advance of the transition to the Post-2014 NATO Mission, Phase II continues to address the timely and coordinated transfer of ISAF tasks to GIRoA and other IC organizations. To

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set the conditions for successful transition to GIRoA, the absorptive capacities, authorities and prerequisites required, and timeframe are major considerations. Accurate assessment and realistic expectations of capabilities will be crucial. Contributing partners concurrently conduct transfer of tasks with the current ISAF responsible party to ensure clear hand off of all aspects of tasks. An in depth familiarization and mentoring process will ensure a full understanding of task and a more complete and thorough handover.

    b. Line of Effort 5: Termination. Identified tasks for termination will no longer by conducted by the executing unit

3. Line of Operation 3: Review. Begins with the execution of agreed tasks and ends when NATTF observes the initial execution of those tasks and makes recommendations to adjust tasks as required.

    a. Line of Effort 6: Evaluation. NATTF and contributing partners conduct review of task accomplishment and effectiveness of enduring, transformed and terminated tasks and make recommendations for review and/or reassignment or further transformation of the task.

    b. Line of Effort 7: Refinement. NATTF makes determination/confirmation that all enduring, transferred and terminated tasks have been effectively completed.

Task Disposition

Task disposition, the determination of how individual tasks would be assessed and accounted for, would be the bulk of the NATTF mission. NATTF action officers, through working with the task owners (tasked organizations for each specified task as per the ISAF OPLAN), would recommend all tasks for either termination or transfer to a gaining body, be it the follow-on NATO mission, an IC actor, or GIRoA itself. These recommendations would then follow a validation process up through the chain of command intended to include ISAF CJ5 (as the ISAF Campaign Plan owners), NATTF Director, ISAF Chief of Staff, COM ISAF, the GIRoA transfer of task counterpart office, then finally SHAPE itself.

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The first criteria when judging task disposition was whether or not the identified specified task was either 'in-scope' or 'out-of-scope' according to the North Atlantic Council Initiating Directive (NID) and the approved SHAPE Strategic CONOPS (SSC) for the RESOLUTE SUPPORT mission. These documents acted as the barometer for all future decisions. Therefore, any function/requirement falling within the scope of the mission for Train, Advise, and Assist to the Afghan Security Institutions (ASI)/Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) should be transferred to RESOLUTE SUPPORT mission.

Tasks that were within the scope and mandate of the follow-on mission according to the NID and SSC would be transferred to that NATO mission. When a task was determined to be out-of-scope of the NID/SSC guidance it would be transferred to either GIRoA or the IC. This was intended to be a close NATTF/GIRoA coordination process as this was a sovereignty issue for GIRoA itself; when a function/requirement was not able to be completely accomplished by GIRoA on their own (i.e. GIRoA does not have the capacity or capability to fulfill requirements on their own which ISAF, under its mandate had fulfilled), GIRoA must technically coordinate through and task the IC body responsible for Afghan aid and development – UNAMA – with continued requests for support. If GIRoA does have the organic capacity to assume and fulfill ISAF tasks, the task will be negotiated and transferred to the IC under GIRoA's lead. Tasks that have reached conclusion (were mission complete or validated by the ISAF command or GIRoA as unnecessary to further requirements) were recommended to be Terminated.

Throughout the task disposition process of task identification, analysis, and validation, GIRoA and the IC, in coordination with the SCR office, were intended to be fully partnered and

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cooperative. After all, ISAF cannot make any recommendations without taking into account the perspectives, wishes, and requirements of the other actors, and vice versa. The original desire was to have a collocated office where at least NATTF and a representative of the SCR would work, and in a best-case situation, a GIRoA representative would work out of as well. It was understood early on that to be fully efficient all three organizations must work hand-in-glove towards the common goal of ISAF task disposition. Without any of the three participating, planning and execution would be done in a vacuum.

The low-hanging fruit in the task disposition process was always assumed to be the Transfer to RS mission tasks; taking the limited scope provided by the NID and SSC into account and recommending these tasks for transfer were expected to be cut and dry. Transfer to IC and GIRoA tasks were assumed to require more effort as external validation, analysis, and negotiations for transfer would be required.

A validation body was brainstormed and nominally agreed to comprising all three entities: NATTF, GIRoA, and the office of the SCR. This 'Transfer of Tasks Council' would take the recommendations from the action officer-level and validate at the 2-star and equivalent level to pass upwards to COM ISAF, SHAPE, the SCR, and the GIRoA Office of the National Security Council for final approval. It was also recommended that UNAMA be included in an observer capacity to this body/function. This forum would become especially important when Transfer to GIRoA and IC tasks were assessed as ISAF has no authority to task outside actors. If a task was out-of-scope of the follow-on mission but its execution was determined to still be

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required to meet defined NATO, IC, and GIRoA end-states the stakeholders represented by this council would need to validate the transfer.

This process was intended to be followed for all 400+ specified tasks initially found by the temporary NATTF predecessor, the IOPT, and would responsibly close out the disposition of all ISAF tasks through termination or transfer. A second function, however, became apparent as necessary. The NATTF, through the task disposition process, deep understanding of the narrowness of the follow-on NATO mission (constraints, restrains, and planned scope), and intended close coordination with GIRoA and the Task Owners, would be positioned to know what tasks would 'fall through the cracks' upon transition.

Certain tasks by nature of their function and intent were critically important to enabling future GIRoA and Afghan stability and, ultimately, success of the ISAF mission and meeting IC end-states for Afghanistan. However, because of what the NATTF would learn about GIRoA capacities coupled with the limited scope of the follow-on mission, the NATTF was able to classify certain tasks as 'critical gap areas' – tasks/functions that would not continue to be performed by NATO yet which GIRoA did not have the capacity or willingness to do on their own coupled with the IC not interested or able to take them on. The NATTF was supposed to analyze these tasks and report them up the chain of command to highlight the risk to ISAF's end of mission as well as NATO and IC desired end-states to ensure military leadership and political decision makers were fully aware of the risks involved.

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<u>Initial Timeline:</u>

ISAF started its transfer of tasks process with the establishment of a US Transfer of Task Interagency Operational Planning Team (OPT). That OPT refined ISAF's understanding of the transfer of task requirement and the necessary scope of the effort. A basic framework was developed to define plans of action and milestones for the transfer or termination of each task. Then, negotiation with external stakeholders and implementation of transfer was supposed to begin as part of the ISAF Transfer of Task process. The IOPT remained in effect until the NATTF reached IOC in early January 2013.

Initial Operational Capability was declared on 01Jan13 and briefed as such to the NATO Operations Policy Committee (OPC) at NATO HQ Brussels on 11 Jan 13. Full Operational Capability (FOC) was defined as steady state manning of 75% or more of the CE posts filled by nations, with an achievable goal of 100% manning. Target date was soon as possible but not later than 01 Jun 13. When it reached FOC in June 2013, the NATTF consisted of 26 multi-national military and civilian personnel.

The NATTF was expected to execute its mission throughout the remainder of the ISAF mandate (until 31 Dec 2014). The assumption was that it would then "bleed over" into the follow on RESOLUTE SUPPORT mission for the "review, evaluation, and refinement" portion of its mission. This NATTF function in the post-ISAF timeframe was undetermined at first and would be refined as the task transfer process was underway.

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Who was Involved:

Stakeholders were broken up into 'mandated' and 'requested.' Mandated stakeholders were to be a standing body of approximately 20 personnel from various agencies including CENTCOM, HQ ISAF, NATO, and others. These would form the core of the larger "NATTF Working Group" that was intended to meet regularly, at first, and then as necessary to work the transfer process in detail amongst the task coordinators/task owners. The NATTF Working Group was led/chaired by the NATTF Director and pulled in the mandatory stakeholders for scheduled meetings. The working group function was intended to be, at first, a regular meeting on a monthly basis but then transfer to as-needed fora as the task transfer process got underway.

From a command perspective, it was a major effort to pull in the task owners and relevant POCs from across the entire command and all staff elements for a one to two hour meeting. For that reason it was initially decided that the meetings would only be regular and fully attended only as long as was necessary to get everyone on the same page, get the process moving in a synchronous direction, and help address all common questions, issues, and problems. Once that was accomplished (assumed to take two to three months), the working group meetings were supposed to transition to the as-needed format and pull in only those task coordinators and/or task owners whose transfers required special attention.

Requested stakeholders were to be the communities of interest to participate, provide input, and review products. These invitations were to be based on the subject of the specific IOPT/NATTF meeting but may include members of the ISAF staff, SCR, IJC, NTM-A, TF 435, USFOR-A, US Department of State, GIRoA, and others as applicable.

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Expected Facilitators

These are the facilitators expected to be involved in the Transfer of Tasks process, locally, abroad, both internal and external to the coalition, as well as higher headquarters and host-nation actors.

- GIRoA 'Transfer of Task' Office. Intended be the primary counterpart to the ISAF transfer of task effort and the primary interlocutor for the wider GIRoA. It was intended to regularly liaise with the NATTF, COM ISAF, and SCR on tasks to be assumed or transferred to the IC, communicate and assist with task hand offs from ISAF to the various GIRoA ministries and other government agencies at the national and sub-national level, and overall be responsible for GIRoA acceptance of tasks. This office would manage the GIRoA negotiation and decisions of tasks to be assumed from ISAF in conjunction with NATO. It would accept identified tasks and liaise for a formal task hand off from SCR (the Office of the SCR would later debate this responsibility).
- SHAPE. Intended to receive task recommendations from COM ISAF and decide tasks to be turned over to GIRoA. Also responsible to communicate with COM ISAF and the SCR on information exchanged with GIRoA, inform and assist JFC Brunssum in transfer, coordination and informational tasks. Finally, responsible for negotiating and deciding with the IC under the direction of NATO for the formal handoff of tasks.
- COM ISAF. Receive recommendations from NATTF on tasks to be transferred and inform and assist JFC Brunssum and SHAPE in monitoring progress of task transfers; detail identified tasks to SHAPE.
- SCR. Liaise with GIRoA on identified tasks and liaise with NATTF on status of transferred tasks for up channeling to NATO HQ and relevant nations; coordinate for a formal task hand off to GIRoA.
- United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), United Nations Development Program (UNDP). Negotiation-lead for tasks to be assumed from ISAF to the IC in coordination with the SCR. Accept identified tasks and liaison for a formal task hand off from the SCR. Work with the NATTF to coordinate task transfer.
- In-Theatre National Military Representatives. Responsible to own nation for in theatre representation; liaison with NATTF to conduct staff-level coordination and assist with task reception.

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- In-Theatre Task Recipients. NATTF will have direct liaison authority to coordinate all tasks with the in-theatre task recipients.
- JFC Brunssum. Inform and assist SHAPE and COM ISAF in the transfer, coordination and informational tasks.
- Certain Nations. Liaison with SHAPE on tasks they are willing to accept and pass this information to their respective In-Theatre National Military Representatives. Negotiate and decide with SHAPE on which tasks are to be transferred and formal task hand off.
- NGOs, IGOs. Liaise with SHAPE and GIRoA to determine identification of potential task for execution, conduct coordination with NATTF to ensure effective task handover.

What Actually Occurred?

Pre-NATTF Mission Analysis

The Interagency Operational Planning Team (IOPT) was stood up in August of 2012 under the directorship of ISAF's Combined Joint Inter Agency Task Force-Afghanistan (CJIATF-A). It was initially manned by a core 4-man cell deployed from the Joint Enabling Capabilities Command (JECC) temporarily assigned from US TRANSCOM, Norfolk, VA. Since their unit's mission is to provide mission-tailored, joint capability packages to Combatant Commanders in order to facilitate the rapid establishment of Joint Force Headquarters, fulfill Global Response Force execution, and bridge joint operational requirements, their capabilities matched what ISAF needed in standing up the NATTF function. The JECC, in providing a highly-skilled team of planners to rapidly increase joint force command and control capability at the operational level of a joint force headquarters, were able to assist ISAF in beginning to bridge the gap between the ISAF and RESOLUTE SUPPORT follow-on NATO missions. In addition to this core team, an O6 director was named and sent from the US Army Center for

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Army Lessons Learned (CALL), a staff officer deployed from JFC-Madrid, and three staff officers reassigned from within the ISAF staff.

The initial IOPT task was framing the problem, developing a Terms of Reference (charter), mission statements, and translating commander's intent into a workable plan of action; they defined the basic task disposition framework and mechanisms. The group then became closely familiar with the guiding higher-level documents, namely the NID and SSC. The second major task was then to begin specified task identification and preliminary assessment. All required documents and Terms of Reference (ToRs) were produced allowing them to start task analysis. The group scrubbed the entire ISAF Campaign Plan 6.1 and 6.2 and all annexes for all specified tasks. Subsequently, all the specified tasks were parsed by functional areas and 'binned' into groups. This first-level analysis provided the first steps to disposition recommendations.

The IOPT also developed the NATTF CE structure, began to form relationships within major subordinate commands and ISAF staffs, developed the NATTF Working Group requirement and framework, began development of task database as the primary tool to organize, share, analyze, and track all specified tasks and their dispositions, started socializing the NATTF mission within the ISAF command, NATO, and the US, and plugged in to relevant ISAF working groups and OPTs, namely the planning OPT for RESOLUTE SUPPORT.

When the JECC members deployed and filled out the staff roster, the original manning was filled by subject-matter experts (SMEs) representing different functional areas. That was

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mainly due to how the JECC deploys a planning team; a SOF planner, a medical planner, a

logistics planner, and so on. Upon starting work in the NATTF and defining mechanisms and

processes however, they realized that SMEs were not necessarily required but rather planning

experts (J5-type) who would manage the transfer-of-task process and program itself. The

subject-matter expertise would come from the various task owners in their own functional and

organizational areas. However, as the IOPT evolved into the NATTF, the initial CE was kept

with SMEs for each of the assumed functional areas (as the NATTF assumed this to be the best

way to analyze and assess the various ISAF specified tasks; e.g., a CIED expert in the NATTF

would best be able to analyze, assess, and recommend disposition of CIED-related tasks, and so

on). As it will be shown, this would hinder future operations.

NATTF Standup

By January 2013, the IOPT had defined the framework and most processes for the

transfer of tasks project. Thus, by 1 Jan 2013, the IOPT was able to transition into a NATO

organization with an approved CE list. Also in January the NATTF was stripped from the parent

CJIATF-A organization and received its own director, a USAF 2-star general. All ToRs, mission

statements, and guidance were further refined and signed and the NATTF chain of command was

set as a separate ISAF DCOS reporting through the ISAF CoS directly to the COM. This

afforded the staff the DIRLAUTH and freedom of action necessary to coordinate and task

subordinate commands and ISAF staffs in the execution of task transfer. This was accomplished

by publishing a command FRAGO as well as an appendix to the existing ISAF OPLAN.

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The initial event educating and informing the command of the task transfer process, the NATTF, its authorities, and mission was the first command-wide NATTF Working Group (21 Feb 2013). The Working Group had its own ToRs, FRAGO, defined the roles and responsibilities between the NATTF, specified task owners, and task coordinators, defined the task transfer process, how to use the task database, and rough timelines. After a few months of the regular, large format, the NATTF decided to keep the normal meeting pace and arrangement and not switch to as-needed times or agendas.

Within the NATTF, the database as the primary tool for NATTF action officers and all task coordinators and task owners across the command was continually fine-tuned while being used. All specified tasks were scrubbed to internally validate disposition recommendations another two times after the initial IOPT scrubs. Other processes that the NATTF finalized and implemented were fortnightly SVTCs to HHQ (SHAPE, NATO HQ, JFC-Brunssum, CENTCOM) for information sharing. During the zenith of NATTF activity (March-July), it focused on the database, regularly scheduled Working Group meetings, and attempting to define processes that would soon come into play.

An interesting side note is the inclusion of the IJC subordinate command-level Civilian Aviation Transition Branch, CATB, into the NATTF. The CATB was an operational organization tasked with the comprehensive management and planning for transition to GIRoA of airports and airspace within the Afghanistan Flight Information Region. In doing so, it was supposed to provide strategic partnership with GIRoA and other agencies to progress GIRoA's aviation sector and set conditions for an effective transition to an Afghan led, self-sustainable,

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aviation structure, while retaining freedom of movement for post-ISAF led engagement. By definition, the CATB was a "task owner" with an operational mission. Yet it was subsumed into the NATTF organization. The fit never really took hold. It was difficult for the operationally-centric CATB to transition to the 4-star HQ level and subsequently shift their focus from operational to strategic. Limited and unsynchronized interaction between the NATTF action officers responsible with aviation functions with the CATB individuals working specific airspace and airfield transition issues further limited efficiency and occasionally caused internal confusion on task transfer status.

Mission (Mostly) Complete

By July 2013, all tasks recommended to transfer to the RS campaign plan from ISAF were consolidated, validated by the NATTF action officers, task owners/coordinators, and finally ISAF CJ5 (as the owner/author of the RS draft OPLAN). After this milestone, the only remaining tasks to validate were the Transfer to IC and Transfer to GIRoA tasks. Throughout the seven months from IOPT/NATTF standup to July 2013, the next phase of the process had never been agreed to, either internally to the NATTF or externally by direction or guidance from above. As such there were approximately 40 tasks that the NATTF did not know how to move forward on. New COM ISAF guidance instructed NATTF to up channel these tasks to HHQ and have them as the responsible strategic-level command deal with negotiating, finding a home for, and closing out all remaining residual tasks. It was apparent that the change of command and commander's intent in ISAF severely changed the nature of what the NATTF was intended to do. The new commander's focus limited the NATTF to dealing with the tasks that would affect

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ISAF's transition to RESOLUTE SUPPORT only and only those tasks that needed to be a part of the RS OPLAN; everything else was now outside the scope of the in-theater task transfer organization or, in effect, ISAF itself.

On 31 July 2013 the NATTF was informally disbanded (steps taken as part of a larger HQ reorganization prior to full North Atlantic Council approval) and realigned into the Non Security Ministries Ministerial Advisory Group (NSM MAG) under NTM-A/CSTC-A. This realignment merged together the NATTF, ISAF DCOS Stability, ISAF DCOS Outreach, CATB, and the Telecommunications Advisory Team (TAT), another operational 'task owner' who became subsumed under the NATTF under the subordinate ISAF 3-star command. This also effectively ended the formal NATTF mission.

After having sent all the Transfer to RSM tasks to CJ5 for validation, and without having a defined or approved mechanism to deal with tasks outside of the RS mission scope, all the Transfer to IC and Transfer to GIRoA tasks were essentially at mission stoppage. The NATTF continued to socialize the 'critical gap areas' (out-of-scope RS mission functions that the NATTF assessed as having a negative impact to NATO and GIRoA end states for Afghanistan if not addressed) to major troop contributing and donor nations in conjunction with the office of the SCR. This defined the "IC Outreach" function the NATTF adopted as a residual mission. The objective was to begin building international communities of interest of willing stakeholders to generate commitment in a post-ISAF Afghanistan. It was intended to advertise these functions so that the NATTF could find a willing IC donor to take them on. This would be the legacy function

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for the NATTF after having 1/2 to 2/3rds of its mission statement stripped away by the new commander's intent.

Legacy NATTF Mission

This process was intended to be the first step in finalizing IC validation of NATTF-defined risk areas by fully informing ISAF and SHAPE about non-RSM, yet required tasks/functions in order to meet long-term IC, NATO, and GIRoA end states. A key factor in this effort was to socialize these gaps with individual embassies as described above. Once these gap tasks were collected research was begun to align strategic risk analysis throughout ongoing IC efforts (outside of NATO) to determine what donor efforts already exist. This objective was to seek synchronicity of efforts, provide situational awareness of the IC continuing efforts, how to align interests, and reduce possible duplication amongst the IC and NATO. Ultimately this should have matched-up our risk/gap tasks (tactical through strategic) with existing IC effort in order to enable further IC/GIRoA negotiation.

Further embassy and IC visits along with focused IC research were supposed to fine tune transfer possibilities based on the above efforts. The objective was to define and narrow the communities of interest and, ultimately, produce an ISAF and IC-validated list of functions, some highlighted as strategic risks that could then be brought to SHAPE and GIRoA. The stakeholder communities of interest would be built and informed on relevant tasks/functions. The IC would be primed to negotiate with NATO and GIRoA on the entire Transfer to GIRoA/IC list (the last remaining NATTF function).

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However, this process was largely slimmed down to producing 'risk area' point papers for COM ISAF and SHAPE and briefing donor nations' embassies to socialize further commitment requests. Building communities of interest, organizing or mediating transfer negotiations, or interacting beyond a very narrow set of troop contributing or donor nations was decided as not the NATTF's responsibility or scope. The final action on this is the Director's NATO HQ (OPC) brief to socialize this directly with the NATO member states.

Identify What Was Right or Wrong?

The NATTF, from conception to closure, performed at least some of the critical responsibilities it was assigned, the most key one being identifying and recommending the disposition of all ISAF specified tasks. However, at the strategic through tactical levels the NATTF experienced both self-initiated and external difficulties generating failures, both large and small. This section will first highlight successes in process, framework, and mechanisms that should ensure successful and replicable best practices can be built into future missions and further built upon. Then it will follow with some of the failures and challenges (in both procedure/framework and execution/implementation) to meeting the initial commander's intent and objectives. This should provide the lessons learned for future transfer of task endeavors.

What Went Well

The concept of a NATTF for military operations is decidedly an enduring one, so much so that a similarly chartered transfer of tasks dedicated mission, if not a dedicated organization, should be standard within any Phase IV and V of joint operations (Stabilize the Environment and

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Enable Civil Authority, respectively). Although a commander will determine the actual phasing used during campaigns and operations, transfer of tasks functions are critical to long-term mission success and as such should be indoctrinated in the campaign planning and execution process.

The NATTF, only starting transfer of task concept discovery and learning process well into Phase III of the ISAF campaign plan did remarkably well. With new temporary staff unfamiliar with the ISAF planning process, goals, missions, and end states, a rough-order magnitude plan was assembled fairly quickly. This is largely owed to the initial staff's focus to a standardized planning process of attacking the problem set. The JECC deployed operational planning professionals trained in standing up new headquarters and required plans. The NATTF mission was not far off that underlying task. What they were in effect working towards was bridging the gap between campaigns and headquarters; taking a legacy mission and operational plan and, through analysis and assessment, determining how to build the follow-on mission and operational plan. What they were tasked with providing would become the kernel of the next mission under RESOLUTE SUPPORT mission. As such, any transfer of tasks mission should at least begin with dedicated planning professionals. They will have the experience to take plans and concepts and through a common doctrinal understanding of missions, operations, and strategy, and translate it into a coherent and standardized way forward to meet objectives and intents.

In its early stages, the IOPT and then NATTF was centrally focused on the commander's initial guidance of creating an organization and framework to capitalize on an iterative process

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that would synchronize both a bottom-up as well as top-down input, analysis, and direction.

Working towards the goal of ensuring that ISAF would responsibly transfer all required

functions to willing and able receivers, and assist that process, the NATTF achieved its goal of

not allowing ISAF to drop any required tasks in the interim of transition. NATTF action officers

also worked closely enough with the task owners in subordinate commands and ISAF staffs to

ensure the task transfer process as a line of command effort did not impact current operations or

planned retrograde and redeployment. These were critical showstoppers for the Commander and

NATTF was successful in ensuring a steady pace of operations without impact from required

transfer.

The NATTF was also successful in taking the first large steps towards building, bringing

together, and synchronizing the very disparate communities of interest, namely among the IC

and coalition who had not previously had a steady or long-term relationship. By assessing the

variables of the legacy ISAF mission with the planning assumptions and political guidance for

the scope of the follow-on NATO mission, NATTF was able to bridge critical shortfalls in

allowing NATO to seamlessly transfer sovereignty to the Afghan government along many

functional lines of effort. Without ISAF's centralized management and oversight through

NATTF of the drawdown, task transfer, and transition to the RESOLUTE SUPPORT mission,

many stovepiped, disconnected, and narrowly focused organizations and efforts would not have

realized that they were not only mutually supporting of task transfer, but also of enabling long-

term endstates to be realized. Without the foundation the NATTF provided, CENTCOM, the US

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Department of State, the US Federal Aviation Administration, NATO, and UNAMA would not have been able to realize the 'cross-pollination' achievable to ensure common ends.

Internal to the NATTF, several mechanisms and developments aided the success it achieved. First, realigning the entire task transfer process along functional lines versus organizational lines made the process more efficient and seamless. After a somewhat drawn-out process of analyzing how to shift to a functional organization and what that organization should look like (overall, this process took about 2 months to develop courses of action, receive guidance, and achieve concurrence and approval which ultimately diverted resources and effort), the end result was a cleaner, more proactive approach that benefitted both the NATTF action officers equally as well as the task owners and coordinators they worked with. Future transfer of task efforts should begin functionally aligned versus organizationally.

Second, handling many of the basic framework issues as a team versus smaller groups greatly contributed to mission and unit cohesion. From fully defining and developing a transfer of task process/flow chart, requiring overall task scrubs and prioritizations to be accomplished with all hands (even if all tasks were not relevant to all NATTF AO's functional 'bins'), close coordination between NATTF AOs on cross-functional issues, weekly way-ahead meetings with the Director, and joint IC outreach efforts, an all-hands approach not only ensured unity of effort and a common voice to the command but also fundamental baselines on core issues were maintained. The NATTF could have easily stove piped within itself which was, in fact, a main risk to the functional realignment. But forcing the all-hands approach successfully (for a while)

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mitigated that risk. Certain issues would later erode some of these commonalities to be discussed later but seeing the need for this approach early on was beneficial.

Finally, maintaining close alignment with the ISAF CJ5 and a few command OPTs was critical to keeping the NATTF focused on command priorities, planning efforts, and atmospherics. These all would be valuable in ensuring task transfer planning kept on pace with larger Commander's intent which was very fluid especially during Phase III.

In all, the NATTF enjoyed considerable success due to the framework and processes it developed. Created from a minimally-staffed core cell of temporarily deployed individuals, it defined and developed all transfer of task processes with no doctrine, lessons learned, or best practices. By and large it stuck to all of these processes and mechanisms it put in place, only diverting when the commander's intent changed its mission and charter. Of course the 12 months of the IOPT/NATTF lifecycle was not without challenge, failure, or inefficiency; these were sometimes self-inflicted, sometimes due to the nature of being a new organization with the latter stages of a 12 year mission, and sometimes due to outside influence or other inescapable factors. The following section will address these issues from which the NATTF was mostly able to overcome. While none of the following issues were 'mission showstoppers,' definite lessons learned can be gained to increase future effectiveness towards objectives and intent.

<u>What Went Wrong</u>

First, at the high level, from the NATTF's mission statement, "*the NATTF will identify and update the list of ISAF tasks; recommend when and which tasks will be terminated or*

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transferred; **plan, negotiate, implement, and monitor all transfers or terminations to enable the transition from ISAF to the post-2014 NATO Resolute Support mission** (emphasis added)."

From the summary of events above it should be apparent that the NATTF successfully achieved only half to 1/3 of its original mission statement. As always, a new commander will have new commander's intent. However, the NATTF mission statement, charter, terms of reference, FRAGOs, or intent was never formally altered nor was the staff entirely aware of what the new commander's guidance was. This not only created enduring confusion amongst the NATTF staff, it caused misperceptions about what the goals and end states were which the NATTF as a team was working towards.

With regards to implementation and staff formation, certain foundational issues were to become problematic as the NATTF became defined and started to execute its mission. For example personnel turnover (NATO personnel rotate at a faster rate than US personnel) would slow not only forward progress but the common understanding and framework NATTF action officers had of the basic process. This was amplified by the fact that, internal to the NATTF, standardization and permanency of the definitions of the various disposition options and priorities and the reasoning behind it was never enforced. This resulted in some tasks switching disposition recommendations (terminate-to-transfer, transfer to GIRoA-to-transfer to IC, etc.) multiple times because new rotational SMEs assigned to the NATTF having different ideas about what was involved with the task or its relation to the scope of RSM or GIRoA capacity. Eventually NATTF leadership reigned in the disposition definitions and held the NATTF AOs to some semblance of uniformity when making disposition recommendations.

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Another problem with execution and staffing was the assumption that SMEs would be more significant to the NATTF process than professional planners or, at least, generalist officers. Not having planners as the NATTF core hindered this process because there was no doctrinal foundation of understanding of campaign plan terminology, the ISAF OPLAN, or campaign planner's intent with either the ISAF or draft RESOLUTE SUPPORT OPLANs. By and large NATTF SMEs were more focused on their own functional areas than how and why it all connected together and to what end. Not being a part of the initial ISAF campaign planning process further held up forward progress. NATTF attempted to mitigate this by assigning one action officer (a US Army FA59 strategist) as a liaison to the CJ5, take part in the RS mission planning process, and help connect the strategic and operational level to the tactical work which the NATTF was trying to accomplish, almost in a planning vacuum.

Other execution issues were due to timelines and required milestones. A core part of the task analysis phase was supposed to be gap/capacity analysis for tasks transferring to GIRoA (to determine whether or not GIRoA has the requisite capacity to assume certain tasks from which NATO will no longer execute). This simply was never accomplished. As a result of NATTF capacity, a lack of direct relationships between the various task owners and GIRoA ministerial or operational counterparts, a basic lack of GIRoA cooperation, or an initial NATO/NATTF lack of vision on why this process would be important, the gap analyses were never accomplished. In the end this was not such a negative impact because the NATTF ended its transfer mission before serious work would have been required with GIRoA in assessing those tasks for transfer. This

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had a negative impact, especially considering the intended next steps to be taken by HHQ

(SHAPE); no GIRoA linkage in the ToT process crippled that phase of task analysis.

A related issue was the POA&Ms – Programs of Action and Milestones. These were

intended to be detailed transfer schedules, lists of required resources, notes on negotiations, and

specific statuses and comments from various task owners and coordinators on each task. From

the NATTF POA&M Guidance Memo:

> "The descriptions are intended to provide a framework for the capture of
> relevant information and in recognition of the wide variation in the
> nature of tasks within the list are neither prescriptive nor constraining.
> General principles outlined below are to be adhered to, but the
> overarching intent is to capture relevant information that identifies risks
> and capability gaps in successfully delivering the disposition of ISAF
> tasks. The completion and validation of POA&Ms is essential in order to
> inform COMISAF's, or his delegated authority's, approval of the transfer
> implementation plan."

These were never fully completed, enforced, or even necessary. As with much of the

NATTF's internally-directed and self-generated work, it ended up being counterproductive.

More time and energy was spent on peripheral issues like this (also the 'Priority 1 binders,' point

papers to justify/maintain NATTF relevance to the new commander, regular attendance at

unnecessary command OPTs, the Working Group itself) than on core NATTF business processes

and it became distracting and parasitic to required functions and capacities. Much of this issue

was a natural byproduct of the NATTF of being a new staff and trying to get "plugged in" to

ongoing efforts while fully understanding that 'they didn't know what they didn't know.'

Without this situational awareness, the assumption went, critical risk would be introduced into

the task transfer process. However, resource drain from attending too many unnecessary OPTs

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was successfully mitigated when leadership realized that effort was being diverted from the primary focus for no real gain to the mission.

The NATTF Working Group, as mentioned above, became a serious draw of limited resources and effort within the organization. It was intended to be, at first, an informational forum to ensure that as the NATTF stood up, the command fully understood the transfer of task function as a new command line of effort. After this baselining, it was intended to transition into a flexible meeting agenda to focus on tasks, functional areas, or issues needing closer attention. This, however, never occurred and the Working Group maintained a standard monthly agenda for all Required Stakeholders to simply pass information. As such, attendance waned as ISAF subordinate command and staff offices were being pulled in to be briefed (from *their* perspective) irrelevant information which did not impact them or their transfers. The NATTF had turned the working group into another regular command OPT which simply pushed data as the bulk of its agenda. What should have evolved into a more focused forum to work and address more specific issues to task coordinators/owners whose processes needed more attention remained a very generic, non-specific, and cumbersome regularly scheduled meeting.

Another resource-intensive draw for no NATTF execution requirement was the fortnightly SHAPE SVTC. What started out simply as a CENTCOM and SHAPE request for information updates and a pursuit for guidance by the NATTF, turned into a mass SVTC pulling in all HHQs: SHAPE, CENTCOM, JFC-Brunssum, and even NATO HQ, occasionally up to the 1-star (O-7 / OF-6) or ambassadorial level. It turned from a status update into a major staff effort to brief defined functional areas locally classified as 'risk areas.' The risk areas were initially

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defined early on in the NATTF process and remained stagnant. As such, as the transfer process was underway and NATTF action officers gained more insights from the task owners, the 'risk areas' remained the same and guidance sought became irrelevant if it came at all. The NATTF became a slave to process over function. The firm guidance NATTF hoped to receive from HHQ was slow arrive (to the point it became inconsequential at best or overcome by events at worst) and it turned into simply an information push requiring much effort at the NATTF end for no perceptible gain or guidance. Especially where the tasks and functions revolved around specific civilian/development issues that the military force was transitioning out of, ISAF required firm guidance from political HQs on how this would be managed. That never came.

Finally, as mentioned in the NATTF Standup portion of Section 1, the task disposition database was the primary analysis and reporting tool the NATTF developed and used in conjunction with the Task Owners and Coordinators. What should have introduced efficiencies into the process and remained an instrument to assist disposition coordination, tracking, and reporting through simple filters and queries, became, however, the primary 'deliverable' of the NATTF as far as the command and HHQ were concerned. Partly due to advertising the importance of it as a way to 'sell' NATTF's relevance, it became a monster of NATTF's own creating. The disposition database became the focus of effort, not the primary functions of actually coordinating with transfer of task stakeholders or building communities of interest. While reporting data and statistics up the chain of command will always be necessary, the NATTF's overreliance on a self-generated database obligation hurt more than it helped; it became unresponsive, unwieldy, hard to manage and maintain, and ultimately of limited utility

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beyond what a simple spreadsheet would have delivered. Nevertheless, it became the NATTF's "legacy." The command intimately tied Transfer of Tasks with the database and this skewed perceptions and usefulness of the NATTF's mission and objectives. Other tools or frameworks to future Transfer of Task functions might be available.

On the procedural or framework side of NATTF's issues and challenges, there were some fundamental problems that generated handicaps to mission completion. First and foremost, NATTF never internally fully agreed to, defined, or sought firm guidance on critical processes and functions. These critical procedural problems centered on 1) how are tasks validated above the NATTF (especially the transfer to IC and GIRoA tasks); 2) how to accomplish gap/capacity analyses for tasks transferring to GIRoA; 3) how to accomplish negotiations for tasks outside of the future RESOLUTE SUPPORT mission but still recommended to be accomplished; and 4) how to ensure all tasks were accounted for (i.e., no double-checking of the initial IOPT campaign plan scrub was ever accomplished and no scrub of over 800 ISAF FRAGOs was ever satisfactorily accomplished to capture specified tasks not within the original ISAF campaign plan). These were all concerns that the NATTF tried to address on multiple occasions but never came to closure on.

Regarding issues #1 and 3, these failures became overcome by events since the new commander's narrow intent for the NATTF removed the requirement to perform these functions. Issue #2 became OBE simply because the NATTF chose not to do it. Issue #4 remained a serious underlying issue and was never addressed.

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Because terminology was not consistent or 'standard,' information became tenuous, speculative, and problematic for future requirements and analyses. For example, the NATTF had to socialize a 'new' definition of such basic things as 'Priority' tasks, measured by suppositional or immeasurable data that conflicted with customary usage of terms and understandings. This caused not only enduring confusion among rotations of NATTF AOs but also Task Owners and other Transfer of Task stakeholders and partners. Furthermore, because so much of the NATTF's work and analysis was not empirical or quantifiable, assumptions led to further assumptions (which were never double-checked) which called into question the data's reliance as a whole.

Another fundamental issue was cooperation with GIRoA. From the beginning the transfer of task process was designed to be closely partnered. CENTCOM even went so far as to By-Name Request Afghan Hands into the NATTF as it was seen that they could provide necessary connectivity to the Afghan government and ministries throughout the process. In total, four Afghan Hands were remissioned to the NATTF to work various portfolios: one engaged to build capacity with the GIRoA Office of the National Security Council (ONSC), two liaised with MoT/CAA, MoD, MoI, and the US Embassy, and one more worked on Rule of Law functional issues for transfer.

These Hands were initially intended to assist with several key areas yielded by the ability and scope of the Afghan Hands program. The functions Afghan Hands brought to the NATTF were intended to bring GIRoA on board with the transfer of task concept and process, building capacity in the ONSC (named by GIRoA as the NATTF's primary counterpart within GIRoA), engaging ministries for the NATTF staff officers directly and through the NTM-A and Afghan

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Hand advisory network, and assist/enable the task owners to conduct gap/capacity analyses with relevant GIRoA counterparts and recommended task receivers. For a staff of four Afghan Hands this was a large mission set.

This, by and large, became a short-lived initiative. GIRoA never fully bought into the task transfer concept, the ONSC never fully engaged or helped manage the process, intended working groups on the GIRoA ministerial side were never set up, and even after KLEs with the Deputy National Security Advisor, the ONSC never received leadership or guidance from GIRoA on how to assist ISAF with this function. Recommended Transfer to GIRoA tasks were never validated by them and coordination or engagement never occurred between the ministries and related ISAF task owners or functional task managers. ToRs for the ONSC were drafted but never signed and timelines and program of action and milestones were recommended but never adhered to. With Ramadan and soon after the gearing up for the Afghan 2014 elections season, the limited capacity within the ONSC became quickly diverted and saturated further removing them from the process until it stopped altogether. Only varying levels of success were achieved by the other Afghan Hands with their GIRoA action officer-level counterparts for, likewise, mostly political reasons. Where low-level successes was realized, it was never able to be fully synchronized or coordinated.

What Can Be Improved and How: Recommendations

As a function, Transfer of Tasks is critical to certain types of campaign plans. The handicaps described above led to definite inefficiencies, hurdles, and even, in some cases,

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failures to accomplish the original mission. Most of these were overcome due to the staff's flexibility, leadership top cover, and decent working relationship with the Task Owners in the various staffs and subordinate commands. These issues, however, can be proactively addressed for future similar functions. This section, broken out into issues with Mission Analysis, Organization, Staffing, and Processes, will define those NATTF lessons learned which can be improved upon for those as yet to come campaign plans and staffs.

Mission Analysis: When To Start

Planning for transfer of tasks should not begin to occur in Phase III as they have for ISAF (and MNC-I before it) but rather at the earliest stages of joint or coalition planning efforts; transitioning military efforts to host nation civilian ones should be considered at the outset of planning. Before entering into military operations long term goals and end states are known (hence, the strategy the military is working towards); these end states should inform what the type of desired peace looks like and how it must be implemented after kinetic operations phase out and stability and normalization become the foci of effort.

Organization: Where Should Transfer Of Tasks Be Accomplished?

The first recommendation for future Transfer of Tasks missions would be to *not* create a new and distinct organization ("task force," in the NATTF's case) within the existing staff structure. Transfer of Tasks roles and responsibilities are wholly within the purview of existing J5 plans organizations. The J5 wrote the campaign plan and FRAGOs, updated the plan with newer versions, already has a very close relationship with all command staffs, subordinate

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elements, and HHQs, and maintained its finger on the pulse of conceptual planning for the next mission. The J5 is, in fact, the command's organic functional and subject matter experts with anything and everything having to do with the campaign plan, its evolution towards the follow-on mission (or mission termination), and how, based on HHQ guidance and political direction, tasks should be transferred. In this respect, much of the NATTF's work (all of the 'Transfer to RSM' tasks) was almost entirely redundant; the J5, already performing the mission analysis and conceptual planning for the follow-on mission, was already aware of what tasks would be in the next campaign plan. At most, the entire years' worth of the NATTF's work was simply to revalidate what the CJ5 already knew and was working towards on their own.

For any future campaign plan to be under development, transfer of tasks must be part of that initial planning calculus. Planning for Phase IV and V is just as critically important as Phase III. If planners do not plan for the peace to follow, they are only accomplishing half their function. This planning should be centralized within one organization, made of the experts who are already familiar with the campaign planning process for the specific effort. As Phase III begins to transfer to Phase IV, the transfer of tasks function of the J5 should ramp up (at most, a separate cell within the J5) and execute that planning function within this resident group of planners.

Staffing: How Should A Transfer of Tasks Element Be Manned?

Staffing is another easily addressable issue yet which, due to initial frameworks, the NATTF was never able to overcome. If the above lesson learned is not accounted for and a

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future Transfer of Task function remains a separate and distinct organization, it should be staffed with generalist officers, ideally planners or at least generalist officers, instead of functional subject matter experts (SMEs). The NATO manning document that the NATTF was built around was slotted to maintain a billet for various functional areas; this was done for ease of use, speed to get billets filled, and an initial assumption that SMEs should be better suited to manage and execute specific task transfers. This assumption was wrong.

What the NATTF needed (if, as a separate organization) were officer generalists, if not professional planners, for lengths of at least 10-12 month tours, not the NATO standard of 4 to 6. They would have been flexible enough to 'do what was necessary' and not be concerned with their billet numbers, job descriptions, or HHQ 'caveats.' What the NATTF was eventually forced into doing was realigning its processes and frameworks to satisfy these NATO billet requirements which never fully worked out. Some functional areas (bins) the NATTF decided on grouping tasks within never had a representative SME staff officer anyway so the staff made do and rolled various bins into other officer's portfolios. It also created problems when staff officers would not shift their areas of responsibility because it "wasn't what NATO sent them here to do." This was a self-imposed handicap that should not have caused the amount of inertia or work stoppage that it did. Nothing in the basic functional requirement of the NATTF necessitated the specific billet construction of pigeonholed staff officers in a SME framework. Furthermore, with the common doctrinal understanding that either the CJ5 organization would bring to the table or dedicated planners if a future ToT organization is a detached office, this would help to address the personnel turnover issue highlighted in Section 3.

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Finally, as mentioned in the Task Disposition portion of Section 1, the civilian perspectives, networks, relationships, and equities must be addressed. It is recommended that future transfer of task functions partner much closer throughout the process with organizations and agencies representing the functions and interests inherent to the office of the SCR and UNAMA in Afghanistan. This would solve many issues felt during the entire course of the NATTF mission; not having visibility on IC requirements, capabilities, intents, or capacities with respect to possible tasks GIRoA might seek continued IC assistance on once transferred out of the military's mission crippled NATTF's situational awareness. They will also be instrumental in building the Communities of Interest for further task negotiations and transfer implementation. That ended up being a bridge too far for NATTF once the commander's intent changed, but if future campaign plans maintain it as their mission to responsibly transfer and handover military functions to appropriate civilian agencies or host nation governments (as per US and NATO planning doctrine), this will be absolutely necessary. Civilian equities and relationships should be built into future Transfer of Tasks manning structures (if the ToT function is to be a separate organization) to ensure important connections and communities of interest with the necessary scope can be built.

Process: How To Manage The Scope and Mechanisms

The next category of lessons learned for the NATTF in order to create a more efficient Transfer of Task function for future requirements can be binned into the heading of Process. Some of these issues were the natural byproduct of being a new organization in a standing HQ, being involved with a change-of-command and a new leadership who didn't have the same intent

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as the old, or trying to work with an uncooperative host nation government. These can be

mitigated. Other issues, however, were self-inflicted and can be successfully addressed.

External Factors

First are external factors. If the partnership with a host-nation is required, key-leader

engagements up and down the chain of command should reinforce this fact. The NATTF tried as

much as it could at the level it could (action officer level between the NATTF and the GIRoA

Office of the National Security Council and leadership up to the Deputy National Security

Advisor), but this engagement should have run up to and including the Commander and Deputy

Commander. If Transfer of Tasks were ever to be fully implemented as a command line of effort

in Phase III (since it conceivably affects all staff sections and subordinate units), KLE's should

have occurred across the KLE matrix; each HQ staff section Director and subordinate command

element had a GIRoA counterpart, to include the commander and Deputy Commander. The

necessity of, benefit from, and risk to ignoring Transfer of Tasks should have been socialized at

all levels with GIRoA. As it was, this process was kept within the NATTF to affect and, as a

result, this portion of the mission failed; GIRoA never fully bought into the process or

requirement and never turned into a successful, proactive, and cooperative partner in this

function. As a result, all 'Transfer to GIRoA' tasks were unfortunately dropped.

Next are issues with the process and framework that NATTF could have mitigated earlier

on and with more definition from a change in command. With a new commander's intent, firm

guidance was never incorporated nor affected the ongoing unit mission. Procedural and

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mechanistic changes were made on the fly but never were concrete to the point that confusion was alleviated, clear mandates were understood by the staff and 'customers,' and sufficient forward motion was maintained. Tasks, FRAGOs, if necessary, mission statements, and functional processes should be revisited, especially after a change of command, to see if they are still relevant, within the intent, or any other changes of scope must be implemented. This will only help to increase staff productivity because not only will they not be working in a vacuum but they can remain flexible enough to adjust fires as necessary to ensure they remain on the intended target.

Finally, the issue of trying to force the NATTF function into existence from the bottom-up, "sell" its relevance and utility to the command, and maintain its significance to the ongoing campaign plan could have been mitigated had the authority come from above, not within. Ostensibly, both US and NATO HHQ saw the usefulness and requirement of the NATTF and its Transfer of Task mission. Yet ISAF prepared and issued the FRAGO initiating and implementing it. This FRAGO or other similar authorizing document should have been initiated by HHQ; this would have cleared a lot of the NATTF time and energy of fighting for their existence and relevance within the command to focus core processes and objectives. Had the authority, intent, and validity of the NATTF been issued by SHAPE/CENTCOM through JFC-Brunssum/USFOR-A, and guidance along with it as far as how the NATTF mission nests within the scope and function of ISAF's Phase III FRAGO and larger Campaign Plan, lines of operation and communication and coordination amongst staff offices and subordinate commands might not have been so difficult, fractured, and ad hoc.

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Internal Factors

The next area of lessons learned is internal to the organization and are the more critical issues affecting productivity and mission accomplishment. By addressing these issues earlier on, or at all, the above external factors could have been more successfully mitigated as well. First is the problem associated with lack of procedural discipline; processes, terms, common understandings, and definitions were created to provide actionable mechanisms to the mission framework. This was accomplished early on by the first rotation of NATTF (IOPT) staff officers and was beneficial to follow-on rotations of NATO non-planner officers. It severely impacted operations, however, when follow-on rotations chose to disregard and change common understandings, and, as such, unit consensus regarding the standardization and permanency of definitions broke down. These were all created for necessary reasons, not out of simplicity, ease of use, or choice. When personnel turnover lost this common focus, that realization not only became apparent but efficiency was already compromised. Instead of second-guessing NATTF and IOPT predecessors (or worse-yet, ISAF campaign planners), revisiting common terms, understandings, and developed frameworks which had the negative effect of "changing horses mid-race" and affecting forward motion, the NATTF should have used that time and energy into validating the task list from the initial Campaign Plan scrubs; throughout the process there was never 100% surety that the entire working list of Specified Tasks was complete.

When follow-on rotations lost the standardization and discipline of common terms and understanding, by choice, and mid-level leadership did not continually reinforce the process, it introduced serious risk into the process. Because of ad-hoc changes, both individually amongst

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staff officers and as a group, the NATTF lost coherence, rigor, and surety both within and without the process and deliverables it was trying to create. When definitions as fundamental as "Transfer" or "Terminate" change for task disposition one or more times during the process (and worse yet when this occurs within the scope of one action officer's process by his/her own accord), all further task dispositions are now in doubt and no one will know when the error was introduced. This throws the entire disposition database and process into doubt. Frameworks need to be agreed upon, written down, constantly reinforced in the implementation process, and double-checked amongst the group.

The second area of self-initiated handicaps came out of becoming too wrapped up (becoming a slave) to the process. Obviously, the initial lesson learned above about following the framework must be balanced to the point of knowing when this begins to hinder forward motion. The NATTF never fully recognized the difference. Within the staff the desire to be able to report upwards to NATTF leadership on processes, frameworks, and statistics became a top concern and effort. This might have been due to a (mis)understanding of the importance of maintaining relevance to the new Commander. In any event, too much time was spent on internally-created tasks and reporting requirements with no real value added or larger benefit. Had this time been focused on core NATTF requirements of working closely with the Task Owners and building communities of interest, more headway might have been achieved in more important areas. Instead of trying to maintain relevance to the command by reporting procedural issues of the NATTF or its statistics and metrics, it should have been working with the SCR's office, the international community, and GIRoA on tasks transferring out of the scope of the next mission.

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This would have built relevance to the command and HHQ, not focusing on internally-generated tasks. The NATTF was a Task Force; it should have maintained a task force's flexibility and focus of effort.

This also proved an issue with the NATTF Working Groups. Designed to be an enduring, yet, as needed forum to work specific issues with ad-hoc groups and communities of interest, the NATTF became a slave to a schedule, agenda, and timeline it set up on its own with no outside requirement. Many man-hours were wasted in this effort that could have been better used elsewhere. The Working Group attendees nor the overall NATTF mission had no use or need for it.

Furthermore, as the NATTF was a new organization within a standing HQs, it was thought that the best way to 'plug-in' to the wider mission and also be a conduit for task disposition information (both ways), was to attend all 'relevant' staff working groups, OPTs, and normally scheduled meetings. This turned out to be counterproductive to NATTF efforts at meeting mission objectives. From the beginning the NATTF was a small office and this fact never really changed considering the scope and task it was chartered to accomplish. Many of the OPTs and meetings NATTF staff were (internally) directed to attend never had any direct correlation to their work at hand. It simply became a time and resource drain for no benefit. Again, it became a matter of focusing resources to the mission and NATTF lost productivity and focus by trying to wedge itself into the ongoing staff processes. As a temporary 'task force' and not a permanent HQ function, this was unnecessary. All of the situational awareness the NATTF needed could have been gained by a closer relationship with the J5 and all of the NATTF's task

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owners and task coordinators amongst the various staff units and subordinate elements. That was its core focus, not attending wider base OPTs or working groups.

Had the above issues been addressed, it would have helped mitigate the larger issues which began to take up so much of the NATTF's time: trying to maintain relevance amidst changing command priorities and intent. The NATTF needed to streamline its focus, keep true to the initial processes and mechanisms, be more flexible and responsive with the task coordinators, and be able to build communities of interest. By actually focusing on those larger Transfer of Task functions, its core mission, and building and socializing transfer requirements, the command might have seen a relevance the NATTF tried to artificially maintain through self-initiated tasks and reporting requirements. That should have been the focus all along but because of the sidetrack of effort and resources, the NATTF function was minimized by the command (the J5 most importantly) and the Commander himself.

Finally, it is recommended that future Transfer of Tasks requirements or missions not let themselves get so wedded to technology as a tool in task disposition. The database referenced earlier in the What Went Wrong portion of Section 4 became a both a crutch and a threat at the same time. It was a crutch because it lulled the NATTF into believing that it could manage and implement the disposition process via remote control, through the database, which they viewed (were forced into viewing?) as their primary action tool. What should have occurred and what should have been realized was that personal communication and interaction, coupled with a responsive Working Group forum, between the NATF AOs and Task Owners/Coordinators should have been the primary line of effort. By relying on the disposition database to the extent

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NATTF did, focus shifted from its primary mission to the supporting mission. The threat realized was that effort was diverted away from this main effort. Future ToT missions should not make that same mistake and use the time and energy to build, foster, and maintain relationships with relevant stakeholders as necessary. That will help accomplish the mission, not the inordinate amount of time spent on the database tool.

Doctrine: Guidelines for Future Transfer of Task Requirements

Recommend that future doctrine for Transfer of Tasks functions and missions cover at least, but not limited to:

1. How, why, and when to integrate ToT into US/coalition campaign planning processes;
2. The basic terminology and structure of ToT missions and objectives within a US/NATO planning framework;
3. Which, how, and when IC, host-nation, and HHQ relationships, networks, and lines of communication should be made and to what end.

As described earlier, the NATTF had a big mission set, with no initial guidance or framework, and no formal historical precedent. What was accomplished by a small group of temporary then rotational individuals from different staff and planning backgrounds is undeniably a success. Considering the changes in commander's intent, scope, and objectives, the NATTF and its leadership remained flexible and focused enough to complete its primary objectives and, even though unable to execute all of the mission statement, they postured both

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NATO and US higher headquarters to successfully build not only the next draft operational plan for the follow-on mission but also the framework for the international community to build upon for enduring and critical support to the sovereign host nation.

Without any left or right limits or fundamental understanding of how to forge ahead, however, challenges to IOPT then NATTF mission analysis, planning, and execution would definitely arise. None of these challenges were enough to pose a fatal risk to the mission yet further operational success could have been enjoyed had a basic transfer of task framework been available. The final recommendation therefore is to enable both US and NATO joint operational planning doctrine. Both US DoD Joint Publication-3: Operations and NATO Comprehensive Operational Planning Directive (COPD) as well as Allied Joint Publication-3: Joint Operations highlight the need for the incorporation of the transfer of tasks doctrine.

For example, NATO AJP-3(A) states that:

> "….Similar to a traditional 'relief-in-place', the Alliance forces will carefully plan, coordinate, and manage the transition to the relieving force, agency, or HN through collaborative coordination mechanisms that must be established. The ultimate goal is to transition all the functions performed by the JFC in a smooth and orderly fashion. Some of these functions may develop into a combination of alliance, local security and governmental activities as transition advances. Whether functions are transitioned to international organizations or local organizations, they require detailed military planning. Once all transitions are complete, the Alliance force can depart."

NATO COPD defines Phase 6 as Transition. This phase's purpose is to "review, develop and coordinate a tailored OPLAN for transition, including the handover of responsibility to the UN, other international organizations (e.g. EU) or indigenous actor in the crisis area, so that

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NATO forces can withdraw in a controlled manner so as to avoid this action being a destabilizing influence the region."

US JP-3 defines Phases 4 and 5 as "Stabilize the Environment" and "Enable Civil Authority," respectively. Stabilizing the environment focuses on stability operations, the reconstitution of infrastructure, and the restoration of services. This phase concludes with the transfer of regional authority to a legitimate civil entity. Enabling civil authority focuses on assisting and supporting civil authorities in their efforts to provide essential services to the populace to include required coordination activities by military forces with multinational, interagency, and non-governmental organizations. All these tasks veritably necessitate Transfer of Tasks doctrine.

More so than simply instructing campaign planners to incorporate these phases into CONOPS and OPLANS, doctrine would be instructive and informative in doing so. The NATTF had to create this 'on the fly' as they went along. Considerable time was initially spent in simply trying to come to grips of what was required, what the scope was, and the major framework and structure of how to make it actionable. This time could have been much better spent on planning and implementation for the specific mission and objectives. At the least, appendices in existing doctrine and publications should be warranted, if not standalone publications and doctrine in its own right. Transfer of tasks is central to both NATO and US joint operations after their respective 'Execution' or 'Dominate the Enemy' phases. Without a common set of guidelines and frameworks, future campaign plans risk becoming unsynchronized between these phases and the next.

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It is specifically during this time and space that cooperation with host nation governments, NGOs, aid and development agencies, and other international community actors takes primacy and within which the HQ staff must understand how and towards what they are campaigning towards. For ISAF and NATO, the NATTF filled that critical gap to tie the various HQ and subordinate command functions together as the mission was nearing an end. Without having doctrine to guide Transfer of Tasks objectives into CONOPS and OPLAN development from the beginning, campaign planners and headquarters will again be operating in the dark, unable to see and tie together disparate, wide, and possibly divergent objectives together at a critical time and space. With this doctrine, future Transfer of Tasks functions and headquarters can successfully meet all mission objectives which the NATTF was unable to fully meet and complete all the tasks and objectives it did in a more efficient manner.

<u>Conclusion</u>

As with any military operation, commanders and staffs face challenges, hurdles, and problems, external as well as internal to its function and process. Meeting command and mission objectives depends upon how well that unit and staff mitigates, adapts, and overcomes these issues. The NATTF mission as a part of the ISAF campaign plan has a mixed success story; it was able to achieve most of its core function of recommending tasks dispositions to the follow-on mission, the IC, and GIRoA, and helped prepare HHQ to be the lead agent in socializing critical risk areas to the wider international community. However, in not dealing with larger issues of changing intent and mandates, it was able to slough off those parts of its mission statement that no longer fit within its mandate. However, by addressing these areas through the

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committed and direct focus of its efforts, larger successes *could* have been enjoyed; building

enduring communities of interest amongst the IC and GIRoA, successfully transferring both

GIRoA and IC tasks which were never accomplished, and ensuring the host nation was

concretely tied to the results of the task disposition process so they would successfully be able to

negotiate residual ISAF functions to the IC within the scope of its requirements. These were

never achieved.

Basic interaction was held within some of the IC embassy community but this should

have been a major focus of effort as Part II of NATTF's mission after the follow-on NATO

mission transfers were accomplished. Due to political and command inhibitions this was never

fully engaged. Had NATTF spent more time on defining these processes and procedures instead

of internally-generated tasks for no gain, the above successes could have been more complete

and the more holistic transfer of tasks could have been accomplished.

Transfers of Tasks requirements in a campaign plan are critical. Planning for the transfer

of sovereignty to a Host Nation, on continued and relevant international engagement towards

future stability efforts and operations, and handovers of military missions to appropriate civil

agencies are not only good practices, they are necessary in military operations. This process is

important enough that it should be translated, systematized, and further developed into both US

Joint and NATO doctrine. If military planners and campaign plans do not prepare for the peace

to follow, they are not accomplishing policy objectives; the ultimate goal of strategy.

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Again, these and all issues highlighted within this AAR were surmountable challenges that can be accounted for in future scenarios. By further refining the Transfer of Tasks process, intent, and function, these can add to a doctrinal appreciation of the scope of this mission. With doctrine comes common understanding; a foundation to fine tune to future requirements. Having this defined for future campaign planners will only assist complete mission success out of Phases IV and V of military operations.

What this After Action Review intended to show was the inherent logic of the transfer of tasks process and why it was necessary. It also captured best practices to replicate in future endeavors. Finally it laid bare failures of process or understanding that limited full productivity and mission accomplishment. There is no reason to believe that these problems cannot be learned from and fixed for future operations. Transfer of Tasks is the only way to successfully, systemically, and responsibly bridge Phase 3 to Phases 4 and 5 (US) and Phase 5 to 6 (NATO) of future military campaign plans. As such this AAR should be studied and applied to further mission analysis and planning scenarios.

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