

Afghan air force aircrew and NATO Air Training Command–Afghanistan air advisors stand together after first-ever all-Afghan C-130 flight, Kabul, Afghanistan, June 16, 2014 (U.S. Air Force/Vernon Young, Jr.)



Advising the Afghan Air Force

By Aaron Tucker and Aimal Pacha Sayedi

Successful advising requires skill in a broad range of competencies that includes political-military relations, operations, and acquisitions. Advising the Afghan air force’s airlift mission seeks to strengthen the legitimacy of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan as part of the counterinsurgency strategy of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). Training at the U.S. Air Force’s Air Advisor Academy supports the initial qualification of students as air advisors, while additional lessons

are gleaned from studying the Soviet experience in Afghanistan in the 1980s. Finally, developing effective advising postures can be guided by a conceptual model that incorporates ideas outlined in Colonel John Boyd’s essay “Destruction and Creation”¹ and by systems engineering techniques. This article breaks down the essential components of a successful air advising posture, applies it to the mission in Afghanistan, and concludes with a summary of key points and suggested areas for improvement.

Airlift as a Counterinsurgency Tactic

The Hindu Kush mountain range extends from central Afghanistan, with peaks more than 16,000 feet high, through the Badakhshan region in the northwest of the country, where mountain peaks reach 24,000 feet. Throughout history, this rugged terrain has isolated Afghanistan’s numerous tribes, causing local government and family-based power structures to prevail. Moreover, attempts by foreign powers to install a strong central government have been strenuously resisted. Ancient invaders such as Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan simply bypassed terrain that was difficult to conquer, leaving ungoverned areas referred to as *yagistan*, that is, lawless places. Deliv-

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ering government services to isolated areas that would otherwise harbor insurgents enforces governmental legitimacy and is a critical part of the Afghan counterinsurgency strategy. An air mobility capability increases Afghan capacity to govern and administer through presence and persistence.

Rotary-wing airlift is flexible and its capability to reach remote landing zones is critical to the counterinsurgency mission in Afghanistan. It is expensive to operate and maintain, however. Developing a less expensive, fixed-wing airlift capability to replace rotary-wing assets on runway-to-runway routes would reduce wear and tear on the rotary-wing fleet's limited life span. In addition to passenger and cargo transportation, fixed-wing airlift can also provide casualty evacuation (CASEVAC) and nontraditional intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (NTISR) capabilities in support of Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). Due to the cultural importance of family and tribal bonds, dependable CASEVAC is critical to the morale and fighting spirit of ANSF soldiers fighting for their country far from their families and home villages.²

The Air Advisor in Afghanistan

The mission of the air advisor is to assess, advise, assist, train, and equip Afghan aviation forces to achieve counterinsurgency objectives.³ Generally considered experts in their career fields, the advisors bring a wealth of operational experience and seasoned judgment to the dynamic task of mentoring Afghan airmen in a fluid and often challenging combat environment that is typically unfamiliar to the advisor. For example, the 538th Air Expeditionary Advisory Squadron (538 AEAS) advised the 373rd Fixed Wing Squadron (373 FWS) in the Afghan air force Kabul air wing. Although each advisor was an expert airlift operator, the mission of the 538 AEAS was not to execute an airlift mission, but to advise Afghan counterparts in establishing a sustainable method for effective and efficient movement of passengers and cargo.

Successful application of advising tactics, techniques, and procedures (TTPs) could transform current Afghan capabilities to a long-term, sustainable solution. North Atlantic Treaty Organization Air Training Command–Afghanistan (NATC-A) advisors are authorized to assist the Afghan air force in the direct execution of their mission in support of the ISAF Train, Advise, Assist (TAA) mission under Operation *Resolute Support*. Assessments are communicated through the advisors' leadership to indicate current trends and signs of definitive success. Personnel at each level of leadership are responsible for advising their counterparts, so regular assessments help maintain coherence throughout the organization. Afghan personnel should be the visible and actual force behind the mission because they are more effective among the population and lend legitimacy to the government during a counterinsurgency. Advisor assistance is required when Afghans have not yet developed the required skill set or gained the necessary experience for safe, effective execution. The range of options along the advise-assist spectrum offers advisors a great deal of flexibility in responding to the tactical situation. Coordinated postures allow several lines of effort to work together to develop combat capability and build Afghan forces to a sustainable capability. And as is often the case in irregular warfare, "success in one area may coexist with failure in another and uncertainty in most."⁴

Both combat aviation advisors and air advisors play a significant role in irregular warfare. Combat aviation advisors graduate from a 1-year special operations course and receive extensive training focused on independent, small-team operations in a specific region and cultural environment. A distinct 5-week air advisor course instructs general purpose forces in three areas: core advising skills; specialized language, culture, and regional studies; and advanced force-protection skills. It also provides a bridge between the extensive combat aviation advisor course and the "slap dash" type of training provided to Vietnam-era advisors.⁵ These courses are critical to

developing cross-cultural empathy and the ability to relate to Afghan counterparts. In contrast, most Soviet advisors during the 1980s had little specialized training or advisory experience.⁶ A 1-week course covered the political, military, and economic situation while instructors emphasized the importance of the Soviet internationalist mission and tried to impart a sense of optimism.⁷ During the course, Soviet advisors might also pick up additional reading on Afghan history or politics on their own initiative.

Conceptual Models for Advising Postures

Advisors spend a great deal of energy developing postures that guide their counterpart relationships toward achieving a sustainable solution. One conceptual model of use in this context is presented in John Boyd's essay "Destruction and Creation." The essay outlines a thought process of the destruction of a concept down to its components through analysis, followed by the construction of a conceptual model through synthesis.⁸ Boyd also uses the mathematical concept of differentiation to illustrate how to understand a concept or response based on the way it changes relative to a given variable. The advisor can then apply inductive logic to construct a conceptual model. Integration of the differentiated parts allows the creation of an internally consistent and effective advising posture.

Similarly, Afghan operational networks such as CASEVAC or air transportation can be analyzed as systems of interconnected systems. Systems engineering techniques are useful for understanding complex mission sets and developing lean solutions that meet validated operational requirements. For example, the functional decomposition technique is similar to Boyd's concept of destruction and is informed by the Joint Operation Planning Process applied at the tactical level.⁹ In this process, mission stakeholders are first surveyed to validate a complete set of requirements. Next, a complex task is decomposed from the system level into progressively simpler tasks until an individual work unit is defined.



U.S. Army Train, Advise, Assist Command–Air personal security detail shift lead provides security while MD-530 Cayuse Warrior takes off with all-Afghan crew for combat mission, September 27, 2015 (U.S. Air Force/Sandra Welch)

Lean management ensures that only tasks that can be directly traced to a validated requirement receive resources for completion. Additionally, the interfaces between tasks are defined and developed to support operation at system and system-of-systems levels. Applied to the advisor mission, host nation economic, cultural, and operational sustainability is the standard by which any materiel or procedural solution should be judged.

Developing Advising Postures

Advisors leverage technical expertise in the development and application of military power with knowledge of Afghan culture and capabilities to construct an advising posture. This posture in turn guides coordinated and coherent advice and assistance. It is both flexible enough to respond to the tactical situation and structured enough to direct lines of effort toward an identified endstate. Through the processes of definition,

destruction, and differentiation, a properly defined mission can be decomposed into relevant tasks and then individualized for cultural and task suitability. Synthesizing an advising posture starts with an assessment of the current Afghan capability and then establishes a balance between advising and assisting to reinforce a desired mode of operation. A set of advising postures establishes the ability of an advising team to deliver coherent advice across a mission set that involves individual interactions with Afghan counterparts. This allows for efficient and effective progress toward a sustainable solution while at the same time advancing the coalition's counterinsurgency mission. The following sections describe this process step by step.

Define the Mission. Good advising starts with a well-defined mission and an accurate assessment based on mutually beneficial security objectives. A properly

defined mission is based on validated Afghan requirements and coordinated throughout Afghan and coalition leadership. Afghans need to have direct input when devising the requirements, and their coalition advisors must listen carefully to understand the Afghan vision that drives their mission statement. Metrics are derived from specific tasks that can be tracked and assessed on a regular basis. Advisors continually assess the effectiveness of their efforts, Afghan capabilities, and the assumptions in their advising posture. The assessment starts long before a materiel solution is identified and continues after equipment is fielded.

Destruct U.S. Methods/Paradigms.

Using their professional expertise in employing airpower, advisors analyze coalition TTPs and deduce their applicability to the Afghan environment. The appropriate model of Afghan airpower, however, must be developed with intellectual humility and with consideration

for Afghan strengths, capabilities, and requirements. It should also be “less intrusive and more insightful; less in control and more in support.”¹⁰ While there is institutional inertia for a technological solution,¹¹ it is important for advisors to weigh in on the sustainability of that technology in light of cultural, educational, and economic considerations. Foreign military sale decisions often are made at the diplomatic and strategic levels, but make little tactical sense.¹²

Differentiate Regarding Afghan Mission/Culture. Advisors work with their Afghan counterparts to differentiate between processes that are sustainable in the Afghan environment and those that are not. Coalition processes are not necessarily applicable to the Afghan air force, and developing sustainable solutions is not possible without understanding the influence of culture, religion, politics, and social considerations as an operational necessity.¹³ With a heavy reliance on donor countries that have a finite commitment timeline and budget, Afghan operations must conserve resources and vigorously seek efficiencies in support functions while preserving operational flexibility. Afghan officers require sound advice on how to provide airpower capabilities that are both effective and efficient, but their insights into sustainable practices are critical to finding a sustainable path to best serve the Afghan people. The sustainable process should be a mix of technology, training, and support functions that enables affordable, sustainable, and capable airpower. Soviet advisors only knew how to replicate their experience in the Soviet Union and could not differentiate their native ideological approach into a successful Afghan solution.¹⁴

Integrate Through Cultural Considerations. Successful advising postures integrate Afghan and coalition cultural considerations. Study of Afghan history and culture before assuming advising duties enables understanding the context of Afghan airmen and their mission. Advisors need to immerse themselves in their roles by attending meetings, flying on missions, and forming strong professional relationships with their Afghan colleagues. Until 2008,

coalition advisors to the Afghan air force served 6-month tours, which were not long enough to enable them to become knowledgeable about their advising mission and to establish a rapport with their counterparts. Patience and subtlety are required by both advisors and counterparts to understand each other’s perspectives, requirements, and strengths. When advising airlift operations, understanding transportation priorities helps advisors work with the Afghans to develop a sustainable solution. For example, the movement of human remains to the place of burial without unreasonable delay is the top airlift priority due to religious considerations. In addition, ANSF leave policies are designed to accommodate close ties with family and home villages. As a result, there is a large demand for troop transport from remote bases back to the population centers around Kabul and Jalalabad.

Construct an Advising Posture. Constructing advising postures requires time and patience in order to listen and observe. Reconciling what is said with what actually happens is crucial to developing practicable postures. Furthermore, effective advising postures balance Afghan success with the freedom to fail. Earned success is excellent positive reinforcement of training, and Afghans take great pride in knowing their efforts have directly resulted in mission success. Conversely, failure is an important training tool, and the advising posture should manage risks and mitigate the consequences of failure while promoting the ability of Afghans to live with their own decisions. An advising posture with too much emphasis on assistance will result in overdependence. Soviet advisors tended to complete a task themselves rather than training their counterparts. As a result, Afghans had largely stopped working, preferring to “lay all the burden and responsibility for practical work on the shoulders of the advisors.”¹⁵

Ensure Balance. Advisors strive for a balance between the advise and assist functions, which is continually shifting, depending on the task and the maturity of the Afghan process. When balanced with force protection considerations,

working and flying alongside Afghan partners are powerful mechanisms to establish rapport, build relationships, and demonstrate a mission skill set. Thus, air advisors in Kabul work outside coalition-secured compounds on a daily basis to properly engage with their Afghan counterparts.

After a period of seasoning, Afghan-demonstrated proficiency allows advisors to shift from assistance to advising while controlling the pace of the move toward an independent Afghan capability through the enforcement of performance standards. Afghans should progress with diminishing mentor support without meddling merely to promote efficiencies. As T.E. Lawrence cautioned, it is “better that they do it tolerably than that you do it perfectly.”¹⁶ When Soviet advisors were held accountable for Afghan forces’ performance, they tended to take control rather than advise Afghan forces. This imbalance slowed the development of Afghan capabilities.

The force protection/personal engagement balance is carefully considered during the synthesis of any advising posture, but the risk of an insider or insurgent attack is never completely mitigated. Force protection and combat skills training were increased after nine NATC-A advisors were killed on April 27, 2011. The result was a decision to harden the NATC-A staff offices and levy “guardian angel”¹⁷ requirements on advisors. Under these requirements, advisor engagement with Afghan counterparts suffered significantly and resulted in policies and initiatives that were removed from Afghan realities. This type of fortress mentality is anathema to the advising spirit and mission, and it is time to return to embedded advising for staff advisors. Tactical-level advisors, however, remained embedded with the Afghans and were able to adjust their advising posture based on threat indicators while maintaining open relationships that produced significant results. In the 1980s, Soviet advisory teams were embedded with the Afghan forces and, although not authorized to do so, assisted with combat operations. They faced a threat of mujahideen infiltration in the ranks of



U.S. Air Force Train, Advise, Assist Command—Air advisor pilot and guardian angel Airman and Afghan air force pilot after training flight on Cessna C-208, September 21, 2015 (U.S. Air Force/Sandra Welch)

Afghan troops that was similar to the current insider threat of insurgent attacks on Afghan soldiers and their advisors.¹⁸

Fixed-Wing Airlift Advising

Airlift in Afghanistan supports the counterinsurgency mission by extending official services to the Afghan population, thereby increasing the legitimacy of the government. Airlift also provides a means to transport critical supplies across a mountainous country with limited roads. Finally, soldiers travel home frequently to maintain the social fabric of family and tribe, and airlift reduces soldiers' time away from their posts. These missions motivate airlift advisors and Afghan airmen to establish a sustainable airlift capability.

C-208 Aircraft. The Afghan air force fleet of 26 C-208B Grand Caravan aircraft is configured with a modern Garmin G1000 avionics suite and up to 10 removable seats (in addition to the pilot and copilot) to allow multiple

cabin configurations for passenger or floor-loaded cargo/patient transport. However, a major C-208 deficiency is an unpressurized cabin and low service ceiling. Unable to climb above the mountainous terrain, the aircraft's en route operations through mountain passes and valleys are required to be daytime visual maneuvers even if airport approaches are under instrument flight rules.

Establishing a fixed-wing CASEVAC capability is a military and economic imperative. The Afghan system mirrors the coalition medical evacuation process with rotary-wing lift from the point of injury to base hospitals. However, since dedicated assets are expensive to operate, Afghan Mi-17 helicopters pick up soldiers close to the point of injury and take them to a forward field station or regional hospital. Wounded soldiers are next flown to the National Military Hospital in Kabul using fixed-wing CASEVAC, as one C-208 can operate at 3 percent of the cost of generating the flights of two

Mi-17s. Additionally, soldiers depend on fixed-wing CASEVAC to return home for care and recovery.

To establish a fixed-wing CASEVAC capability, advisors assist the Afghan air force in assessing airfields, training flight medics, and mentoring C-208 capabilities. Airfields without a coalition presence are assessed for suitability by researching airfield characteristics such as runway length, width, surface material and condition, as well as taxi obstructions, security, and fuel availability. C-208 pilots work directly with Afghan flight medics from the Kabul air wing hospital, attending to litter and ambulatory patients who require assistance during loading or flight. Advisors coordinate with ANSF medics to conduct training at their home airfield. During these training sessions, medics learn to configure the passenger cabin to accommodate litter patients, as well as to load and properly secure litters. Medics and airlift planners also become familiar with C-208 CASEVAC capabilities and



Salang Pass meanders through Hindu Kush Mountains and has been called one of most dangerous roads in world (U.S. Army/Michael K. Selvage)

operations, so they can request C-208 support instead of the more expensive Mi-17 airlift. Finally, advisors educate higher echelon leadership at *shuras* (consultations) such as the Afghan National Army 203rd Corps *Shura* or National CASEVAC *Shura* in December 2013.

Nontraditional intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance is another important capability that the C-208 can provide. U.S. advisors and their Afghan counterparts work together to differentiate coalition methodologies and establish skills that make sense for the Afghan mission, including TTPs, planning, analysis, and exploitation. Confidence missions and exercises are then used to validate the training.¹⁹ Finally, the capability is proved through success in support of real-world requirements.

Rather than requiring dedicated assets, the C-208 is a suitable NTISR platform due to its low operating cost, its prevalence in the Afghan air force, and its low visual and aural signatures. For conducting NTISR, intelligence analysts receive a mission tasking and prepare a simple brief with global positioning system coordinates and descriptions of the targets. Pilots plan approach routing to mitigate threats and exploit advantageous sun angles. No modifications to the aircraft are typically required, although particular attention is paid to cleaning

the windows thoroughly. Prior to the start of such a mission, advisors conduct extensive flight and ground training for the Afghan intelligence analysts. Some training flights might emphasize practice with camera equipment and coordination with pilots on selecting good routes and aspect angles for photographing specific ground targets. Pilots practice maneuvers to orient the airplane for good photography from the windows, establish ground tracks, and mitigate exposure to ground threats. After the mission is completed, intelligence analysts apply imagery analysis techniques to fix geospatial points, identify target features, and measure characteristic data. Such a continuum of flight and ground advising ensures that NTISR provides sound intelligence to the Afghan operational forces.²⁰

As coalition basing contracts to Kabul, an Afghan airfield assessment capability is critical to survey airfields to support the dynamic airlift needs of counterinsurgency and humanitarian relief operations. For instance, one of the first airfields assessed was Feyzabad in Badakhshan Province. Based on this assessment, the Afghan air force was ready to establish an air operations detachment there in late 2013. In May 2014, C-208 and C-130 crews executed airlift and NTISR missions in support of humanitarian relief operations after a mudslide

in the province. The aerial photographs of the disaster area were quickly analyzed and provided to ground commanders and government officials to understand the magnitude of the mudslide and manage the risk of subsequent slides.

C-130 Aircraft. In January 2013, Ashton Carter, then–Deputy Secretary of Defense, directed the U.S. Air Force to provide four C-130H aircraft and the requisite training to the Afghan air force by the end of September 2013.²¹ An arrival ceremony on October 9, 2013, celebrated the delivery of the first two aircraft. Expectations for the new capabilities they would provide were high as advisors worked to establish an advising posture and define the sustainable solution while exercising the aircraft capabilities, command and control, and ground support infrastructure. Advisor creativity and initiative enabled the first all-Afghan C-130 mission in June 2014.

The Afghan medium-airlift requirement consists of passenger, cargo, casualty, and human remains movement between main bases. The large majority of missions carry up to 70 passengers and a baggage pallet loaded on the cargo ramp position. Occasionally, cargo missions are also tasked, but the planning timelines for air transportation missions are centrally controlled by the Ministry of Defense. Afghanistan has a robust ground transportation mode that moves virtually all required supplies for the ANSF. Airlift transports passengers and sensitive cargo that must move quickly or that is an attractive target for insurgent attack and theft (for example, ammunition, weapons, or leadership).

The C-130 is the largest and fastest aircraft in the Afghan inventory. It is a source of national pride, an indicator of governmental legitimacy, and, as a direct threat to the insurgents' narrative, a high-value target. As such, it normally flies to airfields where coalition security is available to provide external security to the aircraft and crew. To deliver sustainable cargo and passenger capabilities, a loadmaster posture that would work for both coalition-assisted and all-Afghan crews was developed. Cargo and passenger loads that did not meet standards

for safe transport were identified by the loadmaster and assessed as an advising opportunity, with notification made to the aircraft commander and the aerial port advisor. The aircraft commander determined the time available to assess, advise, train, and assist aircrew and aerial port personnel. If time was not sufficient to correct the problem, the cargo or passengers were refused. Discrepancies were distributed to the appropriate advising teams to facilitate coordinated advising postures.

While pilots and a flight engineer were in U.S. training programs in 2013, Afghan loadmaster students were not scheduled to complete training until 2015. Therefore, to accelerate an initial all-Afghan C-130 capability, advisor initiative created a limited loadmaster course. Advisors noted that the vast majority of Afghan C-130 missions carried passengers, patients, or human remains, with only a baggage pallet loaded on the cargo ramp. Advisors from the 538 AEAS were familiar with U.S. Air Force training paradigms, as most had experience as schoolhouse instructors. U.S. Air Force loadmaster training is conducted using a syllabus that is structured around lesson plans and that employs classroom learning, static load trainers, and flight instruction. (Static load trainers are non-flying aircraft that allow for continuous training opportunities without the expense of using an aircraft maintained for flying operations or the risk of damage resulting in expensive repairs and impact on the flying mission.) This progression of instruction builds knowledge and skills for demonstration and practice with increasing degrees of risk and expense. The highest risk of injury and damage occurs during cargo load training, particularly that involving winching operations or driving vehicles on board.

Advisors understood the risk of aircraft damage during loadmaster training and sought to mitigate the risk by differentiating U.S. Air Force training regarding the Afghan mission. First, former C-27 instructor loadmasters assigned to the 373 FWS in Kabul were not slated for C-130 training in the United States because of English language deficiencies.

While their technical abilities had been developed in a similar airlift aircraft, language barriers remained. Second, damage to any of the small fleet of Afghan C-130s would have a lasting, strategic impact on its medium-airlift operations due to limited heavy repair capability. Finally, passenger missions with no cargo except a baggage pallet constituted 80 percent of the missions.

Integrating the resulting Afghan mission requirements with advisor resources and capabilities allowed the synthesis of a practicable advising posture. Additional English instructors were available as a result of a realignment of a Raytheon contract (see below) to develop language lessons tailored to the loadmaster training requirements. English instruction was integrated with C-130 aircrew procedures and systems training to support a loadmaster qualification course. The risk of aircraft damage was mitigated by reserving training in winching operations or vehicle loading for the formal training course at Little Rock Air Force Base, Arkansas. Local loadmaster training focused on cargo compartment configuration for passengers, litter patients, or human remains. Only a baggage pallet was loaded on the aft pallet position on the cargo ramp using a forklift.

The first C-130 mission with an all-Afghan crew represented the convergence of 9 months of assessing, training, advising, and assisting. The main risk was crew inexperience, and advisors and Afghan aircrew worked together to mitigate that risk. The mission was limited to passengers, patients, and human remains, with a baggage pallet loaded on the main ramp. A single stop at a familiar coalition-controlled field eased crew coordination and security concerns, and enabled a straightforward maintenance recovery plan. High-ranking government officials and international media were invited to welcome the crew at the end of the mission, but no interviews were granted during preflight and departure to allow the crew to concentrate on executing a safe airlift mission. A generous timeline allowed for response to unforeseen delays without imposing stress on the aircrew. As a result of these measures,

a successful milestone in the medium airlift capability of the Afghan air force was achieved on June 16, 2014.

Aviation English Language Training. Advisors were developing a passenger-only C-130 loadmaster syllabus in December 2013 when Raytheon English language instructors announced that they had unfilled capacity for aviation English training. Because the four passenger-only loadmaster candidates were not proficient in English, they had not been identified for the loadmaster training pipeline in the United States. The fixed-wing advisors thus joined their technical knowledge and expertise with the Raytheon instructors' language instruction and curriculum development skills to train loadmasters in Kabul. In addition, Raytheon had remaining capacity to instruct more students. Thus a 10-week Aviation English Training (AET) course was developed in January 2014 to prepare 8 aircrew and 17 maintenance students for success at the Defense Language Institute (DLI) and follow-on technical training conducted in English. Four follow-on AET courses similarly identified requirements from NATC-A stakeholders, resulting in a functional English course for 108 students from the Kabul air wing and DLI preparation courses for A-29 pilots and maintainers, MD-530 helicopter pilots, students identified for pilot training in the United Arab Emirates, and Kabul air wing maintainers identified for supervisory positions requiring English proficiency.

To develop the AET advising posture, regular meetings with stakeholders defined the mission through an open discussion of requirements. AET was designed to instruct students in technical English to accelerate follow-on technical training. An analysis of the U.S. Air Force process revealed a series of training events for each student: several months at DLI until the student achieved functional fluency, followed by basic technical training (for example, maintenance, aircrew), and then specialized technical training (for example, fuels, hydraulics, flight engineer, loadmaster). Differentiating this process regarding Afghan considerations, advisors determined that it would be valuable

to shorten the time that Afghans are deployed for overseas training and that, under an existing contract, Raytheon had the expertise to develop and deliver technical English training in Afghanistan. Additionally, through a stakeholders' meeting, C-130 maintenance and Pohantoon-c-Hawayee (Air University) advisors identified Afghans who could benefit from a DLI preparation course. At this meeting, 538 AEAS advisors obtained NATC-A/J7 approval to construct an AET capability. The integrated solution included Raytheon English instructors, advisors from the 538 AEAS to oversee operations and provide aircrew subject matter expertise, NATC-A/J7 to administer the Raytheon contract and advise the Afghan air force/G7 (Training Office), and the 440 AEAS to provide maintenance subject matter expertise. These elements worked together to synthesize a program that delivered valuable training in Kabul that was tailored to the needs of the Afghans. The training allowed the Afghans to reduce the length of their absence from the mission of the Afghan air force, remain near their family support structure, and complete Ministry of Defense processing required for travel. This construct of Aviation English Training continues to serve as a valuable advising posture.

Conclusion

Advising the Afghan air force is an important part of the counterinsurgency mission. The airlift capability allows the Afghan government to deliver services across a country characterized by rugged terrain and populated by people who cannot be served by any means as effectively as by airlift. The air advisor assesses, advises, assists, trains, and equips his Afghan counterparts through a series of advising postures. The construction of a good advising posture leverages the advisor's mission expertise by first analyzing coalition tactics, techniques, and procedures, and then selecting those that are appropriate for an Afghan sustainable solution. These components are integrated with cultural considerations to synthesize a coordinated and consistent advising

posture by which advisors can develop and deliver airlift capabilities to the Afghan air force.

A critical requirement that enables advisors to adapt coalition techniques to the Afghan airlift mission is an intimate knowledge of what works in Afghanistan. To achieve this level of knowledge, advisors must immerse themselves in their missions, develop personal relationships with their counterparts, and seek to learn and understand—and then create—advising postures that are imposed on Afghans in a coalition-centric environment.

It is time to return to the embedded advisory posture and invert the ratio of time spent between coalition and Afghan workspaces. Afghans have had mentors for a generation, and their knowledge and vision must be integral to the development of advising postures, not as an afterthought.

Finally, advisors must be receptive to creative opportunities in the execution of their missions. The variety of missions developed for the C-208 and the speed with which an all-Afghan C-130 capability was delivered depended on advisor initiative and creativity combined with Afghan vision, hard work, and sacrifice. When advisors and their counterparts work together toward a well-defined and commonly accepted vision of a sustainable solution, the future of the Afghan air force is bright indeed. JFQ

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Notes

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