

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENSE BLOGGERS ROUNDTABLE WITH BRIGADIER GENERAL GARY PATTON,  
DEPUTY COMMANDER-ARMY, NATO TRAINING MISSION-AFGHANISTAN/COMBINED SECURITY  
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LIEUTENANT JENNIFER CRAGG (Office of the Secretary of Defense for  
Public Affairs): So I'd like to welcome you all to the Department of Defense's  
Bloggers Roundtable for Friday, July 2nd, 2010. My name is Lieutenant Jennifer  
Cragg, with the Office of the Secretary of Defense for Public Affairs, and I'll  
be moderating the call today.

A note to the bloggers on the line, please remember to clearly state  
your name and organization you're with prior to asking your questions. And  
also, after you've asked your question and the general is speaking, please make  
sure you place your phone on mute so we can hear him.

Today our guest is Brigadier General Gary Patton. He's the deputy  
commander-Army, NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan/Combined Security Transition  
Command. The general will be providing our update on the status of the growing  
Afghanistan National Army.

So without further ado, I'm going to turn it over to the general and he  
can start with the opening statement.

Sir, the floor is yours.

GEN. PATTON: Thank you, Jennifer. This is General Gary Patton.

There is a couple people, it sounds like they don't have their phones  
on mute and I'm hearing a lot of background noise. Maybe it's just me in  
Afghanistan, but -- so I'll just pause for a couple seconds. If you could put  
your phones on mute, there's some background conversations that are really  
distorting things.

Okay, I'll get started. Just a couple of things I'll throw out there that I'll be willing and able and encouraging you to ask me questions about, and for our discussion.

First is just on our NATO training mission here for NTMA- Afghanistan, what we do is generate and sustain and develop leaders for the Afghan National Army. And just as a way to demonstrate some of the growth that has occurred, during the time that the NTMA stood up --

Since the time NTMA stood up in November 2009, to give you an idea of the amount of forces that have been generated -- and by that I mean created from scratch, brand-new units, and then added to the Afghan National Army have been one corps headquarters, five brigade headquarters, 13 infantry battalions, three support battalions for logistics, two commando battalions, 42 infantry companies and four special forces teams. In addition, there's been some MP companies and some various other units, but those are the big units.

That's what we've used to round out the Afghan National Army since November '09. We have much more growth to go, but those units are the ones that have been built from scratch since November.

And now, just in the past month, since we're right at the end of the last month of June and beginning the month of July, just a quick count on growth overall, between the month of May to June, with the Afghan solar month ending on June 20th, we saw a growth in the Afghan army of 4,191. And that puts them at a total end strength of 129,885.

That number is significant because it's more than 6,000 above the milestone that we wanted to be at for this particular time. And many of you know that our growth milestone for the end of October is 134,000; so we're within about 4,000 of meeting the end-of-October milestone, which means we're ahead of schedule in terms of growing the Afghan army. We are about to enter the historic slowdown, the summertime where history tells us, in the Afghan army the recruiting goes down, attrition rises, primarily because it's an agrarian, agricultural society. Harvest time is during this time; also Ramadan. And so we think we're about to enter the historic downturn, but we are right now about 6,000-plus above our growth objectives for this month. So that's a good thing.

That growth, although we're on track, does mask some shortages that we see in both the noncommissioned officers and the officers in the Afghan National Army. And I'd be -- would love to talk about and take questions on what those deficits are and what we are doing to overcome those deficits so that we eliminate them over the next 16 to 18 months.

And then lastly, just another opening point here that I'd be willing to talk to people about. We've made some headway, significant headway this past

week in terms of literacy and commitments from our Afghan counterparts in adding literacy to various aspects of the army training.

And you might say well, what are we doing with literacy in military training? Well, it's paramount that we have literacy in the training because a lot of our soldiers advance to engineer school, specialty schools, supply specialty schools, artillery specialty schools and the like, and it requires some amount of literacy.

Fourteen percent -- only 14 percent of our recruits are literate, and 86 percent are not. And so therefore having a literacy program embedded within our army basic training and NCO training is really critical in developing soldiers and leaders that can advance through specialty training and make a part of the professionalization of the Afghan army.

So those are some of the things that are getting a little bit of a roll-up since November, and growth over the past 30 days and some things that we've done here just in the past week to get the literacy moving in a much more accelerated manner in the future, as we professionalize the force.

And I'd be glad to take your questions on that or anything else.

Over to you, Jen.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you so much, sir. And I'll bet it was Spencer that called in. Is that you, Spencer? Or Beth? Someone called in.

Q That was me. This is Beth. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Oh, great, Beth. I'm so glad that you got in. I'll make sure I send you the transcript.

Let's go ahead and get started with questions. Richard, you're next. Please go ahead. Q Good evening, General. My question is going to be about the backbone of any army, the noncommissioned officers. What are you doing for development and retention of NCOs in the Afghan army?

GEN. PATTON: Well, Richard, you're right. The backbone of any army, and the Afghan army is no exception. What we currently have, though, is a deficit. Of our current requirements, based on the forces we have fielded, we have a deficit of about 12,000 noncommissioned officers in the Afghan army. And that's significant.

And as I've said before in some of the Blogger Roundtables, you can grow the army; you can make a private and bring them through basic training and you can actually make infantry units at a much more accelerated pace than you can make leaders. Leaders takes time, takes experience.

Here's a couple of the things that we're doing to make up the deficit that we currently have. We've instituted a program called the team leaders course. A team leader course takes the 150 best soldiers from every basic training class. Of 1,400, it takes the top 150 and then pushes them directly from basic training into a team leaders course which lasts for four weeks and includes literacy within the four weeks.

And at the end of the four weeks they graduate essentially as a corporal or an E-5 comparable in our army, so they'll go out and lead a small group of Afghan soldiers in units. And that's one of the things we're doing.

And then the second course that we've instituted -- and I'll give you some total numbers here in a minute -- but the other course we're instituting is called the 1-U course. One-U; phonetically, uniform.

And the 1-U course takes a literate man -- he has to pass a literacy test at about the third-grade level. Takes a literate Afghan man, puts them through 12 weeks of leadership basic training and some basic leader training -- kind of like a officer candidate school, OCS program, only for NCOs -- and comes out the other end after 12 weeks as a staff sergeant, or at the E-6 level.

And so what we're doing right now, just this month we have 3,300 NCOs enrolled in one of these two courses, either the team leader course or the 1-U course. And so at the end of that training, either the four-week version or the 12-week course, we'll see at least -- four weeks from now we'll see about 3,300 new NCOs. And then we'll repeat that over and over again. And so by doing that, combined with battlefield promotions that the Afghan personnel leaders are spending more, putting more emphasis on, the combination of those three factors -- the two courses I mentioned, a greater emphasis on battlefield promotions -- we hope to make up that 12,000 NCO deficit, as we grow the army, by about October or November of 2011.

Over to you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir.

Someone just joined us. I believe that was Spencer. Spencer, did you call in?

Q That's right. Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Okay, thank you. Right after Beth.

Thank you, Richard. Bill, you're next. Please go ahead.

Q Thanks, and good evening, General. Bill McMichael with Military Times Newspapers.

The recent report by the special inspector general for Afghanistan criticized rather heavily the abilities to date of the ANA in terms of its -- and used some data that you all had gathered to -- it appeared to me to extrapolate that the force has not indicated a capability to sustain independent operations.

General Caldwell said that -- he admitted there were significant challenges, but called the report inaccurate. He said the rating system was only meant to be a measure of training and equipment of a unit and so forth. And we've heard anecdotal reports of problems with the performance of the ANA as well, except for perhaps some of the elite units.

I wonder if you could try to bridge the gap between that report, General Caldwell's response, and what we're hearing anecdotally from the field about the ANA, sir.

GEN. PATTON: Yeah, thanks, Bill. Okay, I'm going to address that question this way.

The SIGAR report that you're referring to, a great majority of the recommendations were about -- the observations and recommendations were about the capability and milestones assessment process that IJC, our sister three-star headquarters, uses to assess, on a recurring schedule, a six-week cycle, to assess them and rate the capabilities and the readiness of the Afghan National Army.

And it's important to note, I mean, IJC, which stands for ISAF Joint Command, has responsibility for the operational force, and that means that at the corps headquarters and below. What we focus on at NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan is echelons above corps, the general staff of the army, and then the Ministry of Defense.

And so I wanted to make that distinction because a great majority, 12 of the (15 ?) recommendations made by the report addressed the assessments of the operational force. And I'm not going to go into that, because that's really an IJC issue, and I would defer that comment to them.

I will address the recommendations and observations that the SIGAR team made that deal with NTM-A, and specifically on two points.

One was one logistics system and reporting and assessments. And it talked about the compliance with ministerial logistics systems and increasing the transparency of ANSF logistics operations. I'm reading almost directly from the report.

You know, what we've done, we -- the SIGAR report was -- and the -- and the audit occurred from October '09 to March '10. So there's been some things

we've done and put in place just over the last three to six months addressing the logistics systems.

For example, we have logistics advisers at the -- in each of the regions at their forward supply depots. And they're there to train, coach and mentor our counterparts that run the forward supply depots. We have logistics advisers at the national depots where they receive and where they warehouse and then initiate distribution of supplies. And then we have advisers placed within the Ministry for Acquisition, Technology and Logistics and also at the general staff G-4 responsible for logistics.

And on a daily basis we're helping them write policies, review policies, implement procedures and so forth. And the logistics system is immature at best because a lot of the units required to fully implement those logistics systems don't exist yet. They haven't been brought into the force structure.

Corps logistics battalions, for example, there's only one right now in any of the six corps. The other five corps don't have their corps logistics battalion, which gives you (administration ?) -- it gives you maintenance and supply and that sort of thing.

So there are some -- it's an immature system. We're trying to further develop it with those advisers that I mentioned at the national depots and regional depots, and then working with IJC, who has partner responsibilities for the corps units and below to help mature and bring these logistics units into the force structure and develop their capabilities. They're very immature right now. But anyway, those are the things we've done on the logistics front.

The second observation and recommendation made by the SIGAR report had to do with training the trainer for driver's training and observe that we could really -- we had an insufficient inventory of drivers in the Afghan army, and we weren't going much about it in terms of creating additional drivers for the growing fleet of vehicles.

So what we're doing right now though, and what we have implemented over the last several months is a very deliberate train-the-trainer program where we are training Afghans to be instructors of driver training. And this is being done at the new logistics school, which just opened in the last several months. Afghan army logistics school. And we have had 113 graduates as train-the-trainers.

And what that means is now they can go out into the army, the Afghan army at the corps level and below, and be located at the regional military training center and train the Afghan drivers themselves. Because now they are formally trained to instruct the drivers.

So that was one -- again, another one of the observations, and we're moving out on that one. And we've had, like I said, 113 graduates from the train-the-trainer course as, one of the recommendations there in that report.

So those are two areas that I have direct knowledge and involvement in -- related to the report. And that's all I'm really comfortable addressing.

Back to you.

Q Just if I could quickly follow, your assessment of the quality of this army writ large to date, in terms of its performance on the battlefield, its ability to take the lead in operations?

GEN. PATTON: Well, it's a growing army, Bill. There are units that have -- as they grow in experience and as they develop and have relations with partner units, those are the units that we see to be the most effective on the battlefield, the ones that have experience, they have a full cadre of officers and senior NCOs, and then they have a close partner, a coalition partner which lives with them, plans with them and fights with them.

Those units seem to be effective out there. There are units, however, that don't have as strong a partner relationship. There are units with serious deficits in NCOs and in some cases -- less so officers, but in an NCO rank. And those units require further development, further -- we need to give them priority focus for NCOs in terms of manning priority. And so there are units out there that deserve attention in those areas -- increased leader manning and further development of partnerships. But like I said, where we have seen the most effective units out there in the battlefield, those with more complete manning, all of their sets of equipment, and then a close partnership with a coalition unit.

Back to you.

Q Thank you, General.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. And thank you, Bill.

Chuck, you were next. Please go ahead.

Q Okay. Jen, can you hear me?

LT. CRAGG: Chuck, I hear you loud and clear. Please go ahead.

Q Okay. General, good to talk with you again. Chuck Simmins from America's North Shore Journal.

One of the things that the American military academies do is get their officer candidates out into the field during the summer, especially -- I'm thinking of the Naval Academy and their -- I think it's junior summer cruise.

You talked about getting your officers some experience, the Afghan officers. Are they doing anything like that?

GEN. PATTON: Chuck, that's a good question. I am a product of the United States Military Academy at West Point, and I spent my -- the best summer of my life as a cadet was at cadet troop leader training, which I think is the program you're talking to where cadets go out into the army and have an experience there, short of being a commissioned officer.

And what we do here is the cadets at the national military academy -- and we have just recently increased the size of the student population. Whereas in the past the classes comprised about 200 to 250 cadets, now the freshman class that just entered in March is now 600 cadets strong. So that's a good point, and I just wanted to make that note.

And just the other thing about the national military academy, the last graduation, which occurred in March of 2010 was the first class by which the officer assignments were determined by a lottery system, as opposed to some previous years when favoritism and other practices that were less than fair may have been used in the distribution of assignments.

So a lottery system where it was completely neutral and fair across the board was used to assign the more than 200 graduates of the national military academy there in March. Getting back to your question, though, on the summer training, we do send them to the Kabul military training center for training during the summer. That's the flagship training base here in Afghanistan. On any given day there are 10,000 Afghan army soldiers training -- officers, NCOs and soldiers training at the KNTC. And so those cadets will join that cadre this summer.

We're also looking at a program -- it's -- it hasn't -- we haven't -- don't have the ink dry on this yet, and we still have a couple of things to coordinate. But we are looking at an option for a summer class to go elsewhere in the country or possibly to a foreign country for troop leader training, additional training during the summer months.

And we haven't completed that proposal and coordination yet, so I'm not going to give any more details, but we are looking at ways to broaden the experiences of the cadets during their summer training.

Back to you.

Q Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Chuck.

Rebecca, you're next. Please go ahead.

Q Hi. This is Rebecca from the Nisei Shimbun Newspaper. It's Japanese press.

I was wondering if we could go back really quickly to what you said regarding the harvest season and recruitment drop-off. Are you anticipating any sort of shortfall in forces that you actually have, and if so, what kind of efforts will you be doing to bridge that?

GEN. PATTON: Rebecca, we're not expecting a shortfall in forces. But we have been essentially banking extra recruits over some very successful months. March, April and May recruiting saw a growth of over 5,500 in the army.

If you look back to as recent as October and November where we rarely saw more than 2,000 soldiers grow -- I mean a growth factor, that's pretty significant growth of over 5,500, March, April, May.

This past month between May and June we saw growth of 4,191 -- still keeping us above our current objectives, but a slight decrease, although that number still allowed us to fill every training seat in the training base. And so that's significant.

We kind of anticipate a little bit of a slow downturn in the summer, but as long as we can keep the training seats filled, we think we'll be okay. Again, this past month -- three of the past four months we've seen the attrition factor at our goal level of attrition. By attrition, I mean soldiers that either are killed in action, are disabled in action and have to leave the service, or are dropped from rolls due to AWOL.

In the months of March, April, May -- and we averaged about a 1.3 (percent) to 1.4 percent attrition per month.

Our goal is 1.2 (percent), so we're very happy that we've brought that attrition down.

An attrition on a monthly basis, if you times it times 12, that gives you the annual rate. So 1.2 (percent) is our goal, times 12, 14.5 (percent), that's the annual attrition rate that would allow us to continue to grow the army and -- a sustainable rate.

We did see a little bit of an uptick this month between May and June. It went up to 1.6 percent. We're looking at -- there were several specific units that had higher than normal rates, and so we're looking at those particular units. We're talking to the ISAF Joint Command, which has the partnership responsibility for those units, and we're trying to put our finger

on what might be the systemic, if there is one, systemic problem in those units that might have caused that little bit of an uptick in attrition.

But overall, we are not at risk of not meeting our training requirements. We are not at risk of -- if our current attrition, retention and recruiting trends stay on track, we will make our growth objective. Like I said in my opening statement, we'll make our growth objective of 134,000 sometime this summer, based on our current strength of 129,885.

As you all know, our future growth goal is -- in October 2011 -- is 171,600. And again, looking at the current positive trends of attrition, retention and recruiting, all those trends staying on track and remaining positive, we believe that those objectives are achievable.

Back to you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. Thank you, Rebecca.

Laszlo, you were next.

Q Thank you.

Good evening, General. My name is Laszlo. I am from the Hungarian Press, and right now I'm calling from New York City.

General, my question to you also concerns morale. Apart from attrition, drugs is also said to be a serious problem when it comes to morale within the ANA. How serious is really that? I mean, narcotics is a problem in Afghanistan in general, but how would you comment on the ANA, from your experience?

Thank you.

GEN. PATTON: I don't have any statistics to give you on that, in terms of drug use.

We have just completed -- on the police side we've just completed a personal asset inventory of the Afghan National Police Force. And during that personal inventory, policemen on the rolls were all drug tested. And we do have the results of that, and I would be glad to get back to Jen with the figures from that. I don't have them at my fingertips.

Drug use is a concern across the board, because of its proliferation and -- or rather, the availability of it in this country. Ninety-three percent of the world opiates are cultivated in Afghanistan. So it's naturally a problem.

But good and strong leadership at multiple levels can counter the temptation of drugs, the temptation of AWOLs, the temptation to other corrupt practices and that sort of thing. So we're about developing leaders, and that's why we're creating more NCOs. We've also increased the capacity that we -- we're producing new officers.

So we think that in a couple of things, the partnership with strong coalition units and the infusion of more leaders in the ranks of the army will be a significant element there to counter the temptations for those things I mentioned -- corruption, drug use, absenteeism and those sorts of things. That's why we are focused on leader development.

Over to you.

Q Thank you, sir.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, Laszlo. We're going to go ahead and go to Spencer. Beth is on the line. I'm going to ask her question after we have Spencer state his question. Beth is in California and she cannot ask her question at the present time.

Spencer, please go ahead.

Q Thanks very much, General. Spencer Ackerman with Wired.com.

I was hoping you could talk about the role of contractors in training and mentoring the Afghan army. How necessary would you say they are, how do they add value, are you encountering any problems with them, and who are your principal contractors who you deal with? GEN. PATTON: Spencer, thanks for that question.

We use contractors at multiple levels, so let me just start at the top and work my way down.

And again, a contractor with -- a lot of them have former military experience. They bring a lot of expertise and that sort of thing. And so we are -- it's a -- it's a very valuable asset to our training. But there are some -- there are some jobs that just require a uniformed officer or a uniformed noncommissioned officer, and so that's why it's a combination and it's not solely contracted.

Because again, we're talking about leadership development. Every trainer that we have out there in uniform serves as role model for these Afghan soldiers, sergeants and officers that we're training. So it's indispensable and invaluable that we have a mix there, because our officers and NCOs out there serve as role models as well as effective trainers.

But having contractors helps us in some cases bridge gaps that we have where we're not able to get a sufficient number of uniformed trainers in. In other cases, it just makes perfect sense to have a contractor in the position. For example, starting at the top, we have a lot of contractors, over 250 contractors that we employ as advisers and mentors in the ministry of defense and the army general staff.

And what these advisers do is they spend their full duty days over embedded in the ministry and the general staff, linked up with Afghan staff officers, staff NCOs and deputy ministers and so forth. And they bring a lot of expertise.

The one I deal with on very frequent basis is a mentor and adviser for the minister of defense. And he has a career in the Army, retired, very successful Army career, and I was able to bring that experience to bear as a very effective mentor of some of the national leadership here in the Afghan army.

And we've seen that across all the ministries. We have retired general officers that are service contractors in the ministry of acquisitions, technology and logistics. There's one there that just comes to mind. And a full range of experiences and background and so forth; very valuable at that level.

And moving down to the training level, we have for example at our regional military training centers we have contractors there who not only help with the training oversight, but more importantly, the sort of garrison and base management aspects of running a training base.

And some people who have done that, both in the Army and in their civilian life who are very proficient, helping organize, manage a training facility and helping their Afghan counterparts. In some cases, colonels and senior noncommissioned officers run a base for training and help in all the aspects of organizing and resourcing that training. So I guess my point is we use contractors at multiple levels. They help to bridge a gap in our uniformed trainers. But we could not go only contract, because of the invaluable element of our sergeants and officers in uniform that are trainers that just lead by example and role-model for their Afghan counterparts. And that's hard to do when you're not wearing a uniform.

Back to you.

Q Could I ask one quick follow-up? How many contractors do you employ in your command vice how many uniformed soldiers?

GEN. PATTON: Yeah, I don't have that figure in front of me, Spencer. I'm going to have to take that question and get that back through Jen. We have that data; I just don't have that in front of me.

Back to you.

Q All right. Thank you very much, General.

GEN. PATTON: Thank you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir, and thank you, Spencer. I'll make sure I forward everything to everyone as specified.

Also, Beth Wilson has sent over an e-mail of her question, as I stated before. So this is her question, sir. Hang on just a second; I'm just looking in my e-mail. I apologize.

This is her question: Is the role of women in the ANA continuing to grow? What are the recruitment efforts to bring women into the ANA and the police force? That's from Beth Wilson, Homefront in Focus.

GEN. PATTON: Well, I'd have to answer that with -- I don't have the figure on the total number of women in the Afghan army, but what we're -- we are looking at bringing some additional Afghan women into the officer corps.

And we started a program a couple of weeks back, an officer candidate school -- the first female officer candidate school cohort, which will graduate on 23 September and currently has 30 women students in there. They'll graduate, they'll commission from that program, and then they'll go off to take largely administrative and some, you know, logistic support and administrative positions in the Afghan army. You know, this is an area that -- I guess the best way to say it is, you know, this is an area that Afghans have to decide what's right for the Afghan army. And so, you know, we're taking some small steps right now and I think assess some of these programs, assess some of the positions the women are going into. There are some cultural issues that prevail with the employment of women in the workplace and the type of jobs they can have, the separation from the home and the family that are -- that are very culturally sensitive.

And so this is an area we're just going to let the Afghans kind of grow at a pace set by the Afghans. But like I said, we are going to have 30 new female officers in the Afghan army here, just in the months ahead.

Back to you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you, sir. That was the only question I had. And we're at the end of our roundtable today. So she just sent me an e-mail. She said outstanding, and thank you. So I wanted to pass that to you.

I'm going to turn it back over to you, sir, Brigadier General Patton, if you'd like to end with any closing thoughts. And if any of the bloggers have

any follow-on questions, please feel free to forward them to me and I'll make sure that the general receives them.

So sir, if you'd like to take this opportunity, any closing thoughts?

GEN. PATTON: Okay, thank you, Jen. And thanks for the bloggers out there. I really appreciate your attention and time on this. I like doing this. I've done this about once a month for the last four or five months, so I do enjoy this venue. And thank you for your questions.

I will get back to you with the answer there with the statistics that Spencer asked about the contractors.

Just to close out, I wanted to emphasize one point, and it had to do with the question that was asked about growth. I just want everybody to be clear that there's a big caveat on the condition that I used in that statement, and I should --

As long as current positive trends in attrition, retention and recruiting continue, we predict being able to make our growth goals here, both in this fiscal year and the next fiscal year for the Afghan army.

We watch them on a monthly basis. In some cases, weekly basis. So we, along with our Afghan counterparts are also very vigilant in their accounting and strength reporting and personnel assessments. We're watching that very closely. We are doing some things to incentivize. So if you all know about the pay raise that went into effect last December, that is still in effect.

We are looking -- one area that we continue to look at is wanting to recruit a greater proportion of the southern Pashtun population into the army. Currently, there's an ethnically balanced army in terms of Pashtun population. However, the southern Pashtun population is a particularly tough population, historically tough population to recruit into the army.

And we see that as being important in terms of creating a sense of ownership of the entire country about its national army. And right now it's underrepresented in the southern Pashtun provinces, around Kandahar, Helmand and so forth. Currently we only have -- about 3 percent of our recruiting cohort comes from that part of the country, and that's a trouble spot and an area we want to work on.

And one of the issues there is to -- replicate what we do in the American Army in the hometown recruiter program. We're looking at -- and this idea actually came from Minister of Defense Wardak. Take the southern Pashtuns who are serving in the army and send them back to their areas, their southern provinces where they can talk to the village elders, talk to the young men and women in the villages and the families and try and create a drumbeat of interest

in increasing the representation of the southern Pashtun population in the national army.

So that's an area of interest. It's an area we're working on. And it's not where we want it to be right now, so -- although we have some pretty good recruiting numbers to show there, I just wanted to tell you it's not all rosy, because there are areas we think we can do better in, and that specific area's in the -- increase the proportion of southern Pashtuns into the army.

Just one last thing I'd like to close with, and that is a week in the life of NTM-A and the Afghan army. This week was closed out on 26 June. It's kind of an average week, but I wanted to share with you all what occurred in that one week.

At the end of the week we had 22,000 soldiers in training total in the Afghan army. But during the week, two battalions, each numbering 5(00) to 600 strong, completed training and then went out to their new -- to their corps as new units being generated into the army. Two full battalions.

Also, a brigade headquarters was created and sent out to its corps up in the north, 209th Corps. We had 1,300 soldiers graduate basic training. We had 82 NCOs graduate from the mid-grade NCO course. We have 162 brand-new NCOs, promoted NCO out of that team leader course I mentioned earlier. Sixty-five soldiers graduated from drivers training and 29 soldiers graduated from supply school. So it's just a week in the life of the Afghan National Army, continuing to create that -- what I would say -- great amount of momentum and forward drive in the growth of the army as a force that continues to grow in capability. And that's what we've been just focused on, both generating new units, training -- NCOs and soldiers, and then in the end, also developing leaders. And I think I've made a number of points tonight on leader development.

So again, thank you all for your attention, and I look forward to talk to you next month.

Jen, back to you.

LT. CRAGG: Thank you so much, sir.

And I just want to wrap up. As you all know, I'm going to send the transcript via e-mail to you all, and I will post it to [www.dodlive.mil](http://www.dodlive.mil). You'll find the audio podcast as well as the transcript, and I'll try to get it to you all today. Again, any follow-on questions, please e-mail me.

And you've been listening to Brigadier General Gary Patton. He's the deputy commander, Army, NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan, Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan.

With that, thank you so much, sir, for calling in. Thanks for the callers. Everyone have a wonderful 4th of July, and this wraps up today's call. Thank you. You can hang up at any time.

Q        Thanks, Jen.

END.