



International Civil Aviation Organization

## The First Meeting of the Ad Hoc Afghanistan Contingency Group Meeting (AHACG/1)

Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 11-12 September 2014

### Agenda Item 2: Afghanistan ATS Status and Capability Building

#### STATUS OF MILITARY TRANSITION IN AFGHANISTAN

(Presented by NATO/ISAF)

##### SUMMARY

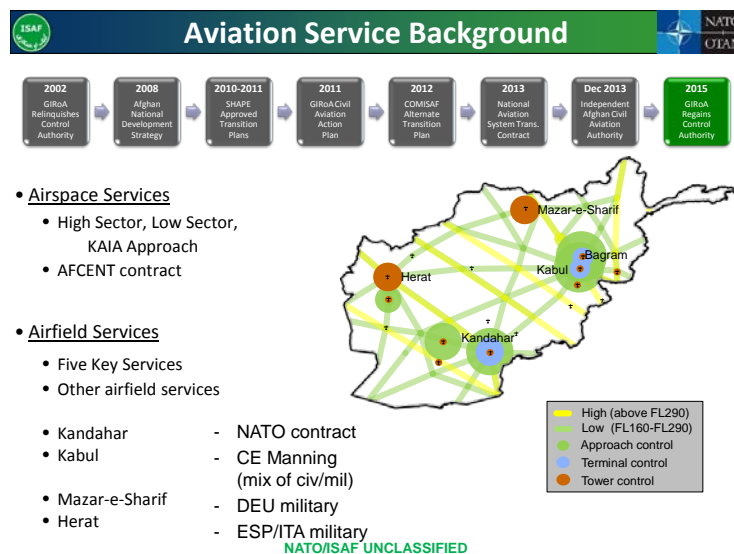
This paper presents background on recent airspace and airfield transition efforts in Afghanistan as well as the current situation that NATO/ISAF and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) face. This paper also looks beyond the present and immediate future to lay out the principles and goals for an enduring partnership between NATO, GIRoA and the international community.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Some challenges exist in transitioning an aviation system designed primarily to support military operations to one that places civil operations in the forefront. The Afghanistan Civil Aviation Authority (A-CAA) has made great strides in developing an organization that conforms to ICAO Standards and Recommended Practices (SARPs) but still lacks human capacities to run control the airspace and operate major airports.

### 2. DISCUSSION

#### 2.1 Background.



2.1.2 One of the key responsibilities of an Airspace Control Authority is to ensure coordination with civilian aviation authorities for the de-confliction of military and civilian flight operations. The first step toward establishing this coordination was the signing of a three-way Memorandum of Arrangement (MOA) between the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism (now Ministry of Transport), International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and Commander United States Air Forces Central Command (AFCENT) in 2002. A key excerpt from that MOA reads:

“In order to enhance the safety in civil aviation and to facilitate aviation commerce within Afghanistan, the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism of Afghanistan and the Combined Forces Airspace Control Authority (ACA) for the Coalition mission in Afghanistan acknowledge that, for an interim and limited period, the ACA will control the airspace within Afghanistan. The ACA will exercise this control as long as United States military operations require or until such time as the Ministry of Civil Aviation and Tourism is capable, either independently or through ICAO assistance under appropriate technical co-operation projects, of assuming responsibility for air traffic services and aviation facilities within Afghanistan.”

2.1.3 Four months later, civil airlines resumed over flight of Afghanistan and military airlift operations were on the increase moving military equipment and personnel. At the same time, there was also an increase in air traffic as the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF), international organizations, non-governmental organizations and other civil aircraft operators focused their attention on the region. This sharp rise in air traffic highlighted a need for positive en route control within Afghanistan. In March 2004, it was agreed to establish an en route control center in Kabul. Over the next year, the task of developing a comprehensive airway system and installing communications equipment across the country as well as brokering air traffic control letters of agreement with all five surrounding countries was accomplished. Since then, Kabul Area Control Center (KACC) and Kabul Approach Control (KAC) have been manned by civilian contractors funded by the United States Air Force.

2.1.4 Over the years, there have been many achievements by several donors supporting the rehabilitation and development of Afghanistan’s civil aviation infrastructure. The initiative to establish an Afghanistan Partners’ “Tiger Team”, to be led by NATO Headquarters International Staff, was the main outcome of a special high-level meeting called by ICAO in September 2011, when the President of the ICAO Council decided to assume a facilitating role in promoting the development of a common and coordinated way ahead for aviation normalization and transition. The outcome of this “Tiger Team” was the development of an *Afghanistan Civil Aviation Roadmap (ACAR)*, *Aviation Action Plan (AAP)* and *Terms of Reference for the Aviation-Donor Coordinating Board*. These three documents were delivered to the Afghanistan Minister of Transport and Civil Aviation (MOTCA), in a May 2012 meeting called by the President of the ICAO Council which included the Ambassadors to ICAO of Germany, France, India, Japan, Turkey, United Kingdom, and the United States, representatives of the European Union, United States Department of Transportation, Federal Aviation Administration, United States Air Forces Central Command, NATO Headquarters, ISAF, ICAO Secretary General, and the Directors of Air Navigation and Technical Co-operation Bureau.

2.1 The plans for the transition of airspace and Kandahar, Kabul, Herat, and Mazar-e-Sharif airports, developed in coordination with the Afghan Authorities, were based on the assumptions that sufficient Afghan personnel would be trained, training facilities and trainers/mentors available, financial issues resolved as agreed in the Aviation Action Plan. While progress was made in some areas of training and qualifying Afghans, it became clear that there would not be enough Afghan human capacity in the airspace and or airfield areas for the transition. In 2013, a team from MoTCA, Ministry of Finance, the US Embassy, 9<sup>th</sup> Air Expeditionary Task Force-Afghanistan (9 AETF-A), and NATO’s Civil Aviation Transition Branch developed the concept for a National Aviation System

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Transition Contract (NASTC) to transition aviation services over a five year period. The goal was that the airspace and airfield contract should be awarded no later than GIRoA 1 Jan 2015.

#### 2.1.5

### 2.2 Transition.

2.2.1 When we speak of transitioning airspace and airfield services, it is important to define what those services are. The airspace includes Kabul Area Control Center (KACC) with the high sector above flight level 290, the low sector from flight level 160 to flight level 290 and Kabul Approach Control (KAC). Airspace services also include all of the communications and radar equipment necessary for air traffic control in the high, low and Kabul Approach Control sectors.

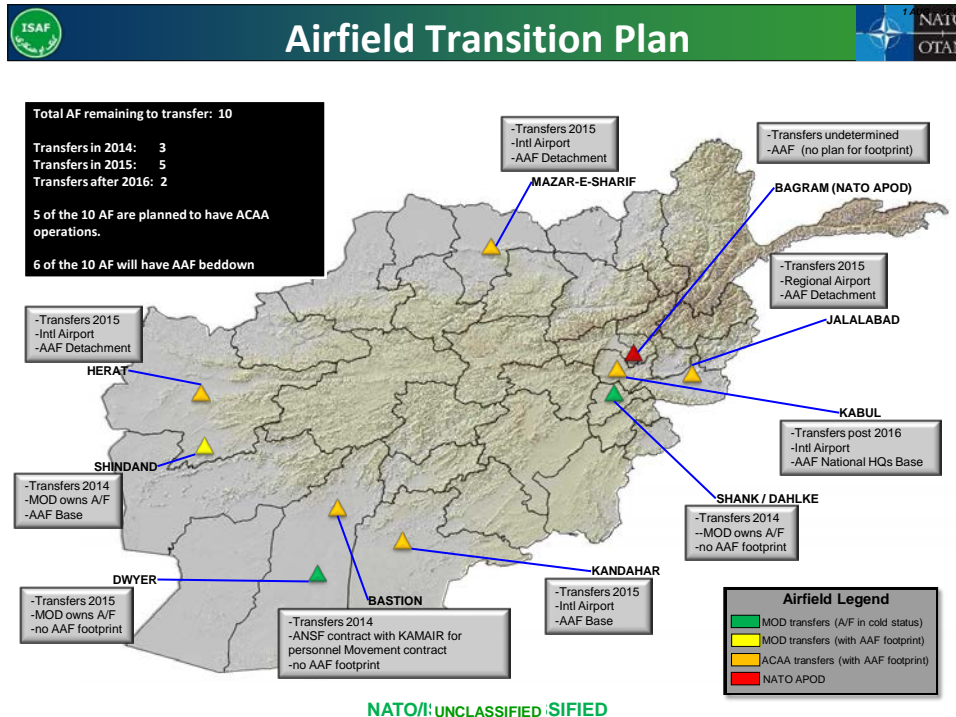
2.2.2 Airfield services include the five major airfield services ATC tower, fire and crash rescue service, airfield and safety management, communications and navigation systems maintenance, and meteorology and additional airfield services. These services are currently provided through a mix of NATO contracts, military personnel, international civilian consultants, and local civilian hires. NATO contracts currently provide airfield services at Kandahar (KAF) and Kabul International Airport (KAIA). Military manpower from Framework Nations (FN)/Lead Nation provide airfield services; Germany for Mazar-e-Sharif; and Italy and Spain for Herat.

2.2.3 The Combined Forces Air Component Commander (CFACC), which exercises ACA responsibilities, stands ready to transition the airspace back to Afghan control if either of the following conditions are met, 1) the military do not require the airspace or, 2) MoTCA (now the Afghanistan Civil Aviation Authority) is capable of assuming responsibility for air traffic services and aviation facilities which conform to ICAO SARPs. While the Afghan airspace portion of the NASTC is progressing and a preferred candidate has been identified, no funds have been released by the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA).

2.2.4 If the NASTC for airspace is signed, NATO/ISAF will assist the A-CAA in determining the competency of the contractor and also help the A-CAA set up a civil military coordination mechanism, especially in the area of deconflicting military and civilian air operations to include ground fires.

2.2.5 The United States Air Forces Central Command contract for the KACC and KAC will not be renewed, so if Afghanistan is not able to resource the facility in time, the KACC and the KAC will shut down without radar and radio antennas and Kabul Afghanistan International Airport (KAIA) will only have non-controlled VFR operations. NATO/ISAF has developed a contingency plan using tactical command and control procedures so that the military can continue to support ongoing operations and the NATO-led Resolute Support Mission.

2.2.6 For airfield transition, there are ten airfields yet to be transitioned to GIRoA. Three will be transitioned this year and five in 2015. KAIA and Bagram will not transition until sometime after 2016; unless the A-CAA is able to provide airfield service at KAIA that conform to ICAO SARPs. The previous transition timeline for the four major airfields is no longer achievable and the previous projected transition to GIRoA by on 1 January 2015 is not possible. Therefore NATO is looking for solutions at the main four airfields for much of 2015.



2.2.7 These airfield services are currently provided through a combination of military manpower, local contract hires and other contract vehicles. Because of restrictions on the number of military personnel in Afghanistan in 2015, maybe most, if not all, of these services could be contracted if NATO finds a solution.

### 2.3 Enduring Partnership.

2.3.1 Following NATO's post-2014 engagement in Afghanistan, NATO has agreed to establish a joint mechanism to strengthen political consultations on issues of mutual strategic concern. Enduring Partnership will assume a greater weight, becoming the prime vehicle for the relationship between NATO and Afghanistan over the long-term. Considering the specific needs of the Afghans, NATO International Staff will consider specific tailor-made activities for the sustainability of the Afghan aviation sector.

2.3.2 On 4-5 September 2014, a NATO Summit was held with Head of State and Government of Allies and their ISAF troop contributing partners. Over the last thirteen years, NATO/ISAF has assisted the Afghan people to regain control over their nation's destiny. It has helped Afghanistan make significant advances in the aviation domain; especially with the development of an independent civil aviation authority. There are still many challenges remaining. However, NATO's commitment to Afghanistan will endure beyond ISAF and will also need support from neighboring nations, air navigation service providers, and the international aviation community. In particular, the establishment of a training-, assistance and advice Resolute Support mission, starting at the completion of ISAF, a trust fund of 3 billion USD to sustain financially the Afghan National Security Forces in the period 2015-2017, and the long-term Enduring Partnership programme constitute concrete and tangible efforts of an enduring NATO commitment to Afghanistan.

## 3.0 ACTION BY THE MEETING

3.1 The meeting is invited to:

- note the information contained in this paper; and
- discuss any relevant matters as appropriate.