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The Lithuanian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan – Achievements and Challenges

The author who from November 2006 to May 2007 commanded the Lithuanian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan's Ghor Province discusses PRT achievements and challenges. The article provides information on the PRT mission, organization, tasks and the ways to implement them. It is recognized that the PRT is given a mission that requires efforts in the stabilization and reconstruction areas. While outlining the main challenges – the small number of troops, inadequate counternarcotics effort, the gap between stability and reconstruction, low capacity of the Government of Afghanistan – it is suggested that the PRT has achieved significant results in a stabilization area while achievements in the reconstruction domain are not so impressive. In order to be successful, the PRT needs to focus mostly on stabilization tasks involving local authorities and other partners while looking for larger international donors who could focus on reconstruction.

Introduction

In the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C., the USA and the UK initiated attacks on Al Qaeda and its leader Osama Bin Laden who were granted refuge by the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. As a result the Taliban regime fell and the country, after almost three decades of wars, found itself in a complex and complicated situation. There was no government left in the country. The economy was in ruins. Education system was almost non-existent. It was obvious that international assistance was required in order to establish governance, ensure security and rebuild the country. Initially international support was defined by the Bonn agreement. This agreement requested the international community to deploy a UN mandated International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in order to

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assist the Government of Afghanistan ensuring security in and around Kabul with a further perspective to expand to other areas as required.¹

Initially ISAF consisted of a coalition of nations that were willing to contribute to the stabilization and reconstruction of Afghanistan. In August 2003 NATO took over the responsibility for ISAF. The expansion of ISAF area of responsibility outside Kabul started immediately. The ISAF expansion process consisted of four phases with NATO taking responsibility of the northern, western, southern and eastern regions of the country. As part of Phase 2 ISAF expansion when NATO forces assumed responsibility over the western region in the summer 2005 Lithuania started her most significant deployment to international operations becoming the lead nation of PRT Chaghcharan in Ghor. Though purely numerically the Lithuanian contribution might not be considered significant it must be argued that qualitatively and complexity-wise it is a significant and challenging commitment for a small-size nation.

The mission of ISAF (the Lithuanian-led PRT Chaghcharan is a part of it) is to conduct military operations in the assigned area of operations in order to assist the Government of Afghanistan in the establishment and maintenance of a safe and secure environment with full engagement of Afghan National Security Forces², in order to extend government authority and influence, thereby facilitating Afghanistan's reconstruction and contributing to regional stability³.

The mission recognizes and emphasizes the primacy of security, which is supposed to be achieved by conducting military operations and fully engaging Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF). It could be insisted that the ANSF needs to achieve at least initial operational capabilities in order to operate with ISAF forces. Security is intended to be a precondition for nation's reconstruction. ISAF activities are intended to promote the Government of Afghanistan, its authority and influence all over the country. The success is considered to be achieved by addressing these areas and having a well balanced approach towards them but maintaining and preserving the primacy of security.

The aim of this article is to overview the achievements of the Lithuanian-led PRT and to identify the challenges encountered in accomplishing the mission paying special attention to stabilization and reconstruction efforts. Initially, an overview of the operational environment is presented. After that, challenges are addressed along the lines outlined in the mission – security, reconstruction, and Government of Afghanistan promotion.

Though the Lithuanian military has participated in international operations since 1994, it is for the first time that Lithuania took responsibility of an operational area. Before that units and soldiers were deployed as part of other nations' bigger units that were responsible for an operational area.

¹ *Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Re-Establishment of Permanent Government Institutions, December 5, 2001*, <http://www.afghangovernment.com/AfghanAgreementBonn.htm>, 25 08 2008.

² Abbreviated as ANSF.

³ *International Security Assistance Force, September 01, 2008*, http://www.nato.int/ISAF/docu/epub/pdf/isaf_placemat.pdf, 01 09 2008.

The Lithuanian military also carries out tasks that require close interaction with members of other governmental agencies. This interaction is crucial as it contributes to the success of the operation. It must be recognized that this unique operational experience generated numerous observations and lessons. The Lithuanian-led PRT Chaghcharan in Ghor possesses a great potential for research and analysis. The PRT could be discussed and analyzed from various perspectives. It might be extremely rewarding to discuss how the decision to initiate this operation was made. Additionally consultations and interaction with the nations that later deployed their troops to the PRT might be a topic of interest. It might also be valuable to address the significance of this operation for the ongoing transformation of the Lithuanian military. But the author while expressing only his personal views chooses to leave these topics for further analysis and not to be part of this article focusing on PRT's contribution to stabilization and reconstruction.

1. Environment

The operational environment for the Lithuanian-led PRT is extremely unusual and very challenging. Ghor is an area possessing physical and political characteristics that are strange for international personnel operating there. It takes time to adapt oneself to the conditions. It takes even more time to become familiar with and understand intricacies of Afghan people and politics.

1.1. Physical Environment

The Ghor province is located in the central western part of Afghanistan. Chaghcharan, province's capital, is located between the two Afghan major cities. It lays approximately 350 kilometers East of Herat and 400 kilometers West of Kabul. While the distances are not so large physically there are factors that make the both cities almost inaccessible for the people of the province. The roads to the either cities from Ghor are almost nonexistent. Abundant snow stops any land travel outside the province. The way to get into and out of the province during most of the year is by air only.

The province is located high in the Hindu Kush Mountains. Temperatures range from extreme high to extreme low (see Table 1). High altitudes and extreme temperatures even more complicate the life in the province.

Table 1. **Physical Features of the Ghor Province**

Temperature	-40 - +40°C
Altitude	2,000 – 4,000 m
Administrative subdivision	10 districts
Population	585,900 ¹
Size	36,657 km ² ; 5.67 % of Afghanistan's territory ²
Ethnic groups	Tajik - 58 %; Hazara - 39 %; Pashtun - 3 % ³
Religious Groups	Suni – 70 %; Shia – 30 % ⁴

Despite the fact that the province is a home for three ethnic groups as well as Shia and Suni sects (see Table 1) no conflicts due to belonging to different ethnic groups or different Muslim sects in Ghor were observed. All the clashes recorded in the province are due to other reasons – mostly because of disputed land ownership or unresolved inter-tribal conflicts.

The province covers a territory, which is over half the territory of Lithuania and is subdivided into 10 districts. It is noteworthy to observe that the boundaries between the districts in the official maps do not coincide with the boundaries that really exist in the minds of local people. Some of the boundaries on maps separate tribes but in practice the people and provincial officials do not recognize these divisions and consider the boundaries that do not separate tribe areas. A similar phenomenon could be observed with the provincial boundaries. One could often hear provincial officials saying that there are no Pashtuns in the southern part of the province. When reminded of the areas in the province inhabited by Pashtuns they would repeatedly insist that these areas are outside the province.

The province is one of the poorest provinces in Afghanistan. Most of the people rely on subsistence farming, which depends on favourable weather conditions. The amount of snow or rain might significantly affect most of the provincial population.

1.2. Political Environment

In the aftermath of the Taliban regime collapse, Afghanistan did not have any governance system. Currently it is being developed.

The highest government official in the province is the Governor (see Table 2). He is appointed by the President of Afghanistan and formally works for the Minister of Interior and is responsible for coordination of governmental organizations' activities in the province. The Lithuanian-led PRT works with a second governor. Both of them are not originally from the province. They have totally different personalities but what they have in common is a strong desire to take their responsibilities seriously and improve life in the province. Having in mind that Ghor is not an attractive place for government officials to work in, the Government succeeded in finding these two qualified public servants as provincial governors.

Table 2. **Post-Taliban Governors of the Ghor Province**

2001-2004	Dr. Ibrahim Malekzada
2004-2005	Abdul Qadir Alam
2005-2007	Shah Abdul Ahad Afzali
since 2007	Baz Mohammad Ahmadi ⁵

While the Governors changed, the Deputy Governor has remained the same since June 2005 ensuring continuity. Due to the fact that he is a native of Ghor he provides local knowledge and expertise.

Provincial administration has 25 departments. They do not formally report to the Provincial Governor and talk only to their respective Ministries. Governors need to be skilful managers to direct provincial department activities towards a coordinated effort. The department staffs have a large number of employees but only very few of them possess the needed qualifications. As a result of such low capacity they cannot deliver. Most of them occupy their positions not because they possess necessary qualifications but as a result of inter-tribal deals. In June 2004, warlords and tribal chiefs started a war over power when one of them was not satisfied with the results of their negotiations.⁴ It is no surprise that their decisions are influenced by their tribal loyalties. It could be argued that employees who are not originally from the province, and are not bound by the local tribal loyalties, can better represent public interest.

Due to a very low provincial officials' administrative capacity, the PRT makes an effort to build and increase it. It is one of the ways to empower local officials to manage provincial affairs more effectively.

The provincial Afghan National Police (ANP) – the biggest and most visible security organization in the province – is in a developing phase. It has approximately 750 men. About 60 % of them are recruited from 2 tribes. The PRT pays a special attention to the police that they acquire required capabilities and receive needed equipment. It could be suggested that despite all the efforts the police remain mostly weak and only partially effective. It is a long way till they develop into a trusted police force that is able and willing to accomplish their tasks. The provincial organization of the National Directorate for Security (NDS) is more developed but lacks equipment and suffers from shortage of trained employees.

Ten district administrations in the Ghor Province mirror the provincial administration, but they cannot deliver as they even more suffer from the lack of qualified personnel and competing tribal interests.

The security situation in the Ghor province, despite relatively rare inci-

⁴ Amir Shah, *10 Die As Warlords Overrun Afghan Town*, June 18, 2004, <http://nucnews.net/nucnews/2004nn/0406nn/040618nn.htm#300>, 22 08 2008.

dents when compared to other regions of Afghanistan, is very good.⁵ Despite this the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) with PRT support has a challenge to prevent a spill-over of instability and insecurity from the neighbouring unstable Farah, Helmand and Oruzgan provinces.

2. Lithuanian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team

2.1. Mission

The mission of the Provincial Reconstruction Team is to assist the Provincial administration in establishing a stable and secure environment in order to foster reconstruction. As it was the case with the ISAF, the PRT mission emphasizes the primacy of stability and security. A stable and secure environment is recognized to be a precondition for further reconstruction efforts.

Elements of stabilization and reconstruction are a part of the PRT mission statement. In the context of a stabilization and reconstruction discussion stabilization is defined as “the effort to create a secure and stable environment and to provide for the basic human needs of the population to include food, water, sanitation, and shelter.” Reconstruction is considered to be “the effort to create a stable and self-governing polity by establishing the rule of law, rehabilitating the economy, and otherwise improving the welfare of the people.”⁶

2.2. Organization

The first PRT in Afghanistan was established by the USA in February 2003 in Gardez, located in the eastern part of Afghanistan. Since then there have been established 25 more PRTs by a number of nations – Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, New Zealand,

⁵ US Department of Defense Report (U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Stability and Security in Afghanistan: Report to Congress in Accordance to 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (Section 1230, Public Law 110-181)*, Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2008, http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/Report_on_Progress_toward_Security_and_Stability_in_Afghanistan_1230.pdf, 23 08 2008) classifies the Ghor province as one of the 14 of the 34 Afghanistan provinces where less than 20 kinetic attacks took place during the period of 01 January 2007 and 08 March 2008 (p. 11). For the sake of comparison it could be mentioned that there were 500-2500 kinetic attacks, i.e. 25-125 times more than in the category which Ghor belongs to, in the provinces of Helmand, Kunar, Kandahar and Paktika during the same period. The Ghor province witnessed only 3 security incidents during 2007 (see *Ghor Provincial Overview: Updated October 23, 2008*, p. 1, http://www.nps.edu/Programs/CCS/Ghor/Ghor_Provincial_Overview.pdf, 12 11 2008).

⁶ Watson, B. G., *Reshaping the Expeditionary Army to Win Decisively: The Case for Greater Stabilization Capacity in the Modular Force*, Carlisle, PA.: Strategic Studies Institute, 2005, p. 7, <http://www.strategicstudiesinstitute.army.mil/pdffiles/PUB621.pdf>, 01 10 2008.

Norway, Spain, Sweden, Turkey and UK.⁷ The situation in their respective areas varied significantly. As a result every nation had different approach to the organization and operations of this non-doctrinal organization from the military point of view. PRTs are exclusively task-organized units established to accomplish tasks in Afghanistan.

PRT Chaghcharan has two distinct parts – military and civilian (see Figure 1). Command and control, patrol/manoeuvre, security, support and logistics elements make the military part of the PRT. The civilian part of the organization is comprised of individual representatives of various governmental agencies.

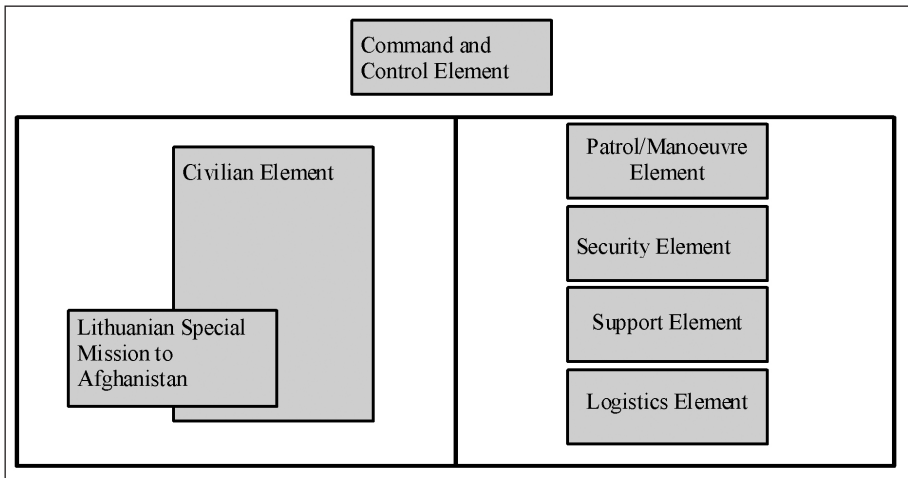


Figure 1. **Organization of PRT Chaghcharan**⁸

The Lithuanian-led PRT excelled in a number of areas that allowed it operate effectively. The first and the most important feature of PRT Chaghcharan is the presence of a large number of civilians. In this respect the Lithuanian-led PRT significantly differs from other PRTs. The presence of civilians in PRTs is a crucial element in accomplishing the mission as there are certain areas where the military do not possess required expertise. At various periods of time there were 9-12 civilians from 3 nations representing 7 governmental agencies (see Table 3). Such an array of expertise seriously contributes to the military effort assisting the provincial administration to create a stable and secure environment.

⁷ *International Security Assistance Force, September 01, 2008*, http://www.nato.int/ISAF/docu/epub/pdf/isaf_placemat.pdf, 01 09 2008..

⁸ The organizational elements listed in Figure 1 do not outline the structure of the PRT. They are rather logical organizational elements than structural ones.

Table 3. **Civilian Members of PRT Chaghcharan**

Lithuania	Lithuanian civilian expertise resides in the Special Mission to Afghanistan. Among other tasks the Mission supports PRT activities. Chief of the Special Mission is a diplomat from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; a civil servant from the Ministry of Defence is the Deputy Chief and political adviser; development adviser; 2 policemen (in 2007 they joined the European Union's Police Mission to Afghanistan).
Iceland	2 development advisers from the Icelandic Crisis Response Unit (left PRT in 2008).
USA	A diplomat and a representative of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID); ANP mentors.

Presence of military and civilians in one organization in an operational area is a great challenge both for the military and civilians. It is in rare cases when such a combination could be observed on operations. Neither civilians nor military are used to operating together. Neither have proper training for cooperation. During pre-deployment training the military usually does not meet their civilian counterparts. The military and civilians possess totally different organizational and working cultures. As a result, friction could be expected. Civilians and military need to have at least part of pre-deployment training together and meet each other before the deployment. When deployed the military and civilians need to spend extra time to develop a common understanding of the tasks and activities. It is not easy but at the end of the day it pays off. With only minor exceptions civilians and military must conduct planning, preparations and execution of tasks together. There should be a clear understanding who is in the lead and who is in support of a specific activity. Trust and mutual understanding are the preconditions for effective cooperation.

Another feature that the Lithuanian-led PRT excelled and utilizes to its advantage is multi-nationality. The military part of the organization benefits from the soldiers of various nations utilizing their strengths. In the beginning of the operation the PRT had soldiers from Denmark, Iceland⁹, Lithuania and the USA. Later the PRT was joined by Croatian, Georgian and Ukrainian military personnel while Iceland withdrew her service members.

⁹ Icelandic personnel were not military. They were members of Iceland's Crisis Response Units who were able to conduct military/paramilitary tasks in a relatively safe and secure environment.

2.3. Tasks

In order to accomplish its mission, the PRT maintains regular contacts with the Provincial authorities attending formal and informal foray to assist enhancing security and develop local capacity. Here the civilian-military nature of the PRT proves its utility. The military are usually in the lead of preparing for and participating in Provincial Security Council and Provincial Disbandment of Illegal Armed Groups (DIAG) Council meetings while civilians take responsibility of Provincial Development Council (PDC) meetings. The military utilize these activities mostly to contribute to the stabilization effort by assisting local authorities to address security issues. Civilian members are more focused on reconstruction but it might be argued that their efforts still fall under stabilization since what they do in this area is meant to ensure that basic human needs are met.

Training and mentoring ANP and developing their capabilities are the ways to establish Afghan capacity to ensure initially security and stability and later law and order. It is without a doubt that while accomplishing these tasks the PRT contributes to stabilization. The ANP currently is not a usual police organization. They are considered to be one more organization to counter Taliban. It remains mostly weak and only partially effective. Engaging ANP and developing its capabilities must remain a high priority among other PRT activities. The PRT with the assistance of US and EUPOL mentors must continue to train and mentor ANP and conduct operations together with them. A capable and willing ANP force must comprise a part of an exit strategy.

Supporting the DIAG process is another important PRT activity. This activity is part of the stabilization effort. After almost three decades of wars the Afghan society is abundant with a large numbers of weapons. The focus of the DIAG is to convince the individuals who have the potential to compete with provincial authorities to become or remain loyal to the legitimate authorities. The weapons are not the biggest issue. The problem is the people who might seek to base their power and influence on illegitimate use of weapons. Supporting the DIAG process requires plenty of time spent convincing people to be loyal to the legitimate authorities. As a supplementary activity weapons should be collected or properly registered. Numbers of collected and registered weapons demonstrate population's trust in stability of the current situation. In Ghor the success in the DIAG process suffers from inadequate attention of the GOA and under-funding.

Engaging International Organizations and Non-Governmental Organizations (IOs/NGOs) is very important in order to become updated on their reconstruction and development efforts and avoid duplication. This activity is a clear contribution to the reconstruction effort. PRT civilian members are extremely helpful in coordinating with IOs/NGOs. Their presence in the province and cooperation is considered as a testimony of a good security situation. Expectedly their numbers will eventually increase with the intensified activities of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) Field Office in Chaghcharan.

The PRT plans, prepares and implements various reconstruction projects. These projects are on the junction between the stabilization and reconstruction effort as they are meant to contribute to a secure and stable environment, provide for basic human needs and partially create a self-governing polity.

Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) are conducted in support of military operations. They are meant to address the immediate interest of a PRT commander and allow him operate with fewer constraints. Not much preparation is required to implement QIPs. The projects are planned and implemented mostly by PRT CIMIC personnel. QIPs fall under the category of stabilization activities as they directly contribute to the establishment of a secure and stable environment.

PRT civilian members possess funds to implement larger projects. These projects cover a longer perspective and are meant to ensure mid-term stability. They require more time and efforts to plan, prepare and implement. Civilian development advisers are in the lead. The enduring effects of the projects depend on a number of factors. Knowledge of the area, technical expertise, planning capacity and Afghan involvement are some of the factors that determine the staying effect of the projects. Disregarding any of them will reduce effort effectiveness. If properly implemented larger projects are supposed to fall under the category of reconstruction effort in a limited location. It could not be classified as a project that contributes to a reconstruction effort since it still mostly addresses security issues and is meant to win local people's hearts and minds and prevent adversaries to exploit people's dissatisfaction with lack of improvement.

Very large projects that have a long term impact and are meant to be part of a reconstruction effort are implemented by IOs/NGOs that have ample financial means. In this case preparation takes more time. PRT Chaghchran does not possess the required means or expertise to plan, prepare and implement these type of projects. The PRT can contribute to very large projects with local area knowledge and other required expertise.

It is of utmost importance that any reconstruction activity adheres to the following principles:

- Ownership (build on the leadership, participation, and commitment of a country and its people);
- Capacity building (strengthen local institutions, transfer technical skills, and promote appropriate policies);
- Sustainability (design programs to ensure their impact endures);
- Selectivity (allocate resources based on need, local commitment, and foreign policy interests);
- Assessment (conduct careful research, adapt best practices, and design for local conditions);
- Results (direct resources to achieve clearly defined, measurable, and strategically focused objectives);
- Partnership (collaborate with government, communities, donors, non-

profit organizations, the private sector, international organizations, and universities);

- Flexibility (adjust to changing conditions, take advantage of opportunities, and maximize efficiency);
- Accountability (design accountability and transparency and build effective checks and balances to guard against corruption).¹⁰

The Lithuanian-led PRT has an outstanding example where most of the mentioned principles were applied. As a result, the project significantly contributed to the stabilization effort in the Ghor province and reconstruction in a limited location. The Lithuanian Special Mission had funds to construct a number of small hydro-power plants. Site surveys were conducted in order to determine the locations suitable for power plants. A project description was developed which stated that Lithuania would buy all the required hardware and pay qualified personnel to supervise construction of a power plant and install the equipment. Local labour was required to construct a power plant and provide construction materials. The project also stated that the contractor was supposed to train two people to conduct user maintenance of the equipment. The project description required the local community development council (CDC) to determine who would receive electricity. After that the Provincial Development Council (PDC) was approached in order to receive their opinion what locations could be considered as a priority for them. Later identified local CDCs were contacted in order to receive their attitude towards the project. When CDC agreed to the project conditions and PDC made final decision the contractor was selected. A power plant was constructed using local labour and the contractor installing the required equipment.

As a result of this project one village in Ghor received electricity. Afghan ownership was ensured at least on three levels by a PDC decision, CDC decision and local people constructing the power plant. It was ensured that the people felt that it was their own power plant and that their contribution was essential. Local capacity was built on various levels. PDC became aware of the issues related to power plant. The provincial department of water and energy was involved in acting as secondary technical supervisors. The local CDC became more knowledgeable about power plant construction. Two men from the village acquired the needed skills to conduct user maintenance on the plant equipment.

It takes plenty of time and requires extra effort to go through all the steps in order to achieve multiple effects through a small project. It is much easier to contract others to build a power plant instead of having local people involved in receiving enough labour when required. It is much easier to decide by ourselves where to build a power plant. But had we done the things in an easy way we would not have achieved much. We might have even developed

¹⁰ Natsios A. S., "The Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development", *Parameters*, Vol. XXXV, No. 3, 2005, p. 5-17.

a long-term dependency of the supported on our support. While it is easier it does not mean it is better.

Since PRTs usually do not possess significant financial resources they should be viewed as a platform for reconstruction. A PRT can assist IOs/NGOs or any other potential donor to implement large projects. A PRT can provide security and possesses knowledge of the area and provincial needs. It is one of the ways how a PRT could support transitioning from stabilization to reconstruction, which is as important as ensuring stability. A vacuum that might occur between the stability and reconstruction by being inconsistent or under-resourced could be a breeding ground for instability.

3. Challenges and the Way-Ahead

There are serious challenges for the Lithuanian-led PRT and ISAF that need to be addressed in order to move forward with consolidating stabilization results and transitioning to reconstruction. These challenges are directly related to the international efforts to make its Afghanistan strategy work.

3.1. Troop Numbers

Troop numbers have a direct impact on security situation in Afghanistan. It is one of the most significant factors in ensuring stability. The ISAF reportedly suffers from a lack of troops.¹¹ Currently there are 53,000 NATO troops belonging to ISAF. Additionally there are 13,000 troops separately deployed on US-led Operation Enduring Freedom. Additionally there are 53,000 Afghan National Army (ANA) and 80,000 ANP personnel.¹² ANA and ANP numbers must be taken with caution as they qualitatively cannot equal to NATO troop numbers. Both of them remain weak and only partially effective.

With these international troop numbers in Afghanistan, there is 1 international soldier per 618 local people or 1 international soldier per each 12.21 sq km. Compared with other stability operations (see Table 4) Afghan numbers do not look impressive. In previous stability operations there was 1 soldier per 50 (in Kosovo) to 375 (in Haiti) local people. Troop to area ratio ranged from 1 soldier per each 0.3 sq. km in Kosovo to 1 soldier per each 8 sq km in Liberia. This ratio worse than in Afghanistan was only in Somalia where there was 1 soldier per each 16 sq. km. It could be insisted that currently deployed troops are neither an appropriate nor adequate force to meet the objectives.

¹¹ Weitz R., "Post-Bucharest: NATO's Prospect in Afghanistan." *Central Asia-Caucasus Analyst*, Vol.10, No. 8, 16 April 2008, p. 10-12, <http://www.cacianalyst.org/?q=node/4837>, 20 08 2008.

¹² Katzman, K., *Afghanistan: Post-War Governance, Security, and U.S. Policy*, Washington, D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2008, p. CRS-39, <http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/108306.pdf>, 26 08 2008.

Troop numbers are too low. ISAF is not an overwhelming force as defined by the Powel doctrine and practiced during deployments to the Persian Gulf in 1990-1991 and Bosnia in 1995-1996.¹³

Table 4. **Comparison of Peak International Troops by Territory and Population**¹⁴

Location	Peak number of international troops	International troops per square kilometer	International troops per persons
Kosovo	40,000	1 per 0.3 sq. km	1 per 50
Bosnia	60,000	1 per 0.85 sq. km	1 per 66
East Timor	9,000	1 per 1.6 sq. km	1 per 111
Iraq	155,000	1 per 2.8 sq. km	1 per 161
Somalia	40,000	1 per 16.0 sq. km	1 per 200
Liberia	11,000; 22,000 (MEF ⁶)	1 per 8.0 sq. km	1 per 265
Sierra Leone	18,000	1 per 4.0 sq. km	1 per 300
Haiti	20,000	1 per 1.5 sq. km	1 per 375

Troop numbers remain mostly absolute without addressing force utility. The utility of the troops deployed in Afghanistan depends on how they are used and how they are equipped. The troops that are not ready for operations in Afghan conditions (especially without addressing a mobility challenge) do not contribute to the achievement of operational objectives. The units must be versed in Afghan culture. Without a significant cultural awareness block during pre-deployment training the troops might make the situation worse instead of improving it. The units that deploy to Afghanistan need to be the type of the units that are required there. Firstly and mostly, light infantry units with an augmented CIMIC capability are needed there. The units need to have the required equipment. Deploying extra troops without equipment is a waste of resources and a futile effort. Equipment must match the task and situation where they are supposed to operate. The equipment that might send a message of a too aggressive troop posture in a relatively benign environment is not the right equipment. It might unnecessarily escalate the situation and send a totally wrong message to the local people.

The troops that have significant and numerous national restrictions are of limited utility. National caveats reduce troop and critical equipment utility.

Shorter tours of duty in Afghanistan do not contribute to troop effectiveness. Different nations have different policies related to the length of tours of duty. Previous experiences and practices could not be fully applied here.

¹³ Cohen E. A., *Supreme Command: Soldiers, Statesmen and Leadership in Wartime*, New York: Free Press, 2002, p. 219.

¹⁴ Bhatia M., Lanigan K., Wilkinson P., *Minimal Investments, Minimal Results – Failure of Security Policy in Afghanistan: Briefing Paper*, June 2004, p. 10, <http://www.cmi.no/pdf/?file=/afghanistan/doc/AREU-Brief-2004-June-security.pdf>, 29 08 2008.

It takes more time for NATO troops to become oriented and acquainted to the Afghan environment.

There are a number of aspects why troop numbers in Afghanistan are considered important. Historically the type of operations conducted in Afghanistan requires larger troop numbers than conventional military operations. Afghanistan is a very difficult terrain. To cover it adequately a larger number of troops are required. It could be suggested that the most important aspect related to troop numbers is local people's perception of our commitment to stabilization and reconstruction in Afghanistan. The local population must perceive NATO as a reliable and credible partner. Inadequate troop numbers and reduced utility do not contribute to the required perception. The troops that only provide base camp security or support operations inside base camps do not contribute to the creation of this perception either. If local people do not perceive our force as credible it will negatively affect our stabilization effort.

The number of Lithuanian-led PRT personnel might not look so impressive in absolute numbers. There are approximately 200 American, Croatian, Danish, Georgian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian soldiers. It makes troop to population ratio 1 soldier per 2,930 local people. It is almost 5 times lower than the international troop in Afghanistan average. The troop to area ratio is 1 soldier per 183.29 sq km which is 9 times lower than the average ratio for Afghanistan. But these are only absolute numbers. Having in mind force utility it could be argued that while not being an overwhelming force it is an adequate and appropriate force in the current situation. Lithuania and the other nations supporting ISAF efforts in Ghor could deploy the right mix of troops with required and adequate equipment and almost no national restrictions to conduct PRT operations in support of stabilization. PRT troops are visible in most of the areas of the province. They send the right message that NATO really cares about the province by committing adequate number of troops.

There might be one area to improve. Since PRTs contribute to stabilization efforts by assisting the Provincial authorities in establishing stable and secure environment it could be considered feasible and adequate to deploy Afghan troops in the province. They could be ANA or Afghan National Auxiliary Police (ANAP) units. They should be stationed in the districts that have the biggest potential of spill-over from the neighbouring unstable provinces like Farah and Helmand. Conducting training for these units and conducting joint operations with them would be in the spirit of the mission, demonstrate unity of effort of NATO troops and Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF) and allow contribution to the stabilization effort.

3.2. Counternarcotics Effort

Narcotics are another factor that negatively influences the security situation in Afghanistan. ISAF is not authorized to conduct counternarcotics operations.

This restriction witnesses inconsistency in ISAF's stabilization effort.

The Post-Taliban era saw a tremendous growth of poppy cultivation and opium production in Afghanistan. The two phenomena – opium poppy cultivation and narcotics trafficking – almost non-existent during the Taliban rule re-emerged and gained ground after 2001. During the Taliban rule the areas used for opium poppy cultivation ranged between 54,000 hectares in 1995 and 8,000 hectares in 2001.¹⁵ Currently 193,000 hectares are used for poppy cultivation making Afghanistan the largest cultivator of poppies with up to 82% of global poppy cultivation.¹⁶

One of the most alarming negative impacts of poppy cultivation and opium production is that drug trade became a way to secure funds for Taliban operations.

In January 2006 the GOA supported by the UK as a lead supporting nation in this area adopted the National Drug Control Strategy where the ways to deal with drugs for next 5 years are outlined. The aim of activities in this area is to secure a sustainable decrease in cultivation, production, trafficking and consumption of illicit drugs with a view to complete and sustainable elimination. The Strategy establishes national priorities in the counternarcotics activities.¹⁷

The counternarcotics efforts against poppy cultivation are subdivided into centrally directed eradication and governor-led eradication. The former is a GOA-led effort conducted in provinces that have largest poppy areas. The latter is a provincial effort to decrease poppy cultivation. The GOA in support of a centrally directed eradication could deploy a special eradication force. While conducting a governor-led eradication ANP is involved together with provincial official and local leaders. The effectiveness of poppy eradication is rather dubious as it develops farmers' negative attitude towards the government and widen Taliban recruitment base.¹⁸ Besides this counter-stabilization effect poppy eradication might also produce a counter-reconstruction effect by denying farmers a way to earn money.

The Ghor province is not considered a major cultivator of opium poppy. In 2007 there were 1,503 hectares used for poppy cultivation with a significant decrease from 2006 and 188 hectares of poppies eradicated.¹⁹ The tendency witnessed from the 2005-2006 growing season to the 2006-2007 season is that

¹⁵ United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime; Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Government of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007 – Executive Summary, August 2007*, New York: UNODC, 2007, p. 3, http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/AFG07_ExSum_web.pdf, 30 08 2008.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 1.

¹⁷ Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, *National Drug Control Strategy – An Updated Five-Year Strategy for Tackling the Illicit Drug Problem, January 2006*, Kabul: Ministry of Counter Narcotics, 2006, p. 17, http://www.fco.gov.uk/resources/en/pdf/pdf18/fco_nationaldrugcontrolstrategy, 25 08 2008.

¹⁸ Cordesman A., *Losing the Afghan-Pakistan War? The Rising Threat*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2008, p. 95, http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/080917_afghanthreat.pdf, 19 09 2008.

¹⁹ United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime; Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Government of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan Opium Survey 2007 – Executive Summary, August 2007*, New York: UNODC, 2007, p. 6, http://www.unodc.org/pdf/research/AFG07_ExSum_web.pdf, 30 08 2008.

the percentage of arable land used for poppy cultivation decreased while the percentage of arable land used for other crops as wheat, vegetables and fruit increased or remained the same.²⁰ This is the reason why a centrally directed eradication was not used in the province. Instead the Provincial authorities were encouraged to conduct governor-led eradication.

The provincial authorities are concerned with drug trafficking through the province.²¹ The opium that transits through Ghor mostly originates in Badakhshan and other northern provinces. All the opium that arrives to Ghor leaves it as there are no opium processing facilities in the province. In 2004 it was estimated that the total amount of the transited opium through Ghor was 120-240 t annually.²² It could be assumed that with different dynamics in poppy cultivation in various regions of Afghanistan the opium transit volume through Ghor remained the same or the decrease was insignificant. The total amount of opium that leaves the province adding opium potentially produced in Ghor makes 175 - 295 t or 2.12 - 3.67 % of the total opium produced in Afghanistan. Taking into consideration that ANP, which has the main responsibility to deal with drugs in the province, is weak it could be stated that capabilities to counter drug trafficking in Ghor are hardly credible.

It might be insisted that there must be steps made to make an Afghan counter-narcotics effort in Ghor more effective and consistent. First of all, it must be a balanced approach as most of the people who are currently engaged in poppy cultivation and drug trafficking have their income only from these activities. With an unbalanced approach the international community and the plan might lose their credibility. Secondly, if poorly implemented any activities might develop unnecessary local people's hostility. Undesired effects could seriously undermine stability.

ISAF needs to become involved in the counter-narcotics effort as it directly supports stabilization efforts by assisting the GOA to establish and maintain a stable and secure environment. Poppy cultivation works against the stabilization effort as Taliban receive their financial means from the drug trade. It is confirmed by the latest tendency in poppy cultivation when there was a significant increase in poppy cultivation in the provinces where Taliban controls some areas while the other provinces either stabilized or decreased poppy cultivation.²³

²⁰ Mansfield D., *Beyond the Metrics: Understanding the Nature of Change in the Rural Livelihoods of Opium Poppy Growing Households in the 2006/2007 Growing Season – A Report for the Afghan Drugs Inter Departmental Unit of the UK Government, May 2007*, London: Inter Departmental Unit of the UK Government, 2007, p. 17, http://www.davidmansfield.org/data/Field_Work/UK/FinalDrivers0607.pdf, 27 08 2008.

²¹ United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, Ministry of Counter Narcotics, Government of Afghanistan, *Afghanistan Opium Winter Rapid Assessment Survey, February 2008*, New York: UNODC, 2008, p. 37, <http://www.unodc.org/documents/crop-monitoring/Afghan-winter-survey-Feb08-short.pdf>, 28 08 2008.

²² United Nations Office of Drugs and Crime, World Bank, *Afghanistan's Drug Industry – Structure, Functioning, Dynamics and Implications for Counter-Narcotics Policy*, New York: UNODC, 2005, p. 83-87, http://www.unodc.org/pdf/afg/publications/afghanistan_drug_industry.pdf, 24 08 2008.

²³ Cordesman A., *Losing the Afghan-Pakistan War? The Rising Threat*, Washington, D.C.: Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2008, p. 95, http://www.csis.org/media/csis/pubs/080917_afghanthreat.pdf, 19 09 2008.

The other reason why ISAF needs to contribute to the counternarcotics effort is that it would support reconstruction. This is also relevant to Ghor. PRTs and other organizations contributing to reconstruction rebuild infrastructure (roads, bridges, schools, etc.). It is very much appreciated by local people. But the rebuilt infrastructure in most cases facilitate better drug trafficking. To remain consistent while performing stabilization tasks and contributing to reconstruction ISAF must develop a feasible and balanced approach how to assist the GOA both in poppy eradication and drug trafficking prevention.

3.3. Reconstruction

As it is clearly seen from the PRT mission statement, PRTs in Afghanistan rely on a “security first” concept. It assumes that first of all the efforts are marshalled towards establishing a stable and secure environment. After that, reconstruction activities are conducted in order to ensure mid-term stability for the population, build independent local capacity and ensure that larger reconstruction projects are implemented. Transitioning from the situation when mostly stabilization tasks are conducted towards the situation when reconstruction is mostly addressed is very crucial.

It was already mentioned that the security situation in Ghor is very good (see p. 6). Ghor is the only province in the Western region which is considered stable and secure (see Figure 2). It proves that PRT’s stabilization efforts in Ghor yielded desired results. The other three Western Region provinces – Farah, Badghis and Herat – are on the unsecure province list with more than 20 kinetic attacks during the period of 01 January 2007 to 08 March 2008. The worst security situation is in the provinces of Helmand, Kunar, Kandahar and Paktika. These provinces witnessed 500 – 2,500 kinetic attacks during the same period.

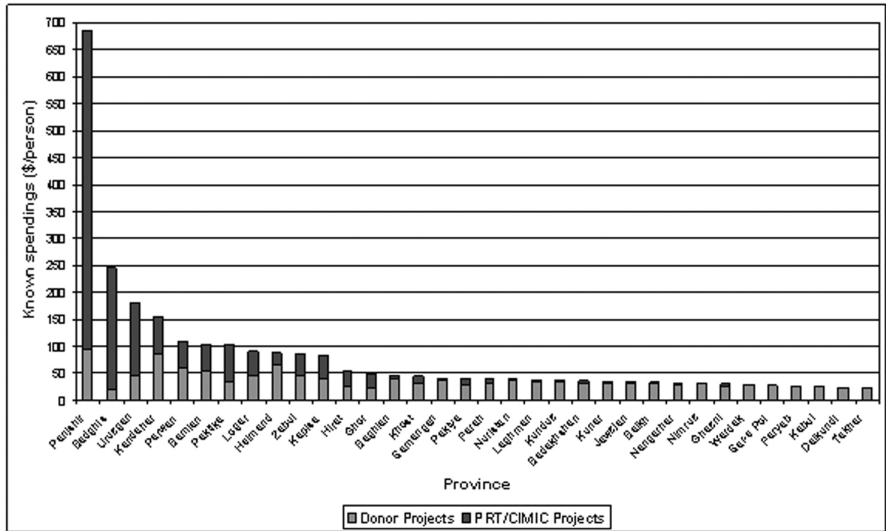


Figure 2. Kinetic Activity in Afghanistan from 01 January 2007 to 08 March 2008²⁴

It should be understandable that reconstruction efforts must be focused in the provinces that are not displayed in Figure 2, i.e. where the security situation is the best, in order to consolidate the achieved and swiftly transition into reconstruction. Even after a superficial analysis of the security situation and money spent on reconstruction in individual provinces (see Figure 3) it becomes obvious that the data in the both Figures demonstrate contradictory tendencies. It could be noted that 10 provinces (Helmand, Kandahar, Paktika, Uruzgan, Zabul, Kapisa, Logar, Parwan, Badghis, and Herat) out of 20 listed in Figure 3 received more reconstruction funds than Ghor. It becomes rather difficult to understand when big sums of money for reconstruction are spent in hostile environment. First of all, it is not an effective way to spend reconstruction money. Extra sums of money spent to ensure contractor security might be unbelievably high. Secondly, it looks as if we reward the provinces that fail stabilization. It might even be perceived by Afghans as our desire to (unsuccessfully) buy Taliban's and other hostile elements' compliance. One of the Ghor Governors when assessing the situation in his province often joked that he needed a dozen Talibs to bring more reconstruction into the province. The situation when more money is spent in insecure and unstable provinces does not add to the credibility of NATO and other international actors in Afghanistan.

²⁴ U.S. Department of Defense, *Report on Progress Toward Stability and Security in Afghanistan: Report to Congress in Accordance to 2008 National Defense Authorization Act (Section 1230, Public Law 110-181)*, Washington, D.C.: Department of Defense, 2008, p. 11, http://www.defenselink.mil/pubs/Report_on_Progress_toward_Security_and_Stability_in_Afghanistan_1230.pdf, 23 08 2008.

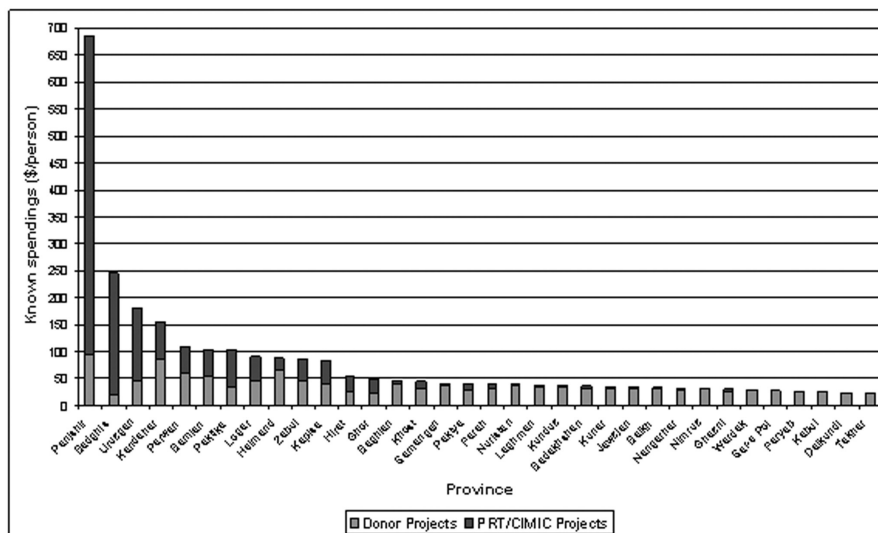


Figure 3. Completed, Ongoing, Planned and Funded PRT Spending Per Capita Per Province²⁵

This situation deserves to be addressed by ISAF, international community and the GOA. They must ensure that funds for reconstruction are prioritized to the provinces where the situation is receptive for such projects, including Ghor. In case this point is missed credibility of reconstruction effort is seriously undermined and the whole concept why we are in Afghanistan becomes distorted.

3.4. Government of Afghanistan Capacity

An inadequate attitude from the GOA to provincial needs and from provincial authorities to the district needs and from district authorities to village needs, usually strikes as the most amazing and shocking fact. Provincial authorities are left on their own to deal with challenges (e.g., support to the DIAG process) and even with the consequences of serious natural disasters. They are forced to use scarce resources that are available within the province. The situation is totally unacceptable in Ghor which is one of the poorest provinces in Afghanistan. The inability of the GOA to project services into the provinces and make ordinary people feel that the GOA cares for them in stable and secure environment is one of the causes why we currently see the resumption of insurgent operations in Afghanistan. As a result when insurgent groups

²⁵ Waldman M., *Falling Short – Aid Effectiveness in Afghanistan*, London: Oxfam, 2008, p. 14, http://www.oxfam.org.uk/resources/policy/debt_aid/downloads/aid_effectiveness_afghanistan.pdf, 24 08 2008.

resumed operations they encountered little of government infrastructure or popular commitment to resist them.²⁶

This situation to some extent could be explained by a low administrative capacity of civil servants at all levels. In Ghor it is felt very acutely, as the province became bereft of educated people, as a result of long lasting wars and is not attractive due its low economic development. Despite this, it is a rather poor explanation for the GOA's inability to deliver.

Dominance of tribes also explains a reduced local capacity. Mostly people loyal to their tribe and clan interests, but not the ones who can perform and deliver, are promoted to public posts. But it is a weak argument explaining GOA's inability to demonstrate its care for the people.

It could be argued that the main reason related to the Government's low output is the nature of the Afghan society and the way how it developed. The main unit in the Afghan society remains tribe. Tribes ensure security and meeting the needs of their members. It became obvious during the rule of last Afghan kings during the period of 1880 - 1973. The kings were rulers who had their areas of responsibility but they were not supposed to interfere with the areas belonging to tribes. Tribes became even stronger after the Soviet invasion in 1979. They provided security for their members and inspired them to fight against Soviets. Tribes acquired very special status during the violent and turbulent years of Civil Wars during the period of 1992 - 1996 and the Taliban rule during the period of 1996 - 2001. During these periods there was no functioning government in the country. Tribes had to assume the functions that are usually performed by the states. They ensured security and delivered the services to their members. They fought wars with other tribes whenever member security was threatened. National cohesion was at risk but people felt relatively safe living in these rather primitive formations. Some of the tribal leaders became warlords with their own armed militias.

Today tribal primacy tradition is being continued as the most acceptable and natural way of life of Afghan people. Currently it could be witnessed as tribes "delegate" their representatives into the GOA, provincial administrations and other bodies in order to ensure that their interests are taken into consideration and defended. The best way to accomplish this is to prevent any interference into the traditional tribal structure by the governmental bodies.

Ghor is no exception. It was already discussed what effects exist within the provincial administration due to the tribal organization primacy. The best way for PRT members to understand the provincial authorities is to become familiar with what tribes provincial officials belong to.

The newly established model of governance in Afghanistan and supported by PRTs in the provinces is more familiar to the people from Europe than to Afghans. The current government model does not fully reflect or integrate

²⁶ Dobins J., Poole M. A., Long A., Runkle B., *After the War: Nation Building from FDR to George W. Bush*, Santa Monica, CA.: Rand Corporation, 2008, p. 103, <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG716/>, 01 09 2008.

the traditional tribal system. As a result some tribal leaders who were very influential before 2001 now might feel threatened. Their reactions may vary. They might accept the new system and consider it as an advantage. Others might take the opportunity and “delegate” as many of his tribesmen as possible in order to maintain influence. Few might consider conducting hostile activities in order to demonstrate their importance and maintain previous influence. In Ghor for example, there is a troublemaker who constantly lets others know about him. The way he does it is totally unacceptable. In this case he must be contained and the rules of the game need to be explained to him.

Currently when in Ghor the PRT deals primarily with stabilization tasks promotion of democracy and, to some extent, promotion of ineffective GOA might become counter-productive. As a consequence some people could turn against the international troops or the authorities that we support and start openly support Taliban. Since changing the nature of the society is difficult or even impossible existing traditional governance needs to be exploited and accommodated. It is not democracy with free elections, but ensuring security and addressing reconstruction are the issues that the Afghan people are mostly interested in and concerned with.

Conclusions

Being in the lead of a PRT in Afghanistan for Lithuania is a significant challenge. Nevertheless, PRT Chaghcharan achieved a lot and possesses great potential for further positive development. It was instrumental in the situation stabilization in the province. Its operations ensured a stable and secure environment. Conditions for transitioning to dominant reconstruction are created. The PRT's strength is integrated and coordinated activities with civilian members. It must be preserved and further exploited. The PRT integrates various national approaches and takes advantage of it. Familiarity with and knowledge of the Afghan culture and the province is considered PRT's advantage.

From the previous discussion it could be concluded that a PRT as a military organization with a robust civilian element is hardly able to address both stabilization and reconstruction areas consistently. Stating otherwise would be considered too ambitious. A PRT possesses neither capabilities nor resources to effectively conduct reconstruction and consequently are not able to ensure a staying effect. Stabilization tasks are more feasible with a presence of robust CIMIC and civilian elements contributing to these efforts. Generally, Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan are Provincial Stabilization Teams. In order to further remain successful PRTs must mainly focus on the full spectrum of stabilization tasks. The PRT should also become involved in counternarcotics effort as narcotics in Afghanistan is a serious security threat. Contacts with other players in the province, especially provincial authorities, must remain an important activity. PRT operations should not be limited by

national restrictions. PRT needs to possess required resources as adequate financial means, equipment and enough military and civilian personnel in order to be successful in performing stabilization tasks.

There might potentially emerge a serious threat to stability if there is no transitioning to reconstruction. While focusing more on stabilization activities, the PRT should reserve the responsibility for reconstruction to larger international donors. PRT's role in this area must be engaging IOs/NGOs and assisting them to implement reconstruction projects. Civilian members are extremely instrumental in establishing initial contacts and attracting IOs/NGOs to ensure a smooth transitioning to reconstruction. Special mission members in Kabul must be insistent in convincing ISAF, GOA and other international partners to use their funds in stable provinces, including Ghor.

PRT lead nations should agree to apply the same policies with regard to where reconstruction funds are used. It is required to be consistent and to reward the provinces that are able to establish and maintain stable and secure environment. As a major troop contributing nation Lithuania could seek the implementation of this approach in other parts of Afghanistan in order to ensure stabilization, especially in the provinces bordering with Ghor.

With a review of current activities and better understanding of the environment, PRT operations will become more effective and efficient. Innovative thinking and determination are needed to capitalize on the achievements.