

ANAOA

Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy

In a dry and dusty military camp just out of Kabul, Afghanistan, a tight-knit group of Kiwis are getting used to words like kandak (battalion), bridmal (senior NCOs), tolay (companies) and blooks (platoons).

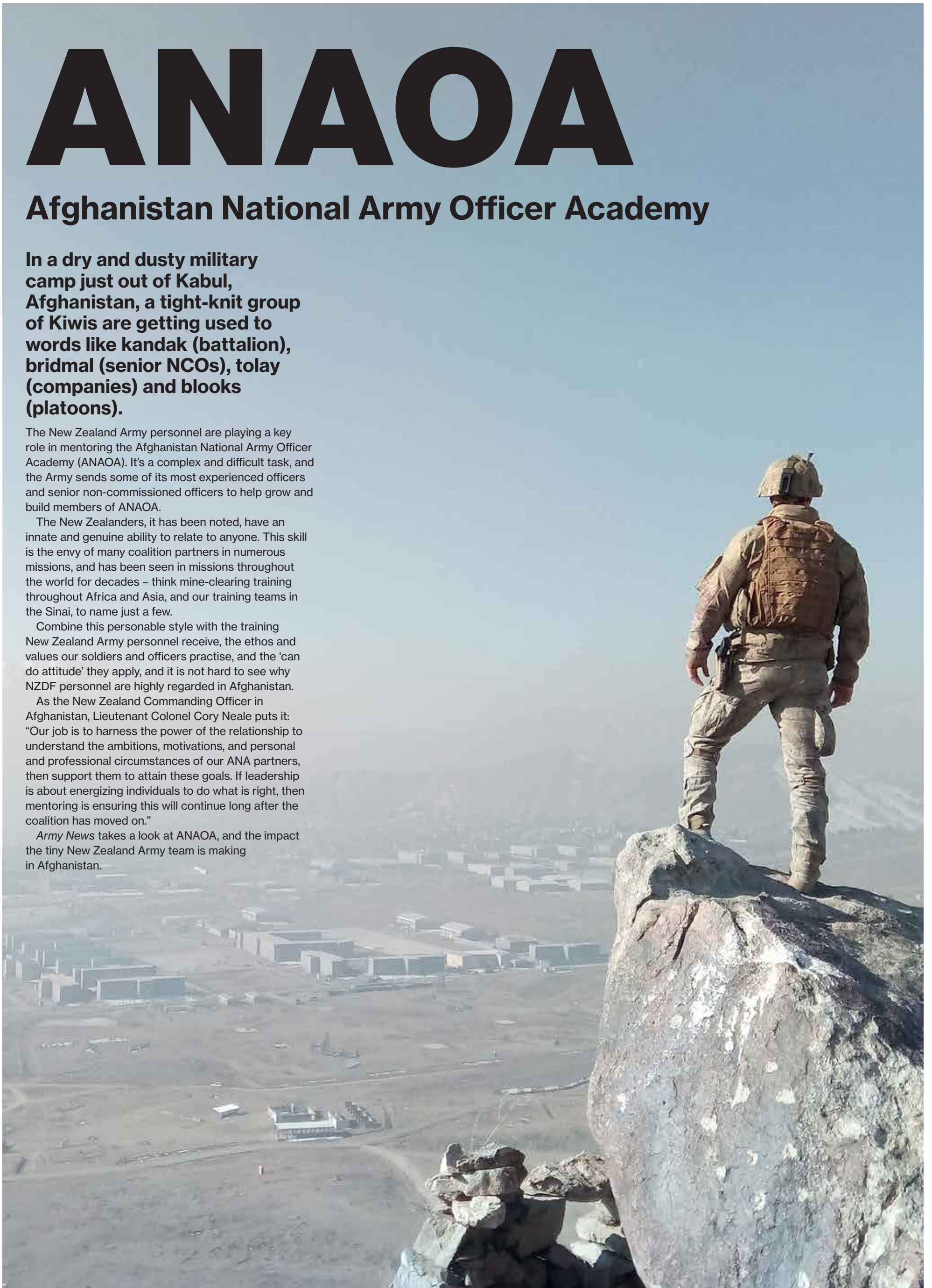
The New Zealand Army personnel are playing a key role in mentoring the Afghanistan National Army Officer Academy (ANAOA). It's a complex and difficult task, and the Army sends some of its most experienced officers and senior non-commissioned officers to help grow and build members of ANAOA.

The New Zealanders, it has been noted, have an innate and genuine ability to relate to anyone. This skill is the envy of many coalition partners in numerous missions, and has been seen in missions throughout the world for decades – think mine-clearing training throughout Africa and Asia, and our training teams in the Sinai, to name just a few.

Combine this personable style with the training New Zealand Army personnel receive, the ethos and values our soldiers and officers practise, and the 'can do attitude' they apply, and it is not hard to see why NZDF personnel are highly regarded in Afghanistan.

As the New Zealand Commanding Officer in Afghanistan, Lieutenant Colonel Cory Neale puts it: "Our job is to harness the power of the relationship to understand the ambitions, motivations, and personal and professional circumstances of our ANA partners, then support them to attain these goals. If leadership is about energizing individuals to do what is right, then mentoring is ensuring this will continue long after the coalition has moved on."

Army News takes a look at ANAOA, and the impact the tiny New Zealand Army team is making in Afghanistan.



A FRUSTRATING YET REWARDING EXPERIENCE

By LTCOL Cory Neale

As part of OP RUA II, the New Zealand Army contributes 11 officers and soldiers to help mentor the Afghanistan Army's officers. The mission is part of the United Kingdom's Operation Toral deployment to develop the Afghanistan National Officer Academy (ANAOA). Together with UK and NZ troops, there are also Australian and Danish personnel that comprise both the mentors to the academy and real life support to enable mentoring.

The ANAOA is in the middle of the Marshal Fahim National Defence University. Much like OCS (NZ), it aims to produce tactically capable platoon (blook) commanders through a year-long course. Mentoring at the ANAOA is a frustrating yet rewarding experience; however, it is a role where our men and women excel. Success in any mentoring mission is entirely about building strong relationships so effective two-way communication can occur. The power of interpersonal relationships is an important life skill for anyone to learn and one that applies in equal measure to daily life within the multi-national environment of Camp Qargha in Western Kabul.

In 2012 a memorandum of understanding regarding cooperation for the development of an officer training academy modelled off the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst was signed between the United Kingdom and Afghanistan. The ANAOA, as it was called, was to be a credible and resilient officer academy with strong reputation, producing high quality leaders for an effective, professional and sustainable Afghan National Defence and Security Force (ANDSF).

Over the past five years, the ANAOA has commissioned 3374 officers, including 124 female officers. The mission comprises 65 mentors from the UK, Australia, Denmark and New Zealand. Since inception, the NZDF has contributed 41 mentors to the AMM. Mentoring at ANAOA is constantly evolving, with each new Chief Mentor articulating a vision for the mentors to follow. Changes are made with an eye for the future while remaining mindful of past AMM effort, Afghan culture and the needs of the wider Afghan National Army.

Right now the mission is deep into the "operate" phase of the campaign plan, with mentoring effort focused on the long-term resilience of the ANAOA as a self-learning organisation. To put this into perspective, the ANAOA is operating at about 80% efficiency in terms of selection, training syllabus, staff functions, and policy.



Afghan troops under instruction.

The ANAOA's structure

The ANAOA is based around three training battalions (kandaks) each comprising three companies (tolays) of three platoons (blooks). To enable training there are the normal HQ and staff functional areas, the biggest of these being the G7 department which deals with training delivery, policy and assessment. NZDF mentors currently operate within both the kandaks and G7.

Training at the ANAOA is cumulative with the Junior Term focusing on individual foundation skills, the intermediate term aimed at developing section (delgai) level command and the senior Term teaching counterinsurgency operations at platoon level.

Core Skills by Term at ANAOA

JUNIOR	<i>Basic Soldier</i>
Weapon Handling Basic Soldier Skills	Navigation Combat Life Support
INTERMEDIATE	<i>Leadership Training</i>
Leadership 1st Command Appointments	Academic Study Orders Process
SENIOR	<i>Combat Leader</i>
COIN Instructional Techniques	Range Work Platoon Combat Ops

How is mentoring conducted at the ANAOA?

Each department crafts a plan that takes into account term priorities and recognizing that ANAOA is an Afghan academy that will always be a reflection of society and culture. For the junior soldiers the method of mentoring has been to set specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound goals aimed at both lines of effort.

What are the challenges faced by the mentors?

Culture. The ANAOA is a reflection of Afghan society and is therefore influenced by negative aspects such as nepotism and corruption. Routinely, the ANAOA will be ordered by high-ranking government or ANA members to accept candidates onto the course. Gender disparity is another challenge for the mentors; however this has seen progress recently with a number of firsts. NZDF mentors are leading the way in attempting to build greater equality into training at the ANAOA. Females are now able to train at night, an issue previously, and therefore are learning a greater amount of the syllabus. For example, Captain Demi Exley has been moved from mentoring a female Lt platoon commander to mentoring a male Maj tolay commander. This relationship has been a considerable success and adopted as best practice.

A self-learning academy. Much of the past five years supporting the ANAOA has focused on ensuring it 'works'. This is a direct reflection of our own military values where we prize the mission above all else. As the mission seeks to drive the ANAOA towards the 'sustain' phase of the AMCP, the mentoring method is shifting to a situation where mentors will actively disengage from problems to force the staff to solve issues themselves. This allows mentors' efforts to be redirected to resolving other issues.

What will the future of the mentor mission look like?

Unlocking the final challenges is increasingly difficult and involves exploration of the interfaces and frictions around the ANAOA. 'Enabling' rather than simply "fixing" ANAOA will likely see the AMCP altered to tackle these issues. Thoughts around how to achieve this are now being developed and will likely dominate future terms. From an OP RUA II mission perspective, mentoring in whatever guise, is still required. This is very much a "long game" and professional, motivated and intelligent NZDF personnel will always be needed.



NEW ROLE - SAME CHALLENGES

Colonel Nick Gillard's first tour of Afghanistan was in 2009 where he served as the Chief of Staff CRIB 14. When he arrived back in the country some eight years later he asked himself "what has changed in the ensuing years?"

Is the road to reconciliation between the government and people of Afghanistan and the insurgency a viable goal given the historical precedence? As the Operation

Resolute Support (RS) Director CJ35, I was well positioned to examine that question from a strategic, operational and tactical perspective during my time in the role. My summation would be that the country sits at an important crossroads. The Afghan National Defence and Security Forces (ANDSF) - led counter insurgency campaign has been described as being at a stalemate. But given a number of cumulative factors, including the recent brief but important ceasefire with the Taliban, the analysis now stands as advantage to the government (GIROA), people and security forces of Afghanistan.

New Zealand, represented by the OP RUA II contingent, continues to play an important role in realising that road to reconciliation and peace. The contingent is small relative to our NATO partners

but does enjoy a positive and respected profile. The mentoring and real life support provided by the Qargha team and those of us within RS Headquarters were part of a wider multinational organisation tasked with enabling the ANDSF through the provision of a Train, Advise and Assist (TAA) capability perform an important function. This holistic approach aims to raise the professional capability of the ANDSF across the operational and tactical spectrum. The development of leadership and the improvement of fighting capabilities are two of the pillars that form the Afghan Security Roadmap articulated by GIROA and NATO that the Kiwi contingent contributes directly to.

My role was as part of a multinational team tasked to reinitiate the previously defunct CJ35 Branch within Headquarters RS. The branch had been disestablished with the downscaling of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in 2014 and the establishment of the RS mission. However, changes to the mission and the uplift of NATO forces saw the need for a bespoke branch to fill the gap between the CJ5 and CJ3 branches. The tour saw the team take on dual tasks of physically establishing the branch and reinvigorating those critical relationships across the headquarters, the deployed Task Force (TF) and Train, Advise, Assist Commands (TAAC) and the ANDSF. Simultaneously the team was responsible for the management of the RS campaign out to the mid-term planning timeline. This included the prioritisation, resource allocation and synchronisation of the effects for the TAA efforts across all TF and TAAC in the Combined Joint Op Area. The TAA effort still supports the ANDSF Campaign Plan (NASRAT 1397) and sets the conditions for the military line of operation on the road to reconciliation. This remains particularly relevant now as Afghanistan prepares for the conduct of Parliamentary and District Council elections in late 2018.

From a personal perspective it was an honour to once again command NZDF personnel on an operational tour. There was also great satisfaction in seeing the CJ35 branch re-establish itself in the planning timeline. It was hard work, and at times a test of patience and resolve. But as my culminating operational experience it was ultimately rewarding and educational.



The New Zealand contingent.

WORKING TOWARD FEMALE INTEGRATION: Building a sub-culture in the ANA

ANAOA

Captain Demi Exley deployed to ANAOA to work on female integration within the academy. She deployed, she says, with full knowledge that female integration, as a result of cultural sensitivities in Afghanistan, would be a challenge.

The staff and cadets come from various provinces of Afghanistan where cultural restrictions vary in stringency; however, the issue stems from general female-male interaction still being considered taboo by some. Female staff and cadets are not viewed as equal to their male counterparts. The equality that New Zealand society, and therefore the NZDF, expects as standard is generally not the case, and the solution is both complicated and long term.

Within the ANAOA, the ideal would be that irrespective of gender, the staff work together towards the common goal of producing quality officers for the ANA. Realistically in the short term, this is easier said than done and is recognised by regular success stories of progress. In my time here we have started normalizing female night training. Female cadets are conducting more than 90% of the syllabus with their male counterparts, and they participated in the tug of war competition against the males. Some female staff are now teaching lessons to mixed gender classes, and I was the first coalition female to mentor a male company commander.

To achieve full integration will require extensive positive influence, and persistent integration-focused mentoring of both male and female staff. It requires a shift to a more gender neutral mentality, and an adjustment of basic cultural gender restrictions to accommodate the requirements of a military. It is not as simple as changing a structure, a process, or a rule. It is effectively changing the cultural mind-set of an organisation regarding females' validity, from both a male and female perspective. The newer generation of cadets and staff proved to play a significant and positive role in this required cultural adjustment.

Working towards achieving this involved building strong relationships with the male and female chain of command, and constant communication and mediation between male and female staff to achieve desired outcomes. The aim, in the first instance, was to allow the female cadets the same opportunity for learning as their male counterparts, and secondly to influence the culture of female and male staff working together to achieve the common goal.

My role was so different from anything I have done previously, but was such an awesome experience working to help improve the ANAOA and therefore the wider ANA. It was a rewarding job being given the opportunity to build relationships with the Afghan instructors, and to see the positive effect we can have on their individual excellence and institutional resilience. The integration is a work in progress, but even in my short time there, we saw definite, tangible and meaningful improvements which will hopefully have a long lasting impact, and achieve a more diverse, resilient and cohesive ANA.

For women of the NZ Army looking for a different experience in an operational tour, this is certainly a worthwhile place to look. Mentoring here is a rewarding and developmental role, and I am so grateful for the opportunity.



BUILDING PHYSICAL RESILIENCE INTO ANAOA

Physical training instructor Staff Sergeant Brett Maraku is the first New Zealand soldier to mentor the ANAOA PTI, and is approaching this new role enthusiastically, he says.

As soon as I started I found there were many areas where I could add value to make positive improvements in the way the wing operated.

Before tackling the big issues, building an effective relationship was the priority. Building rapport is about getting to know the individual, their strengths and weaknesses, motivation and circumstances. Within the physical training wing, which nests within the G7 (training) Cell, I am responsible for the guidance and development of a team of 12 ANA Physical Training Instructors (PTIs) of SGT (E) and above, including the Officer Commanding, Captain Nazeer Ahmad.

The wing is responsible for ANAOA PT with

programmed delivery to a different kandak (battalion) each day from 0830-1030hrs. To achieve this, nine PTIs are allocated among each toloy (Company). The physical training delivered varies, and includes loaded marching, team sport, hill running, and circuits. The academy is modelled largely off the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst and as such officer cadet fitness is measured through a UK styled battle tab with a physical fitness assessment which is similar to our RFL (2.4km run with press ups and sit ups).

The wing also coordinates and runs a series of sporting competitions throughout the year that contribute points toward the top blok (platoon) with the recipients presented an award for their achievement at graduation. One area that has seen positive change has been in the development of an ANAOA "Best Athlete" Policy. This policy, drafted in close conjunction with Capt Ahmad is in-line with the mission's intent to build standards and resilience into the academy. The NZDF has sponsored an award for the best performing male and female cadets and these were presented earlier this year.



Relaxing with their colleagues.