The NATO Training Mission for Afghanistan (NTM-A) began operations in late November when it activated at Camp Eggers, in Kabul, to oversee higher-level training and mentoring of Afghan national security forces. NTM-A will continue training the Afghan National Army (ANA) and will increase emphasis on training the Afghan national police (ANP). NTM-A merged with the U.S.-led Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan (CSTC-A). The unified command will build on already-established relationships as well as foster new ones.

The two organizations will have synchronized missions. NTM-A’s will include the provision of training and mentoring teams to the Afghan National Army and the Afghan national police, ANA’s institutional training, and ANP reform at the district level and below. The commander of NATO’s International Security Assistance Force and U.S. Forces Afghanistan, GEN Stanley A. McChrystal, has long emphasized the importance of protecting the Afghan population in order to succeed in Afghanistan. The ANP are critical to that mission, since they are usually locals who understand the tribal structures and are familiar with the people. In the past, however, problems of illiteracy, desertion and corruption have plagued the police force.

LTG William B. Caldwell IV, who assumed authority of CSTC-A from its former commander, MG Richard P. Formica, noted that “the path to success for NTM-A/CSTC-A lies with three t’s: teaming, transparency and transition.”

Preparing Afghanistan to take over its own security is a primary element of the war plan President Barack Obama announced December 1. LTG Caldwell told the Associated Press in December that there is a rough goal of eventually fielding 240,000 Afghan soldiers and 160,000 Afghan police but that those figures could change. The shorter-term goal is to increase the size of the Afghan army from 90,000 to 134,000 and raise the police rolls to approximately 96,000 by October 31.

**Iraq Update.** With all non-U.S. Coalition members having withdrawn their forces from Iraq last August, U.S. troops serving in that country are now a “coalition of one.” Fittingly, as of January 1, the moniker Multi-National Force-Iraq was shelved in favor of “U.S. Forces-Iraq.” GEN Raymond T. Odierno remains in command, with LTG Charles Jacoby overseeing day-to-day operations.

With fewer than 115,000 U.S. forces in country as of November 2009, the United States is on schedule to achieve its target goal of 50,000 by September 1. In concert with the ongoing drawdown, U.S. forces have stepped up counterinsurgency efforts, including support of Iraqi security forces (ISF) in cities, partnering with Iraqi troops, training and mentoring their Iraqi counterparts, and participating in joint operations with Iraqi forces. Incoming U.S. troops will now consist of specially trained advise-and-assist brigades, including additional cadres of officers who are expected to liaise with ISF as a way to help facilitate the drawdown. In addition, the merging of several unique headquarters is expected to further reduce American boots on the ground, perhaps by as much as 40 percent.

Although there had been speculation that the postponement of national elections from early January would slow, if not halt, the drawdown, that no longer appears to be the case. A preliminary proposal calls for moving the vote to the end of February, and, while some predict the elections could be delayed until as late as March, the drawdown appears to be unaffected, which many attribute to the success of U.S. counterinsurgency efforts. GEN Odierno, who wants to keep troop numbers steady for two months after the elections, told reporters in Baghdad, “We won’t have to make any decisions until the late spring.”

**XM-25 Tested.** For the first time, a soldier successfully shoulder-fired a “smart” high-explosive airburst round from the XM-25 weapon system at...
Aberdeen Test Center, Md., in August. The semiautomatic weapon can accurately deliver an explosive round that neutralizes targets up to 700 meters away, a distance well past the range of the rifles and carbines most soldiers now carry. In addition, the XM-25 is 300 percent more effective at incapacitating the enemy than current weapons used at the squad level.

The XM-25 has an array of sights, sensors and lasers housed in a target-acquisition fire-control unit on top of the weapon. It also features an oversize magazine behind the trigger mechanism and a short barrel wrapped by a recoil-dampening sleeve. The magazine of the XM-25 holds four 25 mm rounds, and the weapon has a built-in thermal sight for use at night or in inclement weather.

The Army plans to purchase 12,500 XM-25 systems beginning in 2012, according to Program Executive Office-Soldier—enough to put one unit in each infantry squad and Special Forces team.

Stryker Update. The Army plans to convert two of its heavy brigade combat teams (HBCTs) to brigades built around the light, fast, versatile Stryker wheeled vehicles. DoD recently ordered more.

The 1st HBCT, 1st Armored Division, will convert to a Stryker brigade when it returns from Iraq in late 2010. The 3rd Armored Cavalry Regiment is scheduled to switch the following summer, after its scheduled deployment to Iraq. Each conversion will take approximately two years to reach full operational capacity. Stryker brigades generally have about 300 of the eight-wheeled vehicles in several different versions. Each Stryker carries nine infantrymen and can travel at 60 miles per hour.

The U.S. Army Tank-automotive and Armaments Life Cycle Management Command recently awarded a $647 million contract for 352 Strykers to General Dynamics. The purchase includes various versions of the Stryker, including infantry carrier vehicles; anti-tank guided-missile vehicles; engineer squad Strykers; mortar carriers; command vehicles; and nuclear, biological and chemical reconnaissance vehicles.

Since 2003, when the first Stryker unit deployed to Iraq, the vehicles have been painted deep green. When the 5th Stryker Brigade, Fort Lewis, Wash., deployed to Afghanistan several months ago, the first Stryker BCT to do so, the vehicles were standard green, and they will continue to be produced in that color. The Army recently announced, however, that as the vehicles are sent to authorized facilities for repair and retrofit, they will be re-
Army Casualties in Afghanistan

The following U.S. Army soldiers were reported killed in Operation Enduring Freedom from November 1 to November 30, 2009. All names have been released through the Department of Defense; families have been notified.

SPC Aaron S. Aamot, 22
SPC Julian L. Berisford, 25
SSG John J. Cleaver, 36
SPC Christopher J. Coffland, 43
SGT Daniel A. Frazier, 25
SPC Gary L. Gooch Jr., 22
SGT Brandon T. Islip, 23
SGT Scott B. Joiner, 26
SPC Joseph M. Lewis, 26
SPC Jason A. McLeod, 22
SGT Benjamin W. Sherman, 21

Army Casualties in Iraq

The following U.S. Army soldiers were reported killed in Operation Iraqi Freedom from November 1 to November 30, 2009. All names have been released through the Department of Defense; families have been notified.

SPC Adrian L. Avila, 19
SPC Tony Carrasco Jr., 25
SPC Christopher M. Cooper, 28
CWO Mathew C. Heffelfinger, 29
PFC Lukas C. Hopper, 20
PFC Michael A. Rogers, 23
CWO Carl R. Scott III, 24
SPC Jonathon M. Sylvestre, 21
SSG Amy C. Tirador, 29
SSG Briand L. Williams, 25
SSG Ryan L. Zorn, 35

STOP LOSS ENDS

Stop Loss Ends. The Army, the only service still using the stop-loss program, plans to end stop-loss deployments by June 2010.

Last fall, DoD announced retroactive stop-loss payments for affected soldiers. Former and current military servicemembers who served between September 11, 2001, and September 30, 2009, and had their enlistment extended or retirement suspended due to stop loss will receive $500 per month special pay for each month or portion of a month they were retained on duty.

Applicants who are no longer in the military must have received honorable discharges, and all applicants must provide documented proof with their claim that they were “stop-lossed.”

MAJ Roy Whitley, program manager, Army Retroactive Stop-Loss Special Pay, noted “the heavy volume of responses” and asked applicants to be patient. He promised to post information online as soon as possible so that soldiers can track their applications.

Servicemembers who file claims must complete DoD claim form No. 2944. All claims must be postmarked by October 21, 2010. For more information, visit https://www.stoplosspay.army.mil.

Involuntary Early Separation. As of January 1, eligible soldiers who do not take advantage of the Army’s deployment-extension program may be involuntarily separated before their expiration of term of service (ETS) dates.

Under the rules of the new enlisted involuntary early separation program, active duty soldiers who do not reenlist or extend their enlistments in units slated to deploy on or after January 1 may be involuntarily separated up to three months early. The policy ensures that their replacements have adequate time to prepare for deployment.


To avoid involuntary early separation, soldiers must serve at least four months on a contingency deployment and two additional months at home station. The early separation policy applies to regular soldiers assigned to a deploying unit whose term of service expires during the first six months of the scheduled deployment and who have at least 36, but not more than 71, months of active federal service at the time of separation.

Soldiers who extend and participate in the deployment-extension incentive program will be compensated. Soldiers who extend fewer than six months before their unit’s deployment will receive an extra $350 each month; those who sign an extension agreement six months or more before their unit’s arrival in theater will receive $500 for each month they serve beyond their enlistment contract. Soldiers assigned to a unit six months or less before it deploys and those in units that are given late deployment alerts will qualify for $500-a-month payments.

Soldiers who are involuntarily separated will receive an honorable discharge and will retain all rights, privileges and benefits, such as post-9/11 GI Bill benefits; they will not be entitled to pay and allowances for time not served. The certificate of release or discharge will indicate that the soldier left service as the result of a reduction in force. Involuntarily separated soldiers are eligible to return to Army service in the future, and they are not required to repay any unearned portion of an enlistment or reenlistment bonus or sell back unused leave.

The Army has instructed commanders to adjust ETS dates so that soldiers can take transition leave if they choose, and to notify them in writing of impending ETS at least 90 days in advance. Human Resources Command will phase in the program.

Soldiers with an ETS in April will be involuntarily separated one month earlier; those with an ETS in May will be separated two months earlier; and those whose ETS is on or after June 1 will be separated three months earlier than their contract states.

The effects of the recession on civilian employment have contributed to the Army’s recruiting and retention rates. According to DoD data, fewer servicemembers are retiring or leaving the military than at any time in the past five years.

**Wounded Warrior E-Newsletter.** The Office of Wounded Warrior Care and Transition Policy inaugurated in November an online newsletter, “The Square Deal,” to describe its activities, provide updates on wounded warrior and transition news, and gather suggestions on how to improve support and services.

The name of the e-newsletter is derived from President Theodore Roosevelt’s 1903 statement that “a man who is good enough to shed his blood for his country is good enough to be given a square deal afterwards.”

To view the newsletter, visit [http://www.woundedwarriorresourcecenter.com/WWCTP_Newsletter](http://www.woundedwarriorresourcecenter.com/WWCTP_Newsletter). If you wish to receive “The Square Deal,” e-mail your request to sarah.moore.ctr@osd.mil.