

The General's Afghan Campaign Plan

The Afghan mission is nothing if not complex. Even basic questions like 'What's happening?' or 'Are we winning?' don't generally have simple answers. In response to a question about the Afghan war during his interview with Legion Magazine, the CDS tried to make the mission more understandable by sketching out a small map (reproduced here) detailing the three stages—fighting, then training, then development—of the Canadian plan in Kandahar province and included an estimate of the current state of progress. As Hillier sketched, he explained the mission in these words.

"Here's how we see this in simple triangular terms, what we've been trying to do since we went in there. Here's how we went in, if you will. The focus initially was on the fight part, and there are very real reasons for that, because the Taliban were there in strength and they were threatening everything that was occurring and planned to occur and there was no Afghan capacity to handle it themselves, so we ended up in the fight.

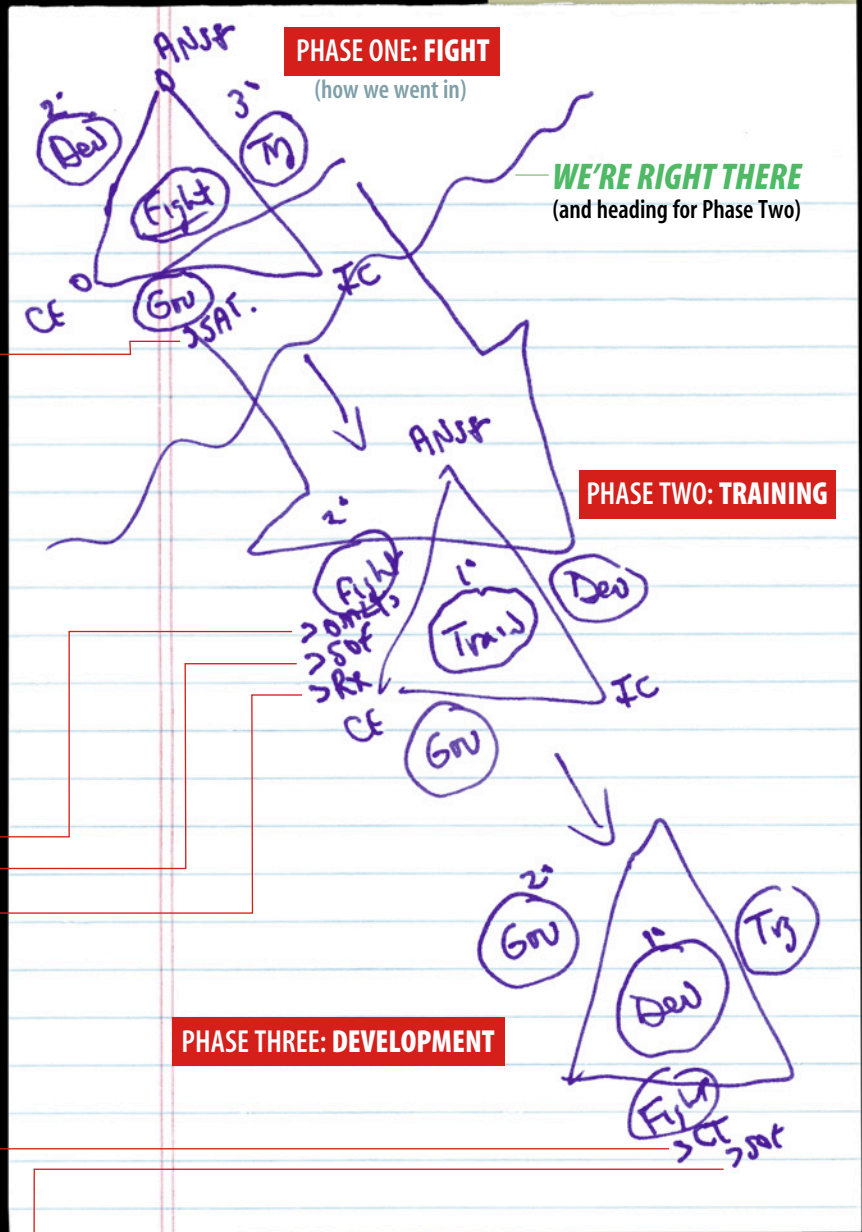
"The developmental part was secondary, mainly because the threat was high enough that we had to develop that very slowly. The training part which we always wanted to do was very much tertiary because there was no Afghan forces to train. And the governance part, or helping them in government, well, we in the military don't have major capabilities to help but we have used our Strategic Advisory Team up in Kabul to try and do that somewhat. But if you take that combination of things working, the Canadian Forces, the Afghans, and then the international community, that was where we have been.

"What we want to transition to is that our main focus becomes the training and that the fight part becomes a combination of the OMLTs (Operational Mentor Liaison Teams) fighting with the Afghan units and our special operations forces going after the leaders, etc., and then a reactive or reserve capability so that when things go bad we can respond. And then we would put more emphasis on the development part and we would have been able to make it more secure and we would continue to work the governance part.

"And then the third part is where the development part becomes the primary focus here. It is the building and the governance part. And the training part becomes sustaining the training of the Afghan National Army and the fight part simply becomes the very high-end counter-terrorist fight of special forces. And everything else is handled by the Afghans.

"So you want to move from one to the other to the other and actually we think we're right there. So how long does it take us to move completely from there to there is the question and we work at it every day."

The General's Sketch



Legend

GUV Governance

Tr Training

Dev Development

Fight Fighting

ANSF Afghan Forces

IC International Community

CE Canadian Forces