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Afghan Army Keeps Getting Bigger, But Readiness Lags

By Jason Ditz

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For the past several years, whenever NATO or the US were discussing the strategy for the ongoing occupation of Afghanistan, there was one constant: making the Afghan military and police ever bigger, regardless of expense.

Now with 352,000 Afghan security forces, they're [starting to rethink](#) the wisdom of that unrestrained growth, as they have an Afghan military that Afghanistan will never be able to afford, which is riddled with corruption, and which continues to suffer [30% turnover](#) year over year just from desertion.

That gives them an estimated 10:1 numerical advantage over the Taliban, even before considering the NATO occupation forces, but with police spending most of their time shaking down locals for bribes and the military constantly trying to train new recruits to make up for deserters, officials say they are “nowhere near ready” to even operate on their own, let alone fight the Taliban head-on.

In many ways this is just another in a long line of failed strategies, but making the Afghan forces ever bigger was such a centerpiece of the war effort that acknowledging its failure is going to be difficult, and NATO is unlikely to come up with an alternative strategy at any rate. This means that commanders will continue, at least in the near term, to insist that the training is “progressing well” despite overwhelming evidence to the contrary.