



Lessons Learned at USASMA Help Afghan National Army Ground Forces CSM in His Mission with The ANA

By Sgt. Jarred Woods

1st Sustainment Command (Theater) Public Affairs

B AGRAM AIR FIELD, Afghanistan – It would be an understatement to portray the United States Army Sergeants’ Major Academy (USASMA) as merely an institute of leadership and higher military education. Since its founding in 1972, USASMA’s exceptional staff and academic faculty has proven itself as the veritable pinnacle of learning and professional development for senior noncommissioned officers.

Command Sgt. Maj. Mohammad Ali Hussaini, command sergeant major of the Ground Forces Command, Afghan National Army (ANA), was a recent alumnus of USASMA at Fort Bliss, Texas. As the U.S. strives to develop and strengthen our coalition partnerships, we have made great advancements to envelope our brothers in arms throughout the world into our vast wealth of experience. At the heart of these efforts is the noncommissioned officers (NCO) Corps – “the backbone of the Army.” The NCO Corps has a rich and extensive history presenting itself as a valuable template for successful military cohesion.

The challenges Hussaini faced and experiences he enjoyed at USASMA have given him a broader appreciation and understanding of the structure of joint military operations and the vital role NCOs play.

“I had heard a lot about the United States Army Sergeants’ Major Academy and I knew that it would be a challenging academy with challenging lessons, but I was always telling myself that, ‘yes, I can do it,’” said Hussaini.

“One of the biggest challenges for me was the English language,” said Hussaini. “I went through the ANA English course here for five months, and then I moved on to the Defense Language Institute at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio for three months.”

USASMA prides itself on presenting their International Military Students (IMS) with a favorable impression of the American way of life. Having grown up in Kabul, the capitol city of Afghanistan, Hussaini was pleasantly surprised at the level of cultural diversity that thrives in the United States.



Command Sgt. Maj. Mohammad Ali Hussaini, command sergeant major of the Ground Forces Command, Afghan National Army (ANA), attends the Initial Best Practices Seminar held at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, March 27, 2014. The seminar was an effort to encourage and advance communication throughout theater among senior noncommissioned officers of ANA, U.S. and other coalition forces. Hussaini is also a 2013 graduate of the U.S. Army Sergeants Major Academy at Fort Bliss, Texas. (Photo by Sgt. Jarred Woods, 1st Sustainment Command (Theater))

“I learned a lot about the United States’ culture and people,” said Hussaini. “I met a lot of different people and saw a lot of diversity. Their clothing, lifestyle, the shopping centers, the education and how people from different countries and cultures have come together as a nation were very impressive.”

“Cultural awareness has always been an important subject for me, and I think it’s important for others,” added Hussaini. “I know everyone comes from different places, especially in the United States, so it’s very important to know about everyone’s culture. For the coalition, it’s very important to know a little about Afghan culture and the Afghan people’s mindset.”

In addition to his studies at USASMA, Hussaini also had some time to travel to different places such as Nevada, San Diego and San Antonio, as well as, create some memorable moments.

“The most enjoyable part of the academy was the day that we went to Cathedral High School and talked to the children,” said Hussaini. “I was teaching them about Afghan culture and history. They had a lot of questions. That was a great experience.”

The lessons and instruction Hussaini received at the academy have been integral in his approach to his mission with the ANA.

“In the joint department at USASMA, we studied about the jobs and responsibilities of the U.S. Marines, Navy, Army, and Air Force,” said Hussaini. “I learned about the structure within the other countries coming together through NATO to conduct joint combined operations.”

“I learned that all of the different aspects of the U.S. Army come together for joint operations, and also joint-combined operations; with other countries’ military,” added Hussaini. “That was really helpful for me. I got an idea of how we can use that in Afghanistan while conducting joint operations with police, ANA and other coalition forces in Afghanistan.”

“When I came back and I saw the coalition’s units, I really had an idea in my mind how they’re structured and what everyone’s job was here,” added Hussaini. “It really helped me to synchronize my unit with them and make a harmony with Afghan National Security Force (ANSF) and coalition forces.”

USASMA and American society has left an indelible impression on Hussaini giving him a sensible perspective for the future of his people.

“I’m so happy that the people of Afghanistan now understand that we have to be a unified nation and we have to get along together better,” Hussaini added. “One of my missions is to use the ANA as the example for a united nation, because in the ANA we have a lot of guys from different tribes and regions of Afghanistan coming together and trying to protect our country.”

Command Sgt. Maj. Isايا T. Vimoto, command sergeant major of the International Security Assistance Force Joint Command (IJC) and 18th Airborne Corps, is a personal mentor of Hussaini. Vimoto works side by side daily with Hussaini and other ANA senior NCOs offering well received advice and wisdom as the ANA strives toward a stronger; more secure Afghanistan.

“He has leadership, knowledge and is all about his Army and his country,” said Vimoto. “He’s very determined in getting the Afghan army to the next level. The ANA’s capable and confident in their ability to take the fight to the enemy, and they’re willing to provide the security for their nation.”

“The next thing I’ve been working on, and over the last few times I’ve been over here, is creating an NCO Corps,” added Vimoto. “They have an NCO Corps, but it’s not a ‘Corps’ yet because they’re not empowered. There’s no document that creates an NCO Corps. There’s no history in their NCO Corps.”

“The ANA NCO Corps needs to have a solid foundation,” said Vimoto. “It also needs to have a document signed by their Ministry of Defense in the highest level of the Army to really identify them as a bona fide NCO Corps. Once you have that, the next thing that comes is authority, which empowers them to do everything that the Army asks them to do.”

“They need their senior leaders and officers to realize the importance of what NCOs bring to the Army; to appreciate the contribution of the NCOs and what they do every day,” added Vimoto. “They are the ones who are taking the fight to the enemy every day.”

Another key element to Vimotos’ vision with the ANA is to improve its inner workings. It’s essential to

remember and recognize that the formation of the ANA fell hand in hand with their fight with the Taliban.

“Logistics is a weak spot for the ANSF,” said Vimoto. “There’s a lot of stuff in their warehouse, but it’s their actual logistic system that takes the longest to navigate. It just takes so long to request something. To put in a request and actually receive the stuff they ask for, it could take up to four months.”

Hussaini would like to see the ANA adopt the U.S. Army’s system of requesting and receiving supplies due to its more streamlined organization as compared to the ANA’s system, which often requires an inordinate amount of signatures, said Vimoto.

In an effort to encourage and advance communication throughout theater among senior NCOs of ANA, U.S. and other coalition forces, Vimoto hosted the Initial Best Practices Seminar at Bagram Air Field, Afghanistan, March 27, 2014.

“I had a thought, prior to coming here on deployment, that we are a team and our mission is to train, advise and assist; what a great opportunity it would be to bring in the Regional Command (RC) sergeants’ major, ANA Corps sergeants’ major and other mentors all under one roof,” said Vimoto. “The purpose was to build a team and really show that we’re truly partnered.”

“Part of that team building is for the ANA and ANSF to interact with their peers to their left and right,” added Vimoto. “It was a great opportunity for these guys to come together and also for them to see how we, as American sergeants major and senior NCOs do business and share information across the battle space.”

Among the topics of discussion were Counter Improvised Explosive Device (CIED) strategies, mitigation of insider threats, training the force and other operational procedures.

“I think the conference was a success,” said Vimoto. “I think we built a team and that the ANSF went away with a better understanding. After listening to their peers, they were able to share each other’s concerns about logistics, when it comes to taking care of Soldiers, assets and leadership.”

“The key of all that dialogue was communication across the board and to show how our Army gets the information across through communication,” added Vimoto. “It also showed common values and how we’re all in this together and we all have the same common goal.”

“The overall success here depends on, I think, the creation of the NCO Corps,” said Vimoto. “It’s extremely important and key to the future of this Army. The doers – the NCOs and Soldiers; those are the guys that need to be recognized for their service.”

“The NCO Corps is the life-blood of the Army,” Vimoto added. “We run the Army every day. The NCOs of the ANA need to be empowered. Their officers need to be appreciative and also recognize the value and work ethic that they bring to the Army. Without these guys, the Army would not go forward. The mission would not be accomplished.”

As the U.S. military’s primary focus transforms from combat operations and direct support to training, advising and assisting, it’s necessary and wise to remember the Army’s heritage as not just NCOs, but as Americans. In America’s not so distant history, its people were immersed in a struggle for their own freedom. The continued professionalism of coalition Soldiers, NCOs and leaders will undeniably bolster its Afghan partners toward a more secure and prosperous future.

“The mission as long as we’re here, is for every one of those mentors out there, whoever they mentor; they need to do all they can to posture the ANSF for success not just now, but for the future,” said Vimoto. “Continue to do all you can in the time we have here to empower and to share all your wisdom and knowledge with the ANA NCOs so they can continue to get better as they move forward.”

Hussaini’s service with the ANA, attendance at US-ASMA and demeanor among his peers denotes a fervent desire to acquire knowledge and lead by example.

“Hussaini’s like a sponge and is always asking questions,” added Vimoto. “With some more time in his position and more mentorship, I think he’ll eventually be able to accomplish more and take it to the next level.” ■



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