
III. FINDINGS

1. *Security for the U.S. Supply Chain Is Principally Provided by Warlords*

Finding: The principal private security subcontractors on the HNT contract are warlords, strongmen, commanders, and militia leaders who compete with the Afghan central government for power and authority. Providing “protection” services for the U.S. supply chain empowers these warlords with money, legitimacy, and a *raison d’etre* for their private armies. Although many of these warlords nominally operate under private security companies licensed by the Afghan Ministry of Interior, the warlords thrive in a vacuum of government authority and their interests are in fundamental conflict with U.S. aims to build a strong Afghan government.

Commander Ruhullah is prototypical of a new class of warlord in Afghanistan. He commands a small army of over 600 armed guards. His men engage in regular combat with insurgent forces. He claims extraordinary casualty figures on both sides (450 of his own men killed in the last year and many more Taliban dead). He readily admits to bribing governors, police chiefs, and army generals. Over a cup of tea in Dubai, he complained to the Subcommittee staff about the high cost of ammunition in Afghanistan – he says he spends \$1.5 million *per month* on rounds for an arsenal that includes AK-47s, heavy machine guns, and RPGs.⁵¹ Villagers along the road refer to him as “the Butcher.”⁵²

Before September 11, 2001, Commander Ruhullah was relatively unknown in Afghanistan. Today, he is the single largest security provider for the U.S. supply chain in Afghanistan. Despite this critical and sensitive role, nobody from the Department of Defense or the U.S. intelligence community has ever met with him (except for a brief detention by U.S. Special Forces on what he says are false drug charges). Commander Ruhullah is largely a mystery to both the U.S. government and the contractors that employ his services. Indeed, several of the prime HNT contractors are apparently unaware that Commander Ruhullah guards their trucks (their security subcontractors utilize his services without the prime contractors’ knowledge).

Commander Ruhullah is largely a mystery to both the U.S. government and the contractors that employ his services.

Commander Ruhullah dominates the private security business along Highway 1, the main transportation artery between Kabul and Kandahar. Because most U.S. supplies are shipped through Pakistan to Bagram Airfield, north of Kabul, while most U.S. troops are surging into Kandahar, in the south, Highway 1 is the critical route for the supply chain within Afghanistan.

No private security companies working for the United States are supposed to use any weapon more high-powered than an AK-47. Commander Ruhullah's men use heavy machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades.

Commander Ruhullah says that he guards roughly 3,500 U.S. supply trucks every month. The prime contractors and local Afghan subcontractors that use his services pay him and the security company that he associates with, Watan Risk Management, handsomely. For security between Maydan Shahr (just south of Kabul) and Kandahar, Commander Ruhullah charges up to \$1,500 per truck.⁵³

At the behest of Congress, the Department of Defense has promulgated extensive regulations intended to improve oversight and accountability of private security contractors in contingency operations such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

Commander Ruhullah has never heard of the regulations and says that they do not apply to him. No private security companies working for the United States are supposed to use any weapon more high-powered than an AK-47. Commander Ruhullah's men use heavy machine guns and RPGs.⁵⁴

Commander Ruhullah is just one of dozens of warlords, strongmen, and commanders who have found a niche in providing security services to the U.S. military in Afghanistan. Some are well-known tribal leaders or former mujahedeen who have been in the business of war for the past thirty years. Others, like Commander Ruhullah, are relative newcomers whose power and influence are directly derivative of their contracting and subcontracting work for the U.S. government.

Both the old and new warlords' interests are in fundamental conflict with a properly functioning government. By definition, warlords wield military might and violence outside of the theoretical government monopoly on those tools. Warlordism is antithetical to the Afghan state, and ultimately to U.S. counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan, yet these warlords have flourished providing security for the U.S. supply chain there.



*Watan Risk Management Toyota Hi-Lux security truck
equipped with a .50 caliber anti-aircraft DSHK machine gun
Photo Credit: Defense Imagery*

Warlordism in Afghanistan

Not all warlords are created equal. At the top of the hierarchy are the well-known tribal leaders, former mujahedeen commanders, or local power brokers who command the loyalty of men beyond their ability to provide a paycheck. For these warlords, providing security to U.S. and NATO convoys is just the latest iteration of long and colorful careers in war-torn Afghanistan. Long after the United States leaves Afghanistan, and the convoy security business shuts down, these warlords will likely continue to play a major role as autonomous centers of political, economic, and military power.⁵⁵

Other warlords are newer to the scene but have grown in strength based on their ability to feed off U.S. and NATO security contracting, particularly the highly lucrative business niche of providing private security for the coalition supply chain. Men serve and die for these warlords for money, not tribal, ethnic, or political loyalty. In Afghan culture, this new class of warlord is undeserving of that elevated title because their power is derivative of their business function, not their political or tribal clout.⁵⁶

According to one expert on Afghanistan, “the partial conversion of Afghan warlords into businessmen resembles in many ways the establishment of mafia networks, which are active both in the legal and the illegal economy and are able to use force to protect their interests and possibly to expand.”⁵⁷ Whether called “businessmen,” “commanders,” “strongmen,” “militia leaders,” or “warlords,” any single individual who commands hundreds or thousands of armed men in regular combat and operates largely outside the direct control of the central government is a competitor to the legitimacy of the state.⁵⁸

Private Security Companies

Both President Karzai and the American-led coalition have made the disarmament of “illegal armed groups” (warlords, commanders, and militias) a top priority for success in Afghanistan. Since 2003, however, the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration program has largely failed. Rather than disarm, many of the warlords and militia groups evaded the program by becoming private security companies for the coalition. According to an academic text on disarmament, “[c]ommanders thus appear to be using PSCs [private security companies] and other government security forces to hide their militias... [A] commander’s strength is expressed less in terms of offensive capability against an opposing unit than in terms of the ability to acquire supporting contracts, to maintain armed units and to integrate into official and quasi-official security structures.”⁵⁹

Major General Nick Carter, the British head of NATO’s Regional Command-South in Kandahar, told reporters that “warlords in Kandahar had been allowed to build up militias that they claimed were private security companies,” and that these private security companies were “a creation of the international community.”⁶⁰ Ahmed Wali Karzai, President Hamid Karzai’s brother, agrees: “[the guards] are the ones who know how to make bombs and shoot AK-47s. They are well-experienced jihadi foot soldiers. Most of them are now part of security companies.” If they were not working for the security companies, Mr. Karzai stated, they would likely join the Taliban.⁶¹

“Warlords in Kandahar had been allowed to build up militias that they claimed were private security companies, and these private security companies were a creation of the international community.”

– UK Major General Nick Carter

Warlords Control the Highways

A warlord’s power is principally derived from his ability to control security within a defined territory. The business of warlordism is to seek rents from those who would occupy that space, whether the local population or trucks attempting to transit through it. Given the extremely limited road network in Afghanistan, highways are prime real estate. If a highway also happens to be a critical component of the U.S. supply chain for the distribution of goods in Afghanistan, the opportunity for rent-seeking is massive. Of course, the business model depends on the warlord’s ability to monopolize control of the highway and to fight off competition.

In Afghanistan, warlords control many of the main highways used by the U.S. supply chain, particularly in the south, east, and west. Sophisticated consumers of the Afghan road network (the local Afghan trucking companies) have learned how to navigate this patchwork of highway warlords by paying the right warlord at the right section of highway. Like a *prix fixe* menu, a list provided to the Subcommittee by an HNT contractor details which “escort provider” operates on which sections of road between various U.S. forward operating bases in Afghanistan.⁶²

#	Origin	Destination	the escort provider	COMPANY NAME
1	AIR BORNE	SAYED BAD	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
2	AIR BORNE	CARWILE	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
3	AIR BORNE	GHAZNI	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
4	AIR BORNE	FOUR CORNERS	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
5	AIR BORNE	SHARANA	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
6	AIR BORNE	WARRIOR	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
7	AIR BORNE	APPACHE	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
8	AIR BORNE	KANDAHAR	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
9	AIR BORNE	LASHKARGHA	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
10	AIR BORNE	BASTION	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
11	AIR BORNE	LEATHERNICK	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
12	AIR BORNE	FARAH	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
13	AIR BORNE	SHINDAND	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
14	AIR BORNE	HEART	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
15	AIR BORNE	QALA E NOW	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
16	AIR BORNE	TRAIN KWOT	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
17	AIR BORNE	FRONTENACK	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
18	AIR BORNE	LUNDELL	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
19	AIR BORNE	DERAWOOD	COMMANDER ROHULLAH	WATAN RISK MANAGEMENT
20	GHAZNI	SHARANA	COMMANDER RAHIM	NO COMPANY
21	GHAZNI	FOUR CORNERS	COMMANDER RAHIM	NO COMPANY
22	QALAT	WOLVRINE	ANA	NO COMPANY
23	QALAT	SWEENY	ANA	NO COMPANY
24	KANDAHAR	SPIN BOLDAK	ANP	NO COMPANY
25	KANDAHAR	FRONTENACK	COMMANDER MATIULLAH	NO COMPANY
26	KANDAHAR	TRAIN KWOT	COMMANDER MATIULLAH	NO COMPANY
27	KANDAHAR	LUNDELL	COMMANDER MATIULLAH	NO COMPANY
28	KANDAHAR	DERAWOOD	COMMANDER MATIULLAH	NO COMPANY
29	KANDAHAR	QALAT	COMMANDER MASUD	NO COMPANY
30	KANDAHAR	WOLVRINE	COMMANDER MASUD	NO COMPANY
31	KANDAHAR	SWEENY	COMMANDER MASUD	NO COMPANY
32	KANDAHAR	BULLARD	COMMANDER MASUD	NO COMPANY
33	KANDAHAR	LASHKARGHA	COMMANDER ANGAR	NO COMPANY
34	KANDAHAR	BASTION	RAHMAT	NO COMPANY
35	KANDAHAR	LEATHERNICK	MASUD	NO COMPANY
36	KANDAHAR	RAMROD	MASUD	NO COMPANY
37	KANDAHAR	MAIWAND	MASUD	NO COMPANY
38	KANDAHAR	DWYER	KAKA SHARB	NO COMPANY
39	KANDAHAR	DWYER	TURJAN	NO COMPANY
40	KANDAHAR	DWYER	KOKA	NO COMPANY
41	KANDAHAR	DELARM	COMMANDER HABIBULLAH	NO COMPANY
42	KANDAHAR	SHINDAND	COMMANDER HABIBULLAH	NO COMPANY
43	KANDAHAR	STONE	COMMANDER HABIBULLAH	NO COMPANY
44	KANDAHAR	FARAH	COMMANDER HABIBULLAH	NO COMPANY

Commander Ruhullah and Watan Risk Management

Commander Ruhullah dominates the critical section of Highway 1 between Kabul and Kandahar, an area that is the central supply artery for the U.S. and NATO mission in southern Afghanistan and also happens to be heavily infiltrated by the Taliban.⁶³

The U.S. supply chain operates on Ruhullah's schedule; his local sub-commanders will wait several days to gather as many trucks as possible before moving, even if some trucks are days or weeks overdue at their destinations.

In a typical convoy movement, Commander Ruhullah assembles between 200-400 trucks carrying U.S. supplies in Maydan Shahr, just south of Kabul. The U.S. supply chain operates on his schedule; his local sub-commanders will wait several days to gather as many trucks as possible before moving, even if some trucks are days or weeks overdue at their destination. Commander Ruhullah guards the convoy with teams of several hundred men. The guards travel in pickup trucks and SUVs. Some trucks have mounted heavy machine guns and many others carry RPGs. The trip takes roughly three days and a different team handles each leg.⁶⁴

Commander Ruhullah operates under the license of Watan Risk Management, a registered security company owned by Ahmed Rateb Popal and Rashid Popal, two

cousins of President Karzai. Watan Risk Management has some Western management, a website, and contracts to protect U.S. forward operating bases and U.S.-funded development projects. The Popals welcomed an interview with the Subcommittee staff and spoke candidly about their operations. Commander Ruhullah runs convoy security operations with relative autonomy; the Popals provide some Western interface (they speak perfect English) and their company's security license. The Popal brothers are eager to exit the convoy security business due to the headache of recent negative publicity.⁶⁵

Whether they know it or not, most of the HNT prime contractors use Commander Ruhullah for security. Of the eight prime HNT contractors, all but one contract directly or indirectly with Watan Risk Management. Only a very small handful of convoy security providers travel that section of Highway 1 without employing Commander Ruhullah's services.⁶⁶ Those competitors and the trucks that they protect claim to experience abnormally high incident rates.⁶⁷

Whether they know it or not, most of the HNT prime contractors use Commander Ruhullah for security. Of the eight prime HNT contractors, all but one contract directly or indirectly with Watan Risk Management.

At a price of up to \$1,500 per truck, and with several thousand HNT trucks traveling between Kabul and Kandahar every month, Commander Ruhullah and Watan Risk Management make several tens of millions of dollars per year providing convoy security.⁶⁸

Kandahar Security Force

With the Popal brothers eager to leave the convoy security business, Commander Ruhullah has new aspirations: establishing a single brokerage firm that will serve to connect coalition contractors to most of the principal local warlords in their respective regions within southern Afghanistan. The “Kandahar Security Force,” as it will be called, will include two dozen warlords and commanders who have been providing unregistered private security services in and around Kandahar. Commander Ruhullah will be president of this new venture.⁶⁹



Photo Credit: Subcommittee Staff

Commander Ruhullah explained that the reason for creating the Kandahar Security Force was to “legitimize” the security providers that are already operating in the region. These security providers will operate under the Kandahar Security Force flag, but each will be given his own separate contracts and Commander Ruhullah believes there will be no internal competition.⁷⁰ Ahmed Rateb Popal of Watan Risk Management believes that the Kandahar Security Force simply gives the gloss of an official license to a collection of warlords and commanders. He wants a “clean government,” but said that the current government is “too weak,” and transporters

have “no choice” but to rely on these warlords and commanders. His brother, Rashid Popal, agreed and stated that the current situation “creates a state of anarchy.” In his view, the Kandahar Security Force “will not improve the security situation.”⁷¹

In sum, Commander Ruhullah hopes to create a confederation that would monopolize private security in and around Kandahar just as Kandahar is becoming the key strategic focal point of the U.S. mission. His proposal for a license for the Kandahar Security Force is pending before the Afghan cabinet’s security committee.⁷²

Operating under the façade of a registered private security company will bring the unlicensed warlords who join Kandahar Security Force into technical compliance with Afghan licensing requirements but it will not fundamentally change the way they operate or improve their accountability. When asked what kind of oversight and control he would have over the collection of commanders that he would lead, Commander Ruhullah stated simply that, in the event of any problems, he would “take care of it.”⁷³

If approved, the Kandahar Security Force would become the single largest private security provider in Afghanistan. According to Commander Ruhullah and the Popals, the idea to create the Kandahar Security Force originated with former Afghan Interior Minister Hanif Atmar, and has been approved by the Ministry of Interior’s anti-terrorism department.⁷⁴ Some top Afghan officials have supported the proposal, ostensibly as a means of uniting and controlling powerful, unregistered groups that they depict as competing violently for coalition contracts.⁷⁵

Others have raised concerns that the consolidation of private security commanders in southern Afghanistan will further empower Ahmed Wali Karzai, the powerful head of the Kandahar Provincial Council and the brother of President Karzai. Carl Forsberg of the Institute for the Study of War describes Ahmed Wali Karzai’s *modus operandi* as gaining “the loyalty of militia commanders in exchange for distributing lucrative contracts from international actors.”⁷⁶ Mr. Forsberg adds, “Ahmed Wali Karzai’s connections and influence allow him to collect a cut of most of the business transactions occurring in Kandahar City.”⁷⁷

In an interview with the Subcommittee staff, Ahmed Wali Karzai denied any operational or beneficial involvement in the Kandahar Security Force. He said that he has never been involved with any private security company and that he only helped to facilitate the meeting in which the individual commanders had agreed to come together under a “single umbrella.” Mr. Karzai believes that the creation of the Kandahar Security Force will be beneficial because it will allow unregistered commanders to register their guards, vehicles, and weapons. He said that the commanders had also been asked to limit their movements within Kandahar City and to transfer their bases of operation to outside the city.⁷⁸ Commander Ruhullah was similarly adamant that Ahmed Wali Karzai was not “involved in any way” with the creation of the Kandahar Security Force: “He will have no ownership whatsoever.”⁷⁹

In any event, if the Kandahar Security Force does come to fruition, it will undoubtedly take over from Watan Risk Management as the principal private security provider and broker for the U.S. supply chain in Afghanistan.

Commander Matiullah Khan

Matiullah Khan is the leading private security provider and principal warlord of Uruzgan Province, just north of Kandahar. Matiullah's nominal title is chief of the provincial highway police, despite the fact that the highway police force was disbanded years ago. He commands an armed militia of over 2,000 men, called the Kandak Amnianta Uruzgan (KAU), and controls all traffic along the main highway between Kandahar and Tarin Kowt, the provincial Uruzgan capital.⁸⁰

In a recent front page profile, the *New York Times* described Matiullah as the “most powerful man” in Uruzgan:

Matiullah Khan [is] the head of a private army that earns millions of dollars guarding NATO supply convoys... In little more than two years, Mr. Matiullah, an illiterate former highway patrol commander, has grown stronger than the government of Uruzgan Province, not only supplanting its role in providing security but usurping its other functions, his rivals say, like appointing public employees and doling out government largess. His fighters run missions with American Special Forces, and when Afghan officials have confronted him, he has either rebuffed them or had them removed.⁸¹

Ahmed Wali Karzai credits Matiullah with almost single-handedly making Uruzgan Province safe. He describes him as a “very successful police officer” who is “in charge of highway patrol” and earned the support of the people. He claims that “the Taliban have been defeated in Uruzgan,” largely because of Matiullah. According to Mr. Karzai, Matiullah also uses his armed force, the KAU, to fight Taliban in neighboring provinces, including Northern Kandahar and Zabol.⁸²

Every HNT contractor and subcontractor assigned to take U.S. supplies to Uruzgan exclusively uses Matiullah's security services at a cost of between \$1,500 and \$3,000 per truck, per mission. The CEO of a private security company in Afghanistan stated that, “Matiullah has the road from Kandahar to Tarin Kowt completely under his control. No one can travel without Matiullah without facing consequences. There is no other way to get there. You have to either pay him or fight him.”⁸³

Private trucking companies supporting the Dutch and Australian forces based in Uruzgan also exclusively use Matiullah for highway security.⁸⁴ With over 200 support trucks per month for these NATO forces, news accounts estimated that he earned \$4 million to \$6 million per year from NATO security alone.⁸⁵

Matiullah is the nephew of Jan Mohammad Khan, the deposed governor of Uruzgan. When the Dutch took responsibility for Uruzgan in 2006, they demanded that President Karzai fire Jan Mohammad Khan for his notorious drug smuggling and human rights abuses. Subsequently, the Dutch blocked Matiullah from being formally named as the police chief because of his human rights record as his uncle's leading enforcer.⁸⁶ According to press accounts, “[h]e led the hit squads that killed stubborn farmers who did not want to surrender their land, daughters, and livestock to the former governor.”⁸⁷ One high-ranking Dutch official claimed that Matiullah is so feared that, “[i]f we appoint Matiullah police chief, probably more than half of all people in the Baluchi valley would run over to the Taliban immediately.”⁸⁸

“Matiullah has the road from Kandahar to Tarin Kowt completely under his control. You have to either pay him or fight him.”

– Private Security Company Executive

Although the NATO forces stationed in Uruzgan are totally dependent on Matiullah to permit their supply convoys to travel the roads he controls, they publicly distance themselves from him. In response to press inquiries, a Dutch government spokesman stated that the Dutch Ministry of Defense does not pay Matiullah directly, but “it is up to local transporters whether they find it necessary to pay for protection.”⁸⁹ Meanwhile, “[t]he [Australian Defense Forces] will neither confirm nor deny knowledge of payments to Colonel Khan,” but privately they acknowledged to reporters that they are dependent upon his permission for their supply routes.⁹⁰

Colonel Abdul Razziq

Abdul Razziq has many titles – “Commander,” “Colonel,” “General,” “Director” – but what matters is that he controls the Chaman-Spin Boldak border crossing, the crucial gateway for all supplies coming from Pakistan directly to southern Afghanistan. At age 30, Colonel Razziq is the chief of the Achakzai tribe which straddles the border area. His semi-official title is the chief of staff of the provincial border police. “According to U.S. military officials, Razziq wields near total control over Spin Boldak and the border crossing... [He] owns a trucking company, commands 3,500 police, effectively controls the local government, and reportedly takes in millions from extorting passing vehicles and trafficking drugs.”⁹¹

During a congressional delegation to Afghanistan, U.S. and NATO commanders readily acknowledged that Colonel Razziq takes a major cut of all trucking that passes through the “Friendship Gate” at the border crossing, but they believe they are so dependent on his tight grip over the border they have no choice but to work with him.⁹² Indeed, in mid-January 2010, General Stanley McChrystal himself flew to Spin Boldak to encourage Colonel Razziq to increase traffic and improve efficiency along the border.⁹³

It is not clear how much Colonel Razziq earns from taxing U.S. and NATO supply convoys crossing the border, but, according to one former high-level member of his border police, he makes between \$5 million and \$6 million per month from his various border businesses.⁹⁴

Pacha Khan Zadran

Pacha Khan Zadran, also known as “the Iron Grandpa,” is currently a member of the Upper Parliament in Afghanistan, owns significant trucking assets, and provides convoy security in and around Paktia and Khost provinces.⁹⁵ He is a former mujahedeen who helped to topple the Taliban regime in 2001. He was appointed governor of Paktia Province by Hamid Karzai in December 2001, but was forced out of office in February 2002.⁹⁶ He responded violently, “many lives were lost as his fighters rocketed Gardez from the surrounding hills.”⁹⁷ He was arrested by Pakistan in 2003 over “renegade” activities, including attacking government forces in Paktia, though he was allowed to return to Afghanistan in 2004.⁹⁸ Pacha Khan reportedly commands a private militia of 2,000 men who “control all major checkpoints on the main roads.” But, Pacha Khan objects to the term “warlord”: “They must not call us warlords. If you call us warlords, we will kill you.”⁹⁹

According to the *Boston Globe*, “[a]t least five people were held for years at Guantanamo Bay prison partly because they allegedly had ties to Pacha Khan Zadran.”¹⁰⁰ Pacha Khan himself was never imprisoned there and was pardoned by President Karzai following his return to Afghanistan in 2004.¹⁰¹ He became a member of Parliament in 2005.¹⁰²

Pacha Khan and his three sons – Sediq, Rauf, and Dawalat – provide security services to a number of HNT contractors in the Gardez-Khost area.¹⁰³ According to one HNT contractor, Pacha Khan controls this region and it is not safe to operate there without paying his companies for security.¹⁰⁴ A former country manager of another HNT contractor reported to the military that Pacha Khan “controls who is able to access the bases to fulfill missions” and that his company was asked to pay a fee for trucks to pass through the area.¹⁰⁵

Koka

Abdul Wali Khan, who goes by the name “Koka,” is a warlord-cum-“police chief” in Musa Qala district, northern Helmand Province. His armed forces provide protection services for U.S. and NATO supply convoys over a wide swath of southern Afghanistan.

Only one HNT trucking company directly contracts with Koka for security, but others may do so indirectly through layers of subcontracting. Representatives of that company stated that Koka provides security to HNT trucks in and around forward operating base Dwyer.¹⁰⁶

Koka has had a roller coaster relationship with coalition forces. In 2002, he was imprisoned by the U.S. for 14 months at Bagram jail “for suspected insurgent involvement.”¹⁰⁷ After his release, by one press account, “he reappeared as a militia commander and lawman for the Afghan Government in Musa Qala, where by 2006 his tenure was marked by allegations of human rights abuses, killings and robberies.”¹⁰⁸ According to the governor of Helmand, Koka took \$20,000 a day in opium taxes and was involved in many mass murders.¹⁰⁹

In 2006, the Taliban took over Helmand and the British forced President Karzai to remove Koka as a police official. According to the British commander at the time, “the UK does not want Koka here; all our good work could be undermined by the baggage he brings with him.”¹¹⁰

In 2008, however, President Karzai strongly criticized the British for doing more harm than good by forcing the removal of Koka and other officials. “The mistake was that we removed a local arrangement without having a replacement. We removed the police force. That was not good.”¹¹¹ Under pressure from President Karzai, the Afghan Ministry of Interior, and the Afghan National Army, the British relented, and Karzai reinstated Koka as police chief. Having no other choice, the British embraced him, even decorating the district with posters of Koka tending to a wounded civilian in front of a mountainous backdrop.¹¹²

Other Private Security Providers

Other private security providers for HNT convoys include Commander Rahim, Commander Masud, Commander Angar, Commander Habibullah Jan, Colonel Haji Toorjan, Gul Agha Sherzai, and General Gulalai.