



INNOVATIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL SOCIETIES

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BOUTELLIS: My name is Arthur Boutellis. I'm an interviewer with the Institutions for Fragile States at Princeton University. I'm now sitting with John Nikita at the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Office, the Gendarmerie Royale du Canada, in Ottawa, Canada. Today is the 15th of January 2008. First, thank you for your time. Before starting the interview I'd like you to please confirm that you've read, understood, and signed the informed consent, as well as the legal release forms.

NIKITA: Yes I have.

BOUTELLIS: Well, John, I'd like to first ask you to begin the conversation by telling us a little more about your personal background and the jobs you've held before, and how did you end up working overseas?

NIKITA: *Well, perhaps I'll start on a personal note by saying I have a Bachelor of Arts degree and in 1974, which is a long time ago now, I became a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. After training, I was posted to the province of New Brunswick in Canada where I did general law enforcement duties in uniform. I spent several years in uniform duties in the Province of New Brunswick at several different locations before taking on a job as a plainclothes major crimes investigator in New Brunswick. After spending about 11-1/2 years in New Brunswick, I was then sent to our National Police Academy in Saskatchewan where I was an instructor and did a tour of duty in our police academy before moving on to the Province of Ontario where I went back into law enforcement duties.*

On this occasion I was posted to Ontario where I carried out various federal law enforcement-type duties, which is a little bit different from uniformed duties. I spent several years in the Province of Ontario, doing law enforcement on the federal side of our mandate; and then in 1994, I was offered my commission to become a commissioned officer and accepted. My first job as a commissioned officer in the RCMP was to become the officer in charge of a brand new program called the United Nations Civilian Police Logistics and Administration Unit. So, I essentially became the first commander of the unit that was responsible for selecting personnel, training personnel, outfitting personnel, and sending them overseas for UN missions. I put the program together and was there two years before moving on myself to a UN mission.

In 1997, I was appointed the Deputy Commissioner of the UN Mission in Haiti, so I was the number two man on that particular mission. Subsequent to that I came back and went back into duties with the RCMP here in Ottawa, but this time it was on the human resources side of the house in administration and did that for a while before moving on back to operations. At that point, I went into criminal intelligence and worked in criminal intelligence and was then assigned to duties on a secondment basis. I became the national liaison officer to CSIS, which is the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. I became the national liaison officer at the national headquarters level, overseeing our national liaison program with CSIS. So, I did that for a couple of years. That takes us to 2000, at which time I completed my duties as liaison officer to CSIS, and I was assigned to duties with the UN in Kosovo. Now, while in Kosovo I actually did split duties. The first portion of my mission, I was the Chief of Operations of the United Nations Border Police, and then I was asked by the mission's senior management five months into the mission to change hats. I then became the Chief Human Resources Officer for the Kosovo Police service. I did that until the end of my mission and then came home, at which time I went back into criminal intelligence work.

Then I was sent on a secondment to the department of the Solicitor General, which is now called the Minister responsible for security for Canada. At that time that department was known as the Solicitor General. In the United States, it's the equivalent of the person responsible for homeland security. Anyway, my job was Deputy Director of Counterterrorism, and I essentially provided advice to our minister responsible for national security on matters related to counterterrorism. So, I worked at that for a couple of years and then came back into the RCMP, this time again in human resources. My job was then to put together a national program to make the RCMP compliant with an act related to occupational health and safety in the workplace. It was decided by government that the RCMP would fall under the legislation of occupational health and safety. So, it was my job to create a national program to ensure that all of our operations countrywide were compliant with the Canada Labour Code, Part II.

So I did that for three years, and upon completion of that project, that task, I was then appointed the Senior Police Advisor to the SRSG (Special Representative of the Secretary-General) for the UN's mission in Afghanistan. Upon returning from Afghanistan, I went back to my old job, which was Commander of the Peace Operations Unit, and that's where I was when I retired last August.

BOUTELLIS: All right. Thank you for this introduction and overview. I'd like to start asking you about your more recent experience overseas with UNAMA, the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, as senior police advisor. First, could you tell us the dates of your mission there? And could you describe for us the history of the mission, the goals, and the current objectives? And also, how you found the situation on the police side when you first got there, and how did you leave it? And what were the major challenges?

NIKITA: *Okay. Well, I'll start by saying I was named the Senior Police Advisor and started my duties on the 4th of September 2005. My mission ended on the 30th of May 2006. Now, the purpose of the mission is an assistance mission on the part of the UN to Afghanistan. It is not a peace operations mission per se; that is, not a peacekeeping mission as we know them and understand them. It is actually a political mission. However, in addition to being a political mission, and in addition to carrying out the various humanitarian type tasks that traditionally the UN carries out, the UN did have, and still continues to have, a small police unit and a small military advisor unit.*

Now, while I was there over the span of 2005-2006, there was a very small police unit that I was responsible for, and when I arrived we were five people; but we had an authorized strength of ten. So, I went about trying to fill the positions and did so through DPKO (Department of Peacekeeping Operations) in New York and eventually got the numbers up to our full complement. However, as time went by, various issues arose where we were trying to decide exactly how big the police unit should be, what role the police unit should play and what role, if any, the United Nations should play in Afghanistan relative to the Afghan police reform project. That was probably the largest issue on my plate during my tenure there; and in the end, after several studies if you will, after several analyses of the situation, the decision was finally taken after much debate to actually reduce the unit down to three. Now today, I can't tell you how many people are there, but I suspect it is probably three people; although I may be wrong on that account.

BOUTELLIS: When you say your role vis-à-vis the Afghan police reform project, are you talking about the German-led effort to reform the Afghan police?

NIKITA: *Yes. Now, what I'll do is, I'll describe to you what our role was—or how I understood our role—and then I'll elaborate for you some of the things we did; and I will probably get into great detail as to some of the things I did in order to stay busy there. First and foremost, in addition to supervising the other UN police officers, my role was to provide advice to the SRSG. Now, in that context, the SRSG would require from me my expert opinion relative to police matters on a whole different variety of issues, whether it be reform of the Afghan National Police or whether it be something to do with the security of the UN and/or any type of issues that arose relative to the policing program, if you will.*

Now, when I first got there I realized that the amount of advice that the SRSG needed or required was very, very small. Now, as time went by, he did start to call on me and asked me to do a few things and provide him with advice on a few issues; but essentially, I was left to ensure that my people as well as myself kept busy, insofar as trying to do whatever we could to assist in the international efforts at Afghan National Police reform.

So, as time went by I developed a niche for myself to the extent that I could, in order to make whatever type of contribution that I could possibly make to the mission, which essentially was reforming the Afghan National Police. Now, being such a small unit—you have to put it into context—Afghanistan is a very large country, Afghanistan has 34 provinces, notwithstanding the fact that the capital, Kabul, required some resources—with eight people, which is what we were, essentially, eight people, really what can you do? And this became the heart and core of the question: what really are we here for—and what really can we do with eight people?

So, myself, I was in Kabul, in the capital, in headquarters. I was available to the SRSG, as well as his two deputies, to provide advice when required; I was available to provide advice to the Minister of the Interior of the Afghan government; I was there to provide advice to the Americans responsible for police reform in their own right; and I was there to assist the German Police Project Office, who officially were responsible for Afghan police reform. Those are the kinds of things that we dug into, if you will, in order to keep ourselves busy and in order to make a contribution. Now, there were many things that came up during the course of events where I was called upon to provide my advice, because as it turned out, essentially, I became the senior police officer, the senior international police official outside, of course, of the German Police Project Office in Afghanistan. So my experience, my knowledge, my training, many of the things that I brought with me were required in the sense of providing advice and assistance on a large number of issues, which I will get into.

Now, having said that, I had two colleagues remain in Kabul and the remainder were out in the provinces. But this again was the dilemma, the overarching dilemma of the mission. With so few resources, really what can you do? Even in the sense of a province, the provinces were very, very large and with security the way it was and our inability to move when and where we wanted—we were not allowed to drive in that mission; we were only allowed to travel when a designated civilian driver would chauffeur us around. We had to share, transport resources with our colleagues from the military observer unit, and we did not as a unit have our own translators. So, we were inoperable essentially. However, the United Nation's military advisors did have designated translators, and they were quite willing to share that resource with the police, if there was a UN police officer assigned to that particular area where the UN military advisors were. So it was, you know, just a matter of sharing resources.

In a perfect world, the police unit would have had its own translators. In a perfect world, the police unit would have had its own transportation; it would not have had to rely on sharing resources with the military. But it's not a perfect world, and resources, you know, were very scarce in Afghanistan. So, it's understandable that we were required to share these types of things. I guess the other overarching issue related to what we were able to do is related to budgets—and it's very simple: we didn't have one. So, we could not contribute in a financial way to police reform. The only thing that we could do there is provide advice. Now, that brings me to the issue of: well, what is it that we were doing there?

Well, in addition to providing advice to the SRSG at my level, my colleagues were providing advice at the provincial level to the UN political advisors out in the regions; and so that's what we did. We provided advice to the extent we could, to the UN political advisors, the regional political advisors, and we provided advice and information and assistance to the United Nations human rights investigators, the human rights advisors. To the extent that we could, to the extent that we were able—again remembering we didn't have freedom of movement and remembering the security situation in Afghanistan—to the extent that we could, we would provide advice in the provinces to the local police chiefs and/or the governor. So, it's in that context there that the people who worked for me, they were providing advice at their level, and I was providing advice at my level.

Now, in addition to providing advice to the SRSG, as I stated earlier, I on a steady basis worked with the German Police Project Office and provided advice to the, I'll call it the GPPO, German Police Project Office, on a regular basis. We had regular meetings, and we made regular exchanges of information. I also kept track of what they were doing and was able to report on a weekly basis to New York the activities of the German Police Project Office. Now, while working with the German Police Project Office I was also introduced to the person who was the overall man responsible for the entire police project, the police reform project, and that was the special German ambassador. So, I would provide advice to the special German ambassador on a regular basis, a very, very nice man. We became excellent friends, and he came to rely on the kinds of things that I could provide him advice with on a whole variety of issues over the time that I was there.

Now, on the other side of the coin, while the Germans were officially the nation responsible for Afghan police reform, the Americans had a very, very large, very, very robust and ambitious program in support of police reform. And so I provided advice and assistance to the Americans the same way I provided advice to the Germans. I worked very, very closely with the Americans, just as close with them as with the Germans, and as time went by and as they got to know me, much like the Germans, they came to call on me more and more and more for advice on a whole variety of issues. Now, perhaps the more important thing is that there was a committee struck before I got there; and this committee was chaired by the special German ambassador. This particular international committee, if you will, oversaw the entire police reform project. It consisted of representatives of the German embassy, the British, and the British embassy, some other various embassies, the Italians, other fellows, and people that were associated with justice sector reform had representatives on this international committee; certainly the GPPO, and of course the Americans, and I was invited to sit on this particular committee as the UN's representative for police issues and remained in that committee for the time I was there.

BOUTELLIS: So this committee was the coordination mechanism between all the actors involved in police reform in Afghanistan at the time you arrived?

NIKITA: *Not all the actors, but most of them. There were other actors involved that were not represented on this committee. Because in Afghanistan, in addition to the Germans, the official country responsible for police reform—or the lead nation, if you will—then you had the Americans. But in addition to the Germans and the Americans, there were other nations involved in police reform at the provincial level in PRTs (Provincial Reconstruction Teams). That was a separate entity, and they were not represented at the time that I was there on this particular committee. Afterwards, it's my understanding after I left, that a new committee was formed—new name, new mandate, a new vision. It was supposedly to include, at least some of the many PRTs. During my tenure, I believe there were about 23 PRTs. I don't know how many there are today, but there were 23 then.*

Indirectly the Canadian PRT in Kandahar was represented at the committee through myself. That was unofficial and certainly indirect. But if there were things that I thought the committee should be aware of, if there were things that I thought that I could share or should share with the committee relative to the police reform project in Kandahar, I did that, I acted as a conduit. So yes, this committee was essentially the one that coordinated not all, but most of the effort towards police reform in Afghanistan.

BOUTELLIS: How regularly was this committee meeting? And how effective do you think it was at the time?

NIKITA: *On average, although it wasn't cast in stone, the committee met about once a week. Sometimes it would go once every two or three week, depending on the circumstances, but I think on average while I was there, this committee met about once a week. How effective was it? It wasn't very effective because of the friction and the animosity between the Germans and the Americans, and I must tell you that on many occasions, I found myself in the middle, almost as a referee between the two sides. I found myself being asked, sometimes by the Germans and/or sometimes by the Americans: "Well, what's your position on this John? What's the UN's position on this? Which side of the fence are you on here?" So, you know, it was a delicate position sometimes, trying to not only keep the peace between these two nations, but to try and represent everyone's interests in the true sense and style of the UN being a neutral body. So, it was a very interesting and very challenging kind of a role to play.*

BOUTELLIS: Was this committee also mandated to coordinate with maybe other sectors such as justice or defense that were also being reformed?

NIKITA: *Absolutely. And they were represented at the meetings by these different bodies. I know the Brits were represented, and the British would send their different representatives throughout the time I was there. The Italians were always there. There were members of the Carabinieri (the Italian Paramilitary National Police, L'arma dei Carabinieri). ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) was always represented. Of course the Americans, Operation Enduring Freedom, would send representatives. Representatives of, of course, the Minister of the Interior of the Afghan government were there. So yes, it was well represented.*

BOUTELLIS: Let me move from this and drawing from your personal experience, you mentioned in the review of your career that you've really been at the beginnings of the effort on the RCMP side to train its own officers before deployment overseas.

NIKITA: Yes.

BOUTELLIS: I'd like to ask you, from your personal experience and of course in this recent deployment in Afghanistan, but maybe also if you want to draw any comparisons with your prior experiences in Kosovo and Haiti, how well did you think you were prepared? Did you receive any training prior to deployment, whether from home, from the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, or from the UN? And were there any differences in your different overseas experiences?

NIKITA: *Well, in a general sense, in terms of the basic requirements for someone who is being deployed as a police officer to a UN police mission, I am very proud to say that as a Canadian I felt that I was very, very well prepared for all three missions, in terms of knowledge and in terms of training and in terms of preparedness. I was very, very well prepared for all three missions. Typical of the preparations that take place, the training that takes place before a police officer is deployed from Canada, I was given extensive training in cultural awareness and training in issues related to the target country if you will, its people and its culture and its practices. So, in that regard, I was well prepared. Things like physical fitness, medical preparation, all of these types of things in the sense of my equipment and the things I needed not only to remain healthy but to remain safe, all of these things were prepared and were provided. The training was given. Something as simple as a first aid course, something as simple as sessions with a psychologist to prepare for the ordeals that you would go through and the difficulties and so on and so forth—you know, trying to prepare us to the extent that they can to be away from wife and family and friends, and being in a new environment, and stress and how to deal with stress, all of these things. So yes, I feel for all three missions, at least from a Canadian perspective, I was very, very well prepared.*

The only difference in the three missions that I found was the one in Afghanistan in the sense that it was not a true peacekeeping operation. For me, this was a surprise. This was a disappointment, if you will, in the sense that it was so different, Afghanistan was so different from a traditional peacekeeping mission. It was a political mission, and the role of the police advisory unit, as well as the role of the military advisory unit was much, much diminished when compared to a traditional peace operation. So this was something I wasn't well prepared for; but I had to adjust after I got there, and then as time went on. It became very apparent that rather than being at the sharp end of the stock, rather than being the priority of the mission, there was very, very little interest on the part of the mission, if you will, towards security sector reform when you compared that to the efforts that were being made in terms of humanitarian aid, in terms of assistance that was being given to women and human rights, and all of these other very important issues. It was not a traditional peacekeeping mission, and so you just had to get used to that fact, and you had to adjust to it.

BOUTELLIS: Were you able to bring any lessons from your prior deployments with UN missions? Or were these so different that there was nothing that could have prepared you?

NIKITA: *No, I was able to bring in things that I learned from previous missions, and I'll give you an example. I was required to work extensively with my colleagues from the UN military advisory unit. I was required to work extensively with the commander of the UN military advisors unit. My previous two missions helped prepare me for that. My previous two missions helped prepare me for working with the military to the extent that I did in Afghanistan. So yes, there were lessons learned in previous missions that I was able to apply in Afghanistan.*

Another example of lessons learned in previous missions for Afghanistan was when I was called upon to attend very, very high level meetings with the Deputy SRSR and, on one occasion only, the SRSR and the Minister of the Interior. Sitting down, dealing with people at that level, especially the Minister of the Interior, after working in Haiti where as the Deputy Commissioner of the mission, on a regular basis we were meeting with the President of Haiti and his cabinet; so the fear if you will of dealing with people at that level, I was able to resolve that. And when I got to Afghanistan, it was quite simple and actually quite comfortable working at that level. And so, if I had not had that previous experience in Haiti of working with people even at the presidential level, and I even met the President of Haiti—if I had not had that experience in the past, it would have made things more difficult in Afghanistan.

Now in Kosovo it was a bit different because the UN administration was running Kosovo, so I didn't get that experience in Kosovo. But I did work with and meet what came to be the future senior officers of the Kosovo police service. But no—Haiti, in terms of becoming accustomed to and comfortable with working with high level politicians, that prepared me well for Afghanistan.

BOUTELLIS: Excellent. Well, if you'll allow, we'll move now into the different technical areas, and we'll start with one where you probably have a lot of experience, as I understand—recruitment—both on the home front as well as overseas. We're interested primarily in your overseas experience, of course, in all three instances. So, I'd like to start by asking you; What makes effective strategy according to you for recruiting police? And maybe start by, how do you sort out the good applicants from, maybe, applicants that might be potentially dangerous? And do you have experience in designing recruitment strategies overseas?

NIKITA: *Yes. While it is dated, and it goes back to a period around 1994, I reentered into the support and administrative side when I came back from Afghanistan. So essentially I did the job for two years in 1994, and then I did it as I closed out my career. But in terms of recruiting in Canada—and I would suggest this probably applies to other countries—the greatest challenge in Canada is to be able to identify police officers that can be released from their duties for UN missions. We have hundreds and hundreds of police officers across the country who are ready, willing and able to go on a UN mission. The problem is that their supervisors are not willing to release them, for a whole variety of reasons. So, in terms of a strategy for recruiting, we have to work very, very hard in Canada at marketing what we do. We have to work very, very hard at convincing supervisors, domestic supervisors, that by allowing their officer, or officers, to go on a UN mission, they're going to come back better trained, they're going to come back with much more experience, they're going to come back a better police officer, more adaptable to do things here in Canada.*

We also have to market the issue of international policing. We have to convince people that it's important to develop police forces abroad so that crime can be fought in foreign countries before it actually gets here. And so we have to market the whole international policing program from the perspective that by reducing crime abroad, by developing police services abroad, we're actually reducing crime of a transnational and international nature in Canada.

BOUTELLIS: This is quite interesting, but I'm sorry to interrupt—actually my question was more directed towards recruiting for indigenous police when you were in Haiti, in Kosovo—

NIKITA: Okay.

BOUTELLIS: Especially in Kosovo where the police were started from scratch.

NIKITA: *Okay. So if we move from recruiting in Canada then, and we're going to talk about recruiting in the mission itself—I'm going back to 1997 now, because that's when I was in Haiti, but sorry, you know, memory fades—I think the largest hurdle in Haiti was very, very similar to the one in Afghanistan and Kosovo in the sense that perhaps their largest and most important and probably the most challenging issue in terms of recruiting is the development of a viable, workable, transparent vetting program. We didn't have a problem recruiting police officers in Haiti. The problem we had was vetting and finding out which ones should not have become police officers. That was the greatest challenge while I was there.*

BOUTELLIS: So, how did you go about doing this? Do you remember specific instances?

NIKITA: *I wasn't there long enough to see a proper vetting system developed, but it is my understanding that a structured, transparent, effective vetting system wasn't created for years. In fact, I don't know if even today they have an effective vetting program yet in Haiti. Now, there may be, but while I was there, we were unable to establish a proper vetting program. Now, what we did was essentially the best that we could at the time, and that was to rely on human rights advisors and human rights investigators, the UN, and rely on military intelligence, rely on the current managers, if you will, including the Director of the Haitian National Police of the day, as well as, of course, the equivalent of the Minister of the Interior in Haiti. We had to rely on their judgment, their records. We had to rely on their word that the people that were being recruited into the Haitian National Police were indeed honest and were clean from human rights abuses and/or other types of things that happened during the hostilities. So, it was a very, very challenging process. For me anyway, the largest hurdle was the vetting.*

BOUTELLIS: In your second assignment, if I may put it this way, with the UN mission in Kosovo, you mentioned that you were Chief HR Officer for human resources for the KPS (Kosovo Police Service). So, what was your experience there? What were the main obstacles? And how did you overcome them on the recruitment side?

NIKITA: *Well, on the issue of recruitment, we were developing at the time that I was there—and it continued to be developed even after I left—a proper exam. We were developing proper standardized physical requirements. We were developing at the time, systems if you will, in order to enhance recruiting. There still was not yet, as was the case in Haiti, a proper vetting system in place.*

BOUTELLIS: How were you developing these, if I may ask? Where were the guidelines coming from? Was anything coming from the UN? Was there anything coming from previous UN police missions around the world?

NIKITA: *No. We were working in collaboration with the folks that were established at the KPS school in Vushtrri the folks that were running the police academy. We were basically developing guidelines for recruiting. We were developing guidelines for tests, for the physical requirements, and the other issues related to ensuring the hiring of a certain number of women, ensuring the hiring of representatives of all of the different ethnic groups. These were the challenges before us.*

In addition to working with the police academy and the folks who were responsible for the police academy at Vushtrri, we were of course working with police officials within, I guess you could call it the representatives of—I'm not

going to say the government—but representatives of the people in Kosovo; because at the time I'm not exactly sure how to refer to it, because the UN was the administration. I'll use the example of ensuring that all of the ethnic groups in Kosovo were represented on the police service. We would have to go to the population statistics, and we would have to go to the community to verify just how many people of different ethnic backgrounds and whatnot were there. I do not recall having available to us any kind of guidelines, if you will, from the UN. There may have been things available that had been made available from other missions, but I just don't recall.

BOUTELLIS: Moving on to the next technical area, if you allow me, which is training and professionalization. Have you been directly involved in these specific areas while overseas reforming national police services?

NIKITA: *In Kosovo, yes. Again, while I was the Chief Human Resources Officer for the KPS, we were in the process of developing an in-service training program, in order to provide extended training to the police officers after they had completed their basic training at the academy. After they had been deployed as police officers, we were now developing police training courses to enhance that basic training that they had received which was, by the way, very, very short.*

BOUTELLIS: Could you enlighten us? When you mentioned the basic training, what were the key areas? And how long was it at the time? Then move to the extended training program that you worked on designing. Again, the same questions; what were the correlations?

NIKITA: *Again, I don't have notes and certainly now we're going back to 2000 and 2001, so the memory doesn't always work well, but what we did was we created actually a very large unit responsible for what we would refer to as extended in-service training. Now examples of the types of training courses we were developing then: First aid, firearms training, self defense training, report writing, basic investigation, interrogation techniques or interview techniques, extended subjects related to human rights and policing in a democracy. These are the types of subjects that we were developing curriculum for extended in-service training for the future.*

BOUTELLIS: Over a period of—

NIKITA: Yes.

BOUTELLIS: How long was the in-service program meant to be?

NIKITA: *Each training course would of course be different, depending on the topic. Again, I can't recall the dates, but I'll just give you an example. A raw recruit comes out of the academy, the raw recruit is deployed and is now working out in the field with very, very minimal training in all of the different areas. So, in order to make the person more proficient, for example, in firearms, we worked at designing a course to enhance their firearms training and proficiency. Now, a firearms course could have been something as short as three days; whereas a self defense course, enhanced self defense techniques, could have been something as short as two days. A human rights course, probably something closer to five days. I don't recall the exact length of the courses, but that would be typical of that kind of training course. These were very basic, rudimentary courses. The development of a course for report writing for example, for the KPS, over and above what they received as raw recruits, could have been something as simple as two or three days, but I don't remember the length of time.*

BOUTELLIS: Do you recall if there were any tools that were developed to evaluate how effective these trainings were?

NIKITA: *At the time, no, because again, we were at the rudimentary stages of development. I just know that we threw a lot of resources at this. Our unit, the UN police unit that was developing standards and curriculum for extended training, in-service training, it was very large. I can't remember the numbers, but it was very, very large. It was a large undertaking, the same as the recruiting unit, very large.*

BOUTELLIS: These kinds of initiatives are very expensive and often too expensive for the budget of the communities or the countries once donor funds start lowering their level. With respect to these two sectors that we just talked about, recruiting or training, can you think of possibly some cost-saving suggestions or where the focus should be?

NIKITA: *I'll give you an example and I'll use Afghanistan simply because of the situation there. In terms of cost saving, for some training for the Afghanistan National Police, there could be cost savings if the Afghan National Police were permitted to train with, jointly, the Afghan National Army. If they were permitted to train more and more with the army on a joint basis, it would require far less resources and far less money than was being spent at the time trying to do it separately. So I'll use that as an example, where in Afghanistan clearly in terms of firearms and in terms of self defense and in terms of just teaching these people how to identify IEDs (improvised explosive devices) and just trying to teach these people how to stay alive in that hostile environment. There's no question that money and time and resources can be saved if you join the training, not all training, but some of the training, especially the firearms related and self defense related training with the military and the police.*

In Haiti, there was no military. They abolished the military so in terms of trying to save money in Haiti and/or make it more efficient, it was extremely difficult because of the situation there.

In Kosovo there's the same thing, there was no military, so we're just dealing with the development of a police service. But in Afghanistan there was the army and the police. I guess one of the other issues, at least in Afghanistan in terms of trying to save money and save time and make the best that you can with the resources you have, is much better coordination. Without question, the biggest problem in Afghanistan was the lack of coordination in everything, not only training but in everything. That comes with the model that was presented in Afghanistan with a lead country as opposed to the UN for example being in charge. It was very unfortunate. My understanding that this lead country model was an experiment and in my view failed miserably only because the Germans were not able to amass the money, the resources, the personnel required to do the job properly. They certainly meant well and what they did do they did extremely well.

The Germans must be commended for an extraordinary job at rebuilding the national police academy in Kabul, just a fantastic effort. The training programs that they developed for the senior police officers, the long training programs for the senior police at the police academy were extraordinarily good and effective and high quality training.

BOUTELLIS: Can you give us specifics of what—?

NIKITA: *I can't give you specifics.*

BOUTELLIS: You said they were effective; what is your reference?

NIKITA: *My reference from that is the fact that it just happened that after I got there and while I was there, the first class actually graduated from the first three-year program. There had been some other classes that had graduated from the shorter programs. So I saw some of these folks. I saw some of the products. They were first class police officers. They really were. You could tell that the program that the Germans developed at the academy, you could tell it was working. You could tell that it was something that they put quality behind as opposed to quantity. By all the reports that I saw, in speaking with the Germans, in working with the Germans, I carried out an inspection myself personally of the police academy. I watched the classes. It is my opinion, having looked at the curriculum it was a very, very well thought out, well done exercise. I was very, very impressed with it.*

In terms of in-service training, again, with the lack of coordination, there was a hodgepodge of countries, PRTs, departments providing all kinds of training, there was no standardized training, there was no coordination of standardization, there was no coordination of effort. The PRTs were doing whatever it is they wanted to do. There was a hodgepodge of training being provided. It was a real free-for-all I guess is the best way to put it.

BOUTELLIS: Let me move to the next category which is the integration and amalgamation of different types of security forces or police services into a coherent police unit if you have some experience in this.

NIKITA: *No, I can't really speak to that. When I think back in Haiti we were developing a national police force that was taking upon every aspect of the security of the country. It did in fact replace the military. It was in the true sense a national police service quite similar to my own, so in that sense, yes we were for a very short period of time that I was there, during a very short window, yes we were developing a national police force, an amalgamated type of national police force, all encompassing. It was very, very similar to the police force that we were trying to develop in Afghanistan.*

Now in Kosovo, a little bit different in one sense because there wasn't a national government. There certainly wasn't an official national army, but the KLA (Kosovo Liberation Army) was there. So a different dynamic. I can't really—.

BOUTELLIS: Then let's move on to the next section. Usually one of the important early tasks in building a police service is strengthening internal management. So by management we mean core elements such as the promotion system, the disciplinary system, record keeping, accounting and so on. Have you ever assisted local or national forces in this, in Afghanistan, or Kosovo or Haiti? In trying to find ways to strengthen internal management?

NIKITA: *While in Kosovo during the short period of time that I was the Chief of Human Resources, one of the things, in addition to the development of an in-service extended training program, one of the things that we were doing was setting up a staffing and administration type of function within the KPS. Again, as part of the larger context of the whole role of human resources within a police service. So yes we were doing that in conjunction with, of course, the Kosovo police officers*

themselves. Manuals were being developed. We had teams of people doing nothing other than developing manuals for the future Kosovo Police Service. Not only operations manuals but administration-type manuals. While we were doing internal investigations on incidents done by the Kosovo Police Service, because we did have a large internal investigation unit within human resources, at the same time we were developing our counterparts from the Kosovo Police Service to eventually take over these kinds of duties. While we were doing that we were developing guidelines for internal investigations.

We were developing, again with the Kosovo Police Service the practices if you will for internal investigations and codes of conduct. So these were all in the very, very early stages of development. But they were all starting. The Kosovo police officers that were designated to our different units, whether it be the training unit or whether it be the internal investigation unit or whether it be the administration unit, for example, the pay office, they were learning alongside our own UN people. Together we were developing these functions which hopefully they would take the ball and run at some point in time down the road. But like with something as simple as the pay office—yes, all of these things were being developed at that time.

BOUTELLIS: As we mentioned earlier, of course in Kosovo the UN had an executive mandate—.

NIKITA: Yes.

BOUTELLIS: Different than in other countries. So you had to design most of this from zero as you're building a new police force. In doing this to what extent, what procedures or strategies that you followed, were determined by the UN and the missions mandate? Again, how much, how did you go about developing these if you didn't have clear guidelines?

NIKITA: *I can't recall exactly what the guidelines that were used in Kosovo and/or in Haiti at the time. I can tell you that the issues were addressed, if you will, from a number of different parties, a number of different areas, so that everyone would have some say in the development of whether it be a manual for policies and procedures or whether it be a manual for administration, or whether it be a manual for training or the development of training standards, or the development of training curriculum. All of these things were taken in the context of what the host people wanted, if it was meeting their needs, what the host agency if you will, whether it be the Haitian National Police or the Kosovo Police Service. It was taken in the context of whatever the local needs were of course, first and foremost. But then I think the rest literally came from within the UN itself, in the sense that everybody made a contribution in one way, shape, form or the other.*

Back in those days, and I'm going back to 1997, I don't know what if anything was in place in New York for example in terms of the UN police. Something that we could use in terms of best practices, I don't think it existed. I don't think it existed in 2000 and 2001 when I was in Kosovo. I understand that there were many missions outside of Kosovo where we perhaps could have gotten materials, for example for standards on training or how to put together a police administration, but we would rely on our own knowledge and our own practices, our own experience.

I can tell you for example, as the Chief Human Resources officer of the KPS, I know how to put together the administrative units of an administrative support team for a police service. I know what you have to build into it. I basically know

how it looks, and how it is supposed to look. As long as it meets the needs of the local people, you build it. Police science is police science. There are other folks like me from all of the other countries and they have basically the same experience. So you go from there.

Afghanistan was a little bit different. We were, for example, I helped—that's one of the tasks that I did in Afghanistan. I actually helped create the questions for the exams for the top 31 generals. I helped create the process of selection for the top 31 generals. I helped develop the interviews, the structured interviews for the top 31 generals. I was part of a larger team of course doing these kinds of things. When it came time to do the next level of generals, the two-star generals, again I was asked to help by providing a batch of questions typical—.

BOUTELLIS: For the Afghan National Army now?

NIKITA: No, police.

BOUTELLIS: That was just the police.

NIKITA: *Yes. So these were the kinds of things I helped develop under an American lead of course. Remembering always that in Afghanistan the UN police had no budget, had really no people other than a very, very tiny representation. So we would provide advice and we would report on what either the Americans were doing or the Germans were doing, or the PRTs were doing. But when called upon, and by all means we provided advice. When it got down to the lower ranks and of course my colleagues helped in that regard. We again provided batches of questions for exams for the lower ranks, in this case the NCOs. We would, when time permitted for example, we would sit in and observe; we wouldn't participate. We would only observe during the interview process. We assisted to the extent that we could with the biggest problem in Afghanistan in terms of building the national police service, which was the vetting. We assisted when and how and wherever we could in terms of vetting which essentially relies almost solely on intelligence provided by UN human rights investigators and ISAF military intelligence. We also, to some extent had to rely on the Afghans themselves, the Minister of Interior as to whether, in terms of vetting, as to whether or not there were any bad apples in the groups. So yes, in the sense of participating in the actual processes for the selection of people, the development of a process for establishing ranks, yes, very much so in Afghanistan, very much more so than the other two missions.*

BOUTELLIS: Another issue of special interest to many is what can be done to improve external accountability both to government and to the communities in these countries. Have you ever worked with local indigenous police services to develop this kind of external accountability?

NIKITA: *No. We talked about civilian oversight in Afghanistan. It was an issue that was brought up and discussed but at this point in time in terms of the development of the Afghan National Police, the issue of civilian oversight is probably a long way away.*

BOUTELLIS: How about the depoliticizing of the police force? By that we mean having a politically neutral police service. Have you worked on this in any of your prior overseas work?

NIKITA: *In Afghanistan, yes. This was a huge issue relative to policing in Afghanistan. It was discussed on a regular basis. We would on occasion bring up to the Minister*

himself, through the Deputy SRSG, we would bring up to the Minister himself concerns about political interference in the police.

BOUTELLIS: Can you be precise? Was it at a provincial level by governors?

NIKITA: *We're talking at Kabul, at the Deputy SRSG and Minister of Interior level.*

BOUTELLIS: Right, but the issues of politicized police force, are they—?

NIKITA: *We would discuss this very issue, that trying to explain to the Minister of Interior of Afghanistan, trying to explain that the police must be seen to be at arm's length from the government, the police must be seen to be free to investigate who they wanted to and when they wanted to without political interference, without political interjection if you will. The advice was always very, very politely received but at least during my time the problem certainly did not go away. Now, the Germans, in the development of the tashkeel which is the framework for the development of the Afghan National Police, did try to design a police force that at least from appearances, was at arm's length from the Minister, but what is on paper in terms of a design or an organigram and the realities of life are two different things.*

I know that the Americans also brought this up on many occasions, that the police were to be separate from the political realm, but—.

BOUTELLIS: How did political interference, what were the concrete signs of political interference with police work while you were there? Do you have specific examples?

NIKITA: *I can't give you specific examples in terms of names but there were certain investigations that were politically motivated in Afghanistan. There were investigations that were not undertaken reportedly because of political interference. I don't have any specific examples, but these are the kinds of things that would be reported back to us. I think the best people may be the UN human rights advisors, human rights investigators. They may be able to provide you with specific examples. But, in the very general sense, we would become aware of the fact that some investigations were undertaken because of politics, some investigations that should have been undertaken were not because of politics. I do know that this was of concern to the UN. So these were things that we were aware of but I can't give you any specifics.*

One area, where again I can give you examples, but not specifics, is in the selection of the top 31 generals, the three-star generals. There was political interference right to the President's level. The President of Afghanistan himself had some say, had final say, in who became the top ranking officers in the Afghan National Police. The movement of police chiefs by the government, in spite of being told, either by the Americans or by the UN or by the Germans. In spite of being advised not to do that, for whatever reason, you can look at all kinds of things, the government would replace police chiefs, they would put in police chiefs where there was a good, effective honest one and then the next thing you knew there was a suspected crook running the place. Politics was involved in policing.

BOUTELLIS: The next question would be about the police working with non-state security groups, if there were any present. Do you have any experience with this?

NIKITA: *I'm not sure I follow.*

BOUTELLIS: With non-state political groups meaning many, like whether they be militias or local authority different forms of security, more traditional, that were not under state supervision.

NIKITA: No.

BOUTELLIS: Let's move on to the next question. We've talked about your experience in a number of functional areas. Now let's take a step back and maybe turn the conversation to some of the broader challenges that often affect efforts to build or reform an institution. One of the things maybe I'd like to ask you because we were just talking about the political nature and the importance of maybe the political will to reform is what kinds of allies in the host countries are essential for success, in your opinion from your experience?

NIKITA: *It is absolutely essential that the host government understand the importance of a stand-alone police service, an independent police service that is not influenced by government. If you don't have the support and understanding of the host government, I think you're defeated from the start. This was again one of the problems in Afghanistan. I can understand why the government in Afghanistan would be so interested in who the key leaders, key senior officers were in the Afghan National Police if for no other reason than their own security and their own longevity in a country like that. However, when you have political interference where senior police officers are essentially picked by the government and/or are moved around, it defeats the purposes of why essentially we are there.*

First and foremost the host government must be on side and if they're not, you have problems from the beginning. Second of all, unless the host government and unless the host agency, if you will, unless they're given primary responsibility for developing a program that suits them, you're also defeated. Because if you try to impose upon a host government and a host police service, if you try and impose upon them your thoughts, your ways, your practices, from a different world, that's not going to work. So it is key to listen to the host, not only government but the host police officials to truly develop a police service that is made for them, is designed by them, and that they're going to be happy with.

BOUTELLIS: Now a very broad question. Are there any innovations or sort of experiments that you know of through your whole career, whether you've been involved, or you've just witnessed, that you think merit more attention. I would include in this of course on the UN side of things, the effort to reform, but possibly also maybe home-grown success that you came across.

NIKITA: *In terms of the UN I must say this, my first mission was in 1997 and we were well served and we were well supported by the people in DPKO. However, I did notice by 2001, that the services and the support and the quality of the services and support that came out of New York were much enhanced. You could also tell that more care was being taken in the sense of the quality of the senior leaders of the UN police missions from 1997. Going back as far as 1994, as I recall, being in charge of peace operations, police peace operations here in Canada, I would visit my people in the missions and see the quality or lack thereof sometimes of some of the UN police officials. As time was going by you could see it improving at every stage and at every level. Until the time I got to Afghanistan, I must say that I was deeply impressed with the quality, the support and the practical experience that was in DPKO. It was like day and night from the old days. So whatever they did, whatever measures they took to enhance the*

capacity of DPKO, in spite of the fact that they're so terribly short of people, they were doing, at least in my opinion, a wonderful job, compared again to the old days. They would keep in contact with us in the field. They would follow up on issues that I would put in weekly reports. They would follow up on issues that perhaps were raised in code cables.

Even though we were a very small mission, even though we were not a traditional peacekeeping mission if you will in Afghanistan, DPKO had great interest in what we were doing. I was very much impressed with the fact that on three occasions we had three visits by officials from New York trying to help me, I guess it's the other way around, I was trying to help them determine what we should be trying to do in Afghanistan. We were trying to carve out a niche, if you will, carve out a role, carve out a description of what it is we should be doing in Afghanistan. We were also trying to determine what our contribution should be to police reform in Afghanistan.

Now, I can't remember the man's name, but New York sent out a chap from DPKO, I guess it was about three months into the mission. He did a very thorough analysis of the whole situation. He heard me out and he accepted my options as to what I thought we should be doing there in terms of our role, in terms of our size, in terms of the type of people we needed in the mission. Then the second wave came in the form of Mark Kroeker and one of his analysts. They did a very, very thorough study of what we were doing in Afghanistan and spent a lot of time with the Germans and the Americans. They accepted my different proposals and options as to what we should be doing in Afghanistan. Then thirdly, and this was a great surprise to me but one that demonstrates to me the importance that DPKO was placing on our mission, Mr. Guéhenno himself came which was quite an honor for me. Mr. Guéhenno spent close to a week there. Again, trying to determine what contribution should this—.

BOUTELLIS: Jean-Marie Guéhenno the head of the peacekeeping department of the United Nations.

NIKITA: *Yes. What should the UN be doing in terms of making a contribution to police reform in Afghanistan? So these kinds of things tell me that DPKO is working extremely hard at trying to be the best that it can be for all of the folks that are in the field. So from my perspective this was a real plus, a real plus.*

BOUTELLIS: Maybe one last question before we wrap up the interview. If you had a chance to write a handbook for people, for fellow officers who were going to go out and try to build civilian police units, try to reform national police services in challenging environments, what would be maybe the key topics that you would consider most important for this handbook?

NIKITA: *Number one, first and foremost, recruitment of personnel, of UN police personnel. By far, the biggest problem facing the UN police missions is the quality of the people in the mission itself. That has to be dealt with. I know that they've made great strides especially at the senior ranks of the missions; I alluded to that earlier in our interview. DPKO is doing a much, much better job now at selecting senior people for the missions, but it is at the bottom level, the entry level where there are still significant problems with the quality of the police that are coming into the missions. I can only hope that someday it will get better. But it is probably the largest problem that the missions are facing, the quality of the personnel.*

In terms of a handbook, there should obviously be the basics described in terms of the purpose of the mission, the role of the mission. These things have to be explained and clearly understood before the police officer gets there. The police officers beforehand have to know what it is they're going to be doing. They have to know what their powers are, what restrictions there are and so on and so forth.

In any handbook because of the number and variety of people now coming onto missions, policing in a democracy as well as human rights still has to be addressed. You can find for example, a situation where you're trying to build a new police force and you're trying to teach them principles of democratic policing but your UN police officers from the People's Republic of China or Nepal or some other country with almost none, if any history of policing in a democracy—we're calling on these folks to teach it? I don't know. So if you have to continue to—and I understand that you do have to continue to bring people in from all over the world, these kinds of things have to be taught and have to be instilled in these officers, especially if they're coming from countries that don't have a long history of policing in a democracy.

Certainly in any handbook the cultural do's and don'ts of the home country have to be explained, cultural sensitivity, gender sensitivity. These are the key issues in terms of preparing your police officers for duties in any host country. They have to be spelled out very, very clearly. Discipline in the handbook must be dealt with clearly. Not only does management have to know what the discipline processes are, but the field officers at the lowest ranks also have to know exactly what is in place, what can happen and what will happen if there is a code of conduct issue. So these are the things I think are important in terms of any handbook that is presented.

I suppose if there is one last thing in terms of helping a police officer get through a mission in terms of a handbook, essentially it would be hints, it would be suggestions at how to deal with stress, how to deal with monotony, how to deal with separation from family and friends, how to deal with isolation, how to deal with the difficulties that are posed in terms of physical demands in a mission. So it helps each officer cope, if you will, a little bit better with some of the extremes that do happen. For the most part the folks are fairly well prepared but not enough in all instances. So those are the kinds of things I think I would put in the handbook.

BOUTELLIS: Well John Nikita, thank you very much for your time and your thoughts. They are much appreciated.