

You can call a bunch of guys an army, but does saying so make it so?

Recently Jane's Defence Weekly quoted British soldiers training members of the Afghan National Army in Helmand Province (that's the one where there's a lot of actions, our people are getting killed on a regular basis, and the ANA is supposed to be taking over from the USMC who've ousted the Taliban from that patch of wilderness)

"This equipment issue [NATO standard small arms] has now outstripped their training....we are having to backtrack....It would be better if we could concentrate on the basics.

"They don't gel together as much as they should. There are quite a few incidents where [the training] doesn't click in and [they don't] do what we train them to do.

"They'll go to ground, or withdraw and leave another...infantry element in a precarious position."

The standard contract for a soldier in the Afghan NA is three years - so they're on a par with conscripts. The British Army wouldn't have conscripts as a gift, overstretch or no overstretch.