Maqsud Shrine, located at the base of the Shah Maksud mountains in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, is a sacred destination many regard as the third holiest Islamic site in Afghanistan. Photo by David Ellis/used with permission

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VSO and the Evolution of SOF C2 in Afghanistan

Knarr/Nutsch

JSOU

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Village Stability Operations and the Evolution of SOF Command and Control in Afghanistan: Implications for the Future of Irregular Warfare

William Knarr and Mark Nutsch

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Joint Special Operations University and the Department of Strategic Studies

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2020

Comments about this publication are invited and should be forwarded to the Director, Department of Strategic Studies, Joint Special Operations University, 7701 Tampa Point Blvd., MacDill AFB, FL 33621.

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On the cover. Governance (top): A village elder addresses Panjwai district Governor Haji Faizluddin Agha at a local shura on 6 March 2011, in a rural village in Panjwai district, Kandahar province, Afghanistan. Photo by U.S. Army Sergeant Benjamin Watson, Special Operations Task Force–South. Security (left): Afghan Local Police compound/checkpoint. Photo by William Knarr, 25 June 2013 in Northern Afghanistan. Development (right): Workers from the Dashtak Demonstration Farm install a grape trellis system in Panjsher Province on 9 October 2010 to aid upward growth of grapes. Photo by Sergeant First Class Peter Ferrell/DVIDS

Back cover. Maqsud Shrine, located in Kandahar Province, Afghanistan, at the base of the Shah Maksud mountains is a sacred destination many regard as the third holiest Islamic site in Afghanistan. Photo by David Ellis/used with permission

Contents

Foreword

In this monograph Dr. Bill Knarr and Mr. Mark Nutsch recount how Special Operations Forces (SOF) command and control evolved with all of the Village Stability Operations (VSO) dimensions, culminating ultimately in the creation of the Special Operations Joint Task Force. With the 2018 National Defense Strategy calling for expanding the competition space below the level of armed conflict, VSO provides a timely and relevant example of how SOF can contribute to this vision. Just like terrorism, great power competition will play out in countries with weak sociopolitical systems. The inherently political character and joint, interagency, international/multinational, and corporate nature of VSO can be replicated in many parts of the world for sustainable strategic effect. This monograph develops the concepts for SOF on how to contribute more effectively and efficiently to the counterterrorism fight, but readers would do well to think about VSO principles and command and control in the context of great power competition.

Within the last decade U.S. SOF have organized for and operationally executed a counterterrorism and counterinsurgency (COIN) concept that put local politics first in order to generate a security effect. Called VSO, this concept effectively used many of the tactics associated with unconventional warfare to fulfill a foreign internal defense requirement in areas where the Afghan government was unable to effectively govern due to weaknesses in the system. Because it endeavored to create governance in the absence of government in active conflict zones, VSO was an inherently joint, interagency, international/multinational, and corporate undertaking involving the Afghan government, Joint SOF, International Security Assistance Force, allies, partners, and even private corporations.

Whether in the context of counterterrorism, COIN, or great power competition, sustainable strategic effect in special operations is increasingly dependent on achieving a desired political effect with subnational population groups. Although the emphasis in counterterrorism has for years focused on kinetic operations through the find, fix, finish, exploit, analyze, and disseminate cycle to destroy, degrade, or disrupt terrorist and other threat networks, there is growing recognition that the future demand for SOF in great power competition now requires reimagining how to employ special operations

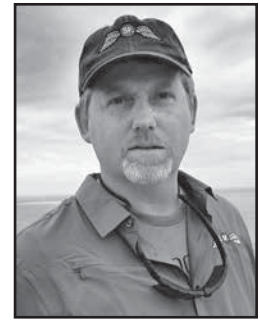
capabilities with greater emphasis on non-kinetic and influence-based activities. Whether described as operating in the human domain, cognitive space, or the human aspects of military operations, the importance of political effects in special operations suggests greater need for updating the concepts of SOF for the practice of special warfare.

David C. Ellis, Ph.D.
Resident Senior Fellow, Department of Strategic Studies

About the Authors

Dr. William Knarr is a non-resident Senior Fellow at the Joint Special Operations University (JSOU) in Tampa, Florida, where, on a part-time basis supports their research program and teaches/leads seminars on irregular warfare. He also serves as an adjunct professor at the National Intelligence University where he teaches graduate courses on intelligence and special operations. Dr. Knarr retired from the U.S. Army in 2002 as a colonel. His operational experience included intelligence, aviation and special operations. He has a doctorate in education, and master's degrees in national security strategy and systems management. His projects and publications include: *The 2005 Iraqi Sunni Awakening: The Role of the Desert Protectors*, JSOU monograph 15-4, and *Mazar-e Sharif: First Victory of the 21st Century*, IDA Document D-4015—both highlight the power of small adaptable units leveraging joint/coalition capabilities and working "by, with and through" indigenous forces. In April of 2019 he was inducted into the Infantry Officer Candidate School Hall of Fame.

Former U.S. Army Major Mark Nutsch recently provided contract support to USSOCOM J-3 Training and Education joint assessments of SOF Baseline Interoperability Standards for combat skills. Mark served in the Army, in active and reserve capacities as a 101st Airborne Infantry, 75th Ranger Regiment, and special forces officer and mobilized as an operations officer in support of SOF counter-ISIS efforts. He deployed repeatedly with multiple combat tours to the Middle East and Central Asian States. Working with the National Labs as a program manager, he led diverse collaborative teams of contract aircrew and intel analysts, and conducted groundbreaking manned aerial wide area counternetwork surveillance efforts as part of Task Force (TF) ODIN. In America's response to the attacks of 9/11, Captain Nutsch led one of the first TF Dagger combined



Special Forces teams (ODA-595) with Combat Controllers and CIA into Northern Afghanistan. He advised the area command leadership of three different resistance factions. Uniting those factions together against the Taliban and al-Qaeda, they spearheaded unconventional warfare operations while mounted on horseback. The "Campaign for Mazar-e Sharif" resulted in the liberation of six northern Afghan provinces, and with other follow-on TF Dagger teams was the catalyst for the Taliban Regime collapse. Mark and the ODA-595 "Horse Soldiers" are the design inspiration of the "America's Response Monument," a tribute to the SOF and intelligence community. He and his team are featured in the books *The Last Warlord* and *The Horse Soldiers*. He is a featured guest speaker for public and professional institutions including JSOU Senior Enlisted Academy courses. Mark and his team are featured in the documentary film "Legion of Brothers" and portrayed in the feature film entitled "12 Strong." Because Mark led the first special operations team into Afghanistan, he was asked and subsequently led the first parachute team into Normandy on 5 June 2019 for the 75th D-day commemoration ceremony. His co-author, Bill Knarr, was a member of his jump team.

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This monograph was a spinoff of a much larger "Battle Reconstruction" effort conceived among members of Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), Joint Staff and the Institute for Defense Analyses (IDA). We'd first like to thank Mr. Frank DiGiovanni, known as D9; then-Director, Training Readiness and Strategy, OSD; Lieutenant General Thomas Waldhauser, J7 and Mr. Jerry Lynes, Director for Joint Education and Doctrine, both from the Joint Staff; and Major General Thomas Jones, United States Marine Corps (Ret.), from IDA. Although the multimedia Battle Reconstruction was a much larger initiative, the objectives in terms of research focus as addressed in the introduction changed very little since that initial meeting in 2014.

Much of the information for this monograph was initially developed under the sponsorship of that Battle Reconstruction program, as well as the expertise of the IDA team—especially the efforts of Ms. Carolyn Leonard and Major General Thomas Jones. An informal partnership between the Joint Advanced Warfighting Division (JAWD) at IDA and the JSOU Department of Strategic Studies (DSS) encouraged the sharing of information and leveraged the strengths and reputations of both organizations to address the requirements of each. The authors thank Mr. James Johnson, director of JAWD, and Mr. Frank Reidy, Director of Outreach, JSOU DSS for recognizing and capitalizing on the opportunity.

The authors would like to thank Admiral Eric Olson, Lieutenant Colonel Chris Hensley, Brigadier General Donald Bolduc, Brigadier Mark Smethurst, Lieutenant Colonel Scott Mann, Colonel Brian Petit, Major General Edward Reeder, Major General Michael Repass, Colonel Chris Pflanz, Command Sergeant Major Rod, Major Jerry "Rusty" Bradley and Major Neiman Young—all retired, experienced Special Operations Forces (SOF) Service members who played a major role in helping the authors understand SOF (both U.S. and coalition) contributions and developments in Afghanistan.

Additionally, the authors need to recognize the following contributors: Captain Jesse Erickson, Major Ty Flinton, Colonel Justin Sapp, Major Derek

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Mr. Michael Pirolo from the Lessons Learned Operational and Strategic Studies Branch at the United States Special Operations Command provided experience and lessons learned material in the development of the Village Stability Operations/Afghan Local Police (VSO/ALP) programs and the special operations joint task force. His review of this monograph was greatly appreciated.

SOF/conventional force integration was a major theme in this monograph. We thank Colonel Curtis Buzzard and Colonel JD Highfill for their support.

And last but not least, we appreciate the efforts of our JSOU reviewer, Dr. David Ellis. In addition to his experience in working the VSO/ALP programs—to include a deployment to Afghanistan with the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command in 2010 to 2011—he brought new ideas and a different and insightful perspective to the project.

Introduction

> This is not a war of choice. This is a war of necessity. Those who attacked America on 9/11 are plotting to do so again. If left unchecked, the Taliban insurgency will mean an even larger safe haven from which Al Qaeda would plot to kill more Americans. - U.S. President Barack Obama[1]

With the war in Iraq winding down, newly-elected President Obama redirected resources to the war in Afghanistan—the war of necessity. In addition to an increased emphasis and additional resources, this war demanded new ideas and leadership. By the summer of 2009, the commander-in-chief would designate U.S. Army (Ret.) General Stanley McChrystal as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF)/U.S. Forces–Afghanistan (USFOR-A) commander. In late June 2009, General McChrystal was directed to provide an assessment of the "situation in Afghanistan." On 30 August he provided that assessment:

> The situation in Afghanistan is serious. The mission can be accomplished, but this will require … fundamental changes. First, ISAF must focus on getting the basics right to achieve a new, population-centric operational culture and better unity of effort. Second, ISAF must also adopt a new strategy, one that is properly resourced to radically increase partnership with the ANSF [Afghan National Security Force], emphasize governance, prioritize resources where the population is threatened, and gain the initiative from the insurgency. - U.S. Army (Ret.) General Stanley McChrystal[2]

Something drastic had to be done; the U.S. was losing. No matter how many Taliban were killed, there were always more. General McChrystal recognized that and his initial assessment and subsequent campaign plan emphasized a major change in how the Coalition approached the problem. It would now emphasize culture—Coalition and Afghan. The Coalition had to change its culture in how it approached the problem and that approach had to change from enemy-centric to population-centric.[3] An enemy-centric approach was more direct: find the threat and kill it, with less regard or

understanding of the consequences. After all, the military's mantra from basic training was very direct: "shoot, move and communicate."[4] As one commander put it, "Hell, we were making insurgents!"[5] This environment demanded that we "communicate" first. In order to do that the Coalition needed to understand Afghan social structures and the importance of the rural villages to Afghan national security.

A Special Operations Mission

This was not new to the special operations community. In fact, this approach seemed to be written for Special Operations Forces (SOF). It capitalized on the basic attributes of special operations core activities such as counterinsurgency (COIN), foreign internal defense (FID), security force assistance, foreign humanitarian assistance, military information support operations (MISO), civil affairs (CA) operations, and unconventional warfare (UW)—all people-focused. As such, SOF are manned, equipped, and trained for the mission.[6]

General McChrystal mandated two major changes to improve the "execution of COIN fundamentals" and "enhancement of organizational alignment:" 1) pursue a population-centric COIN approach that puts the people first, and 2) improve unity of command and unity of effort.

In line with that mandate, SOF would develop and run bottoms-up COIN programs known as Village Stability Operations/Afghan Local Police (VSO/ALP) and develop a command and control (C2) structure that addressed many of the C2 issues found in Iraq and Afghanistan.[7]

Purpose

The purpose of this research and monograph is to:

1. Document the development of the VSO/ALP programs including the integration of SOF and conventional forces (CF) in developing the programs and building the capacity of those local forces. Additionally, it will identify the successes and failures of the programs and provide examples of, and lessons from, SOF/CF integration. It will discuss the applicability of the approach to other regions.

2. Trace the evolution of special operations C2 in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2014 to include command relationships, authorities, and

organizational structures. It will discuss the efficacy of those changes and their value to future conflict.

3. Analyze the complementary effects of those initiatives. The monograph will discuss how the development of those initiatives made for a more effective force and broadened the set of strategic options for the Coalition's approach to Afghanistan and other regions beyond 2014.

In this monograph the authors contend that both initiatives (the VSO/ALP programs and the evolution of SOF C2) were generally successful in-and-of themselves. However, true success lies in the convergence of those initiatives and their contributions to strategic options beyond 2014, which started with the establishment of the Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command–Afghanistan (CFSOCC-A).

Securing a Seat at the Table

Anticipating this sea change in strategic and operational direction, as well as an eagerness to "fix" some of the C2 challenges encountered in both Iraq and Afghanistan, Admiral Eric Olson, then Commander, United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), pressed for the senior in-country theater SOF representative to be a flag officer. He had every confidence in the highly talented SOF and select colonels to command the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Afghanistan (CJSOTF-A), however, they were spread thin commanding the organization and trying to influence planning efforts at the higher headquarters. Additionally, the CJSOTF-A commander wasn't invited to all of the meetings in Kabul. In particular, some of the more important meetings at the ISAF and ISAF Joint Command (IJC) headquarters demanded flag office rank to secure a seat at the table. That would also place the one-star Theater SOF commander on par with the one-star commanders of the ISAF SOF and direct action task force (DA TF).

Hence, in January 2009 newly promoted Brigadier General Edward Reeder, an experienced Afghan operator and at the time Admiral Olson's executive officer, was designated as commander of the CFSOCC-A. It is the authors' contention that development and sustainment of the VSO/ALP programs and progression of C2 to the Special Operations Joint Task Force–Afghanistan (SOJTF-A) would not have happened without this first step as it allowed the CJSOTF-A commander to command his unit and provided

the CFSOCC-A Commander an opportunity to influence planning at the operational and strategic levels.

Village Stability Operations/Afghan Local Police

Brigadier General Edward Reeder immediately started drafting what would ultimately be called VSO and initiated the program in May of that year. It would incorporate a local defense initiative, later to be called the Afghan Local Police (ALP). There were a number of local or community defense initiatives (CDIs) in the past, but to the Afghans they were militias by another name. The ALP name and program would endure for two reasons: 1) it was eventually supported by Afghanistan President Hamid Karzai who reportedly coined the name, and 2) it was tied to the much larger, strategic vision of VSO. Soon it would be known as VSO/ALP.

The VSO/ALP concept was much more than protecting the population. In April 2010, Brigadier General Reeder was replaced by Brigadier General Austin Miller. Miller also recognized the importance of developing legitimacy within the governing system. The central theme of VSO was stability, and in addition to security, included governance and economic development. To be sustained, the village had to be connected to the central government. Stability demanded a bridge from the traditional to the institutional (or informal to formal) governing systems with the center of gravity (COG) at the district level. The concept was to enable and empower local villages to fend and govern themselves, kick-start development through expert advice, assistance and grants, and then link those villages to the central government through supporting nodes at the district, province, and region.

The central theme of VSO was stability, and in addition to security, included governance and economic development.

Hence, the CFSOCC-A developed an elaborate network connecting VSO sites or Village Stability Platforms (VSPs) at the village level to the national level, via District Augmentation Teams (DATs), Provincial Augmentation Teams (PATs), regional Village Stability Coordination Centers (VSCCs), and the Village Stability National Coordination Center (VSNCC) in Kabul. A critical part of their job was to ensure that services and resources were delivered to the people. This was a major challenge for two reasons: 1) Interagency

services from U.S. State Department, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) and others emanated from the top—from the Embassy—and were not structured to support down to the village level, and 2) this was a society endemic with bribery, fraud, and other forms of corruption to include a poppy-based economy. The complexities of that network would address the former, but would struggle with the latter.

Command and Control

General McChrystal, in his quest for unity of command, requested that all in-country SOF report to him. By April 2010, this took place by way of realignments of command relationships.[8] USSOCOM supported the consolidation of SOF under one commander, but realized that the four-star headquarters should not be burdened with coordinating SOF operations. As such, they were working on "presentation of the force"—a structuring of all in-country SOF under one SOF headquarters called the special operations joint task force (SOJTF). The SOJTF, as explained by Admiral Olson, was not specific to Afghanistan, but was intended to be a flexible structure, by which

> we could form a cadre around, and forces could be assigned to apply to a problem. Those forces assigned could include national forces, international forces, or theater forces.[9]

Afghanistan was the first execution of that concept with Major General Raymond A. "Tony" Thomas taking command of the SOJTF-A in July 2012. Within a month he assumed command of ISAF SOF as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) Special Operations Component Command–Afghanistan (NSOCC-A). In addition to providing one SOF voice to the ISAF/USFOR-A commander and Afghan government, it synchronized all in-country SOF operations and more effectively managed resources. This became essential with the growing importance of the SOF mission that demanded increased capacity, a shift to supporting Regional Command (RC) Battle Space Owners (BSOs), and a more congested battlefield as it would accommodate the surge of U.S. and Coalition forces and civilians.

Framing the Discussion: Successes, Failures, and Implications

Despite the alignment of programs and commands from the strategic level through the operational to the tactical level, there was debate as to the success or failure of the VSO/ALP programs and the need for a two-star SOJTF headquarters in Afghanistan. Generally, those that opposed VSO/ALP said that it encouraged local militias that further separated the government from the people, was endemic with human rights abuses, became a patronage system, and fed a corrupt system permeated by Afghan strong men and political self-interest. SOJTF skeptics contend that the two-star headquarters was just another level in a growing bureaucracy that progressed from a Colonel/O6 as the senior SOF commander in-country for theater SOF to a one-star CFSOCC-A commander to a two-star SOJTF-A commander in several years, with little to no value added. One CF general officer said that it made coordination with SOF in his area of operations (AO) more difficult and time-consuming.[10]

This monograph sorts through and analyzes these contentions and finds much more success than failure, as well as implications for the future—in particular how these seemingly unique innovations address larger doctrinal issues. The below chronology of events helps frame the discussion.

January 2009. In anticipation of the shifting focus and priorities relating to Afghanistan, Admiral Olson worked with General David McKiernan, ISAF Commander, to authorize and deploy SOF flag officer Brigadier General Edward Reeder to Afghanistan as the CFSOCC-A commander.

March 2009. With a drawdown in Iraq, President Barack Obama proclaimed that Afghanistan was a "war of necessity" and would be the focus of U.S. war efforts.

June 2009. General Stanley McChrystal assumes command. His mandate: 1) pursue a population-centric COIN approach, and 2) improve unity of command/effort.

August of 2009. The first Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) was established in the village of Nili in Daykundi Province, under the CDI program.[11] It would be hailed as the first VSO site.

November 2009. IJC was established as NATO's three-star operational level command.

December 2009. President Obama announced surge of 30,000 troops, with withdrawal of troops in 18 months following the surge.[12]

December 2009. CDI renamed Local Defense Initiative (LDI).[13]

10 March 2010. Brigadier General Austin "Scott" Miller assumed command of CFSOCC-A and on 1 April operational control (OPCON) of CFSOCC-A was transferred from Special Operations Command Central to USFOR-A.

May 2010. LDI became VSO. Brigadier General Scott Miller established a complex VSO network to link Kabul and Coalition services to districts.

4 July 2010. General David Petraeus assumed command of ISAF/USFOR-A and supported VSO/ALP. President Karzai approved ALP as an Afghan-led program under the Ministry of Interior (MOI).

January 2011. 1-16th Infantry deployed to support VSO/ALP followed by 1st Battalion, 505th Parachute Infantry Regiment (PIR).

June 2011. President Obama announced reduction of 33,000 troops by September 2012.[14]

June 2011. Brigadier General Christopher Haas assumed command of CFSOCC-A; enhanced VSO program with addition of enablers to include cultural support teams (CSTs).[15]

December 2011. Admiral William McRaven, Commander USSOCOM, announced an ALP increase from 10,000 to 30,000 by 2015.

11 March 2012. Staff Sergeant Robert Bales, part of infantry "uplift" to VSP Balambai, Panjwai District, murdered 16 civilians. President Karzai demanded U.S. troops be pulled from villages, but later acquiesced.

1 July 2012. SOJTF-A was established, with Major General Thomas in command. Shortly after, he is dual-hatted as the commander NSOCC-A, assuming command of ISAF SOF.

December 2014. The U.S. ceased direct combat operations in Afghanistan.

Successes

There were a number of SOF successes, both enablers and effects, from 2009 to 2014. All are discussed within the monograph, but three of those were selected for discussion in terms of effects.

Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan: Setting the Conditions for Innovation

The success of the CFSOCC-A wasn't just in its C2 of forces, but primarily in the effects it was able to generate, such as setting the conditions for innovative ideas to take root and develop. In this case it was the placement of an Afghan-experienced high-level staff officer with access to three- and four-star generals. It is the authors' contention that the birth and sustainment of ALP and VSO would not have happened without the establishment of the CFSOCC-A. Innovative leaders such as Brigadier General Reeder started the program with Brigadier General Miller moving the concept forward by establishing a structure to support VSO from the bottom to the top.

Village Stability Operations/Afghan Local Police: Building and Sustaining Legitimacy

ALP was important in working with the traditional village governing system to develop a local defense system. But, the uniqueness of VSO/ALP was implementing a program that recognized the importance of governance and development as well as security, and that, to be sustainable, needed to be linked to the central government. That linkage was a major step toward building legitimacy. Legitimacy has always been an important theme in COIN doctrine and is mentioned over 150 times in the 2018 version of Counterinsurgency, Joint Publication 3-24.[16] However, saying it and doing it are two different things. Legitimacy was arguably the most important (missing) characteristic in Iraq and, the lack of legitimacy led to the return of al-Qaeda in Iraq (as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in 2013/2014.[17] The need to enable legitimacy was an important lesson from Iraq. The point is, the acronyms may change, but legitimacy is an enduring concept no matter the region or time frame, and VSO is one example of how to manage people and resources to enable legitimacy.

Unity of Command: Synchronizing Population-Centric Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism Operations

Unity of command and the evolution of C2 to the SOJTF-A produced a number of positive effects such as one in-country SOF voice to the ISAF/USFOR-A commander as well as to the regional commanders, synchronizing all in-country SOF missions, and managing limited resources across the in-country SOF enterprise. One area that stood out as a major issue from Iraq

was the ability to coordinate, communicate, and balance counterterrorism (CT) operations within the ISAF commander's COIN mandate.

Debate on whether this should be predominantly a CT fight or a population-centric COIN fight was widespread in 2009 at the national level (to be discussed later) with a doctrinal manual devoted to each. The doctrinal gap between each was initially reconciled by the four-star Theater commander. Bridging that gap in Iraq was initially a failure with visceral complaints by CF that suddenly found SOF (task force) conducting raids in their areas of operations for which they had to "clean-up" with resident tribes.[18]

Figure 1. Finding the right balance is important.

General McChrystal, as the Counterterrorism Task Force commander in Iraq, acknowledged that frustration. When he took command in Afghanistan he demanded SOF unity of command under his authorities. USSOCOM supported the consolidation of SOF under one commander, recognized that the four-star should not be burdened with coordinating SOF operations, and were working on a structure called the SOJTF to assume that responsibility. The SOJTF accomplished that and, as indicated, much more.[19]

A survey of BSOs in Afghanistan was almost unanimous in the support for the two-star SOF command in addressing SOF/CF conflicts such as theater SOF and DA TF operations in their areas.

Failures

There were a number of failures. Two of them at the national/strategic level are listed here because they contributed to follow-on failures.

A Failure of Policy

- Diverting America's attention and resources to Iraq in 2003.
- Announcing the troop drawdown in Afghanistan immediately following the announcement of the surge.[20]
- Rapidity of the troop drawdown as well as the final troop count.[21]

The point is that countering insurgencies requires time; time is not measured in days, months or even years. Time to counter insurgencies is measured in generations. This is a clash of cultures—American culture of quick fixes versus the generational demands of changing attitudes and other societal cultures. Developing legitimacy is not a short term project.

The Inability to Deal with Narcotics and Corruption

Although there were periods of decline, poppy production generally increased from 2002 to a record high in 2017 with Afghanistan "producing 90 percent of the world's illicit opium." Additionally, opium poppy is Afghanistan's largest cash crop.[22] This is the elephant in the room.

Why is poppy cultivation and opium production so persistent? During periods of conflict, insecurity and poor governance, farmers have turned to high demand, high yield, high payoff, and low cost production crops. Poppy cultivation fits the need. Additionally, a crop can be harvested within six months, it doesn't require elaborate storage such as refrigeration, and with the abundance of criminal networks marketing is not a requirement.[23] Opium bricks also serve as currency and can be a source of savings.

There are five pillars to the U.S. approach to countering narcotics in Afghanistan: public information, alternative livelihoods, elimination and eradication, interdiction, and law enforcement and justice reform.[24] U.S. strategy has changed several times in the last 17 years with emphasis on different pillars at different times. One of the most controversial has been eradication. In particular, eradication without an alternate source of production results in humanitarian crises with little effect on cultivation and production, as the narcotics networks simply relocated cultivation areas and production facilities.

Sadly, this monograph does not offer a solution, but expects that if the issues with poppy cultivation and opium production are not solved, corruption will never be resolved and government legitimacy will never be established. We are on the road to failure.

Implications

VSO/ALP and the evolution of SOF C2 have implications across the doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities and policy (DOTMLPF) spectrum.[25] The following focuses on doctrine,

training and education; its effects on organizations and personnel will be addressed later.

VSO provided a way to connect the bottom with the top and vice versa and build legitimacy. Doctrine speaks to legitimacy as an end and the population as a means, but it doesn't offer a way, or how. Most doctrinaires would argue that it is not supposed to, because the way or how is situation dependent.[26] Generally, the authors would agree, however, the use of vignettes in joint publications provides an opportunity to highlight a structure and process that specifically addresses the issue.[27] At a minimum VSO/ALP should be mentioned in the next versions of *Counterinsurgency*, Joint Publication 3-24, and *Special Operations*, 3-05, as an example of addressing the legitimacy issue.

This has training and education implications as well. The nucleus for the VSO/ALP mission was special forces (SF), and UW/FID techniques have been lauded as major contributors to success. However, the integration of the various disciplines that operated as core elements and/or enablers, such as the SF ODA, Marine Special Operations Teams (MSOTs), Sea, Air and Land Forces (SEALs), CA, MISO, cultural support teams and others, to pursue "stability" is new, and needs to be addressed in training and education.

The SOJTF is discussed in the last two versions of Joint Publication 3-05, with the most recent version providing the right touch of structure, authorities, and flexibility. Conventional force appreciation for the functionality/ability of the SOJTF to overcome issues from Iraq is near unanimous, in particular its ability to balance and coordinate CT/COIN operations. It has also been recognized internally for its ability to efficiently manage resources across the in-country SOF community making resources available that might otherwise have been held in reserve. The issue now becomes one of resourcing and training to ensure an organization is ready and prepared to assume that role.

Both of these areas (VSO/ALP and SOF C2) have implications for future operations. The SOJTF has been implemented in Iraq as well as Afghanistan and is part of doctrine. While VSO/ALP is not doctrinal it provides lessons that, in a general sense transcend geographical areas as demonstrating one "way" (as an element of strategy) of addressing legitimacy in COIN.

Methodology

A case study methodology based on a literature review and interviews was used. The interviews span the strategic to the tactical. They include a U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan, a former ISAF commander, coalition force commanders that worked with the VSO/ALP programs and with the SOJTF, as well as SOF members that participated in the programs at the SOF team to the SOJTF level.

Scope

In addition to a timeframe, this project will also be scoped by selected initiatives and geography. As indicated above, it will generally cover the timeframe of January 2009 to 31 December 2014 with the "transition of NATO support from a combat role to a train, advise, and assist mission."[28] However, it will focus on 2009 to 2012 with the activation of the SOJTF-A.

The three topic areas are primarily the three project initiatives: (1) the development of the VSO/ALP programs, (2) the evolution of SOF C2 to the establishment of the SOJTF, and (3) the complementary effects of those initiatives.

Geographically, the project will primarily address several of the districts within two areas of importance to the Coalition: RCs East and South.[29] See figure 2 for location of the regional commands.

Administrative Notes

The following protocols are used in this paper for consistency. In text/context, this paper will normally refer to military members by their rank at the time of the event. In the endnotes they will be referred to by their rank at the time of the interview.

When discussing strategy, this monograph uses a combination of the strategy framework and the levels of war. The strategy framework conceptually defines strategy as "the relationship among ends, ways, and means. Ends are the objectives or goals sought. Means are the resources available to pursue the objectives. And ways or methods are how one organizes and applies the resources."[30] This paper also uses the levels of war as described in Joint Operations, Joint Publication 3-0, 11 August 2011, "Three levels of

war—strategic, operational, and tactical—model the relationship between national objectives and tactical actions."[31]

Structure

There are nine chapters:

Monograph starts with introduction.

Chapter 1 discusses strategic and operational initiatives that promulgated major changes in the Coalition approach to the war in 2009.

Chapter 2 provides background on Afghanistan including the physical and human terrain, as well as historical events that are relevant to the monograph.

Chapter 3 discusses VSO/ALP programs, the development of ALP and VSO, as well as VSO enablers.

Chapter 4 consists of vignettes from the field.

Chapter 5 discusses interaction and contributions of interagency partners and the establishment of the VSCCs to link those governance and development efforts from the top to the bottom and vice versa.

Chapter 6 discusses General McChrystal's efforts toward unity of command to include the unification of SOF tribes under him in 2010 and then later the balancing of missions and resources under the SOJTF in 2012.

Chapter 7 discusses the interactions with the international community, as well as multinational SOF. It includes national caveats, rules of engagement (ROE), and the command structure as well as their contributions.

Chapter 8 is addressed from two aspects: 1) generally, the working together of those two forces to meet a common objective.[32] As an example, working in the same area with a supporting/supported relationship at the Brigade Combat Team or higher level. But it also refers to 2) the building of U.S. capacity to support the VSO/ALP programs at the SOF split team and CF squad level.

Chapter 9 provides discussion and summation of successes, failures, and implications.

Figure 2. Afghanistan: RCs and Provinces.

Chapter 1. A War of Necessity[33]

Immediately following the 9/11 attacks by al-Qaeda on the United States, countries around the world condemned the act. On 12 September, in a rare show of solidarity, the United Nations Security Council unanimously passed Resolution 1368 calling "on all states to bring the perpetrators to justice." Additionally, NATO invoked Article 5 of the charter "declaring the [terrorist] act against the United States [on 9/11] as an act against them all."[34] On 14 September, the United States Congress passed Joint Resolution 23 granting the president the authority "to use all necessary and appropriate force against those nations, organizations, or persons he determines planned, authorized, committed, or aided the terrorist attacks that occurred on September 11, 2001, or harbored such organizations or persons."[35] On 7 October, after the Taliban rejected his demands that they hand over Osama Bin Laden, U.S. President George W. Bush publicly announced that the

> United States military has begun strikes against al Qaeda terrorist training camps and military installations of the Taliban regime in Afghanistan. We are joined in this operation by our staunch friend, Great Britain. Other close friends, including Canada, Australia, Germany and France, have pledged forces as the operation unfolds. More than 40 countries in the Middle East, Africa, Europe and across Asia have granted air transit or landing rights. Many more have shared intelligence. We are supported by the collective will of the world.[36]

Events happened quickly. With the deployment of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and SOF teams supported by airpower, the Taliban government fell by the end of November. After the Bonn Agreement in December 2001, the Afghan interim administration was established with President Hamid Karzai appointed as chairman. Additionally, the ISAF was established to help the Afghan government provide security in and around Kabul. From 2002 to 2003, ISAF was led by various NATO nations on a six-month rotational basis from its headquarters in Kabul. In August 2003, NATO assumed the responsibility for ISAF, and under an October 2003 United

Nations mandate, NATO would expand ISAF operations beyond Kabul to include all of Afghanistan by the second half 2006.[37]

Change of National Priorities to Iraq/Deterioration of Conditions in Afghanistan

In late 2002 and 2003, the United States' attention and resources turned toward Iraq. What appeared to be a quick victory turned into a lengthy and lethal insurgency. Although the Iraqi elections of December 2005 seemed a bright spot, enthusiasm quickly faded in early 2006 with the bombing of the Al-Askari mosque in Samarra, one of the Shia's holiest mosques. The act ignited sectarian violence that led to intense civil conflict in Baghdad.

The Taliban, learning from the insurgents in Iraq, began using improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to great benefit—U.S. and Afghan casualties, both military and civilian, soared. Although the Taliban resurgence started in 2005, it wasn't until 2006 that it gained media and public attention. Unfortunately, Iraq was in chaos, and demanded more resources with a military surge scheduled for 2007.[38] While conditions in Iraq improved during 2008, the situation in Afghanistan continued to deteriorate. During the run-up to the 2008 U.S. elections, presidential candidate Barack Obama pledged to end the war in Iraq, in his words "a distraction," and turn the nation's attention to Afghanistan, what he later called "a war of necessity."[39]

2009: A New Commander-in-Chief and a New National Strategy for Afghanistan

In January 2009, newly-elected President Obama took office; high on his agenda were Iraq and Afghanistan. He set time tables for the United States to depart Iraq by 2011 and committed to increasing support for Afghanistan. In February 2009, he approved the deployment of 17,000 troops to Afghanistan. That was in addition to the 36,000 U.S. and 32,000 NATO members already in-country.[40] In March 2009, he announced a new strategy "to disrupt, dismantle and defeat al-Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future."[41] The strategy emphasized the importance of Pakistan to the stability of Afghanistan and increased funding as well as military and civilian support. President Obama appointed Ambassador Richard Holbrooke as a special representative for both countries (Afghanistan and Pakistan) and directed that he work closely with General

David Petraeus, the United States Central Command (USCENTCOM) commander, to integrate the civil-military aspects of the strategy. President Obama made it clear that this was not "simply an American problem" and that he expected more international community support as well. In addition to the 17,000 troops, he committed another 4,000 personnel to train Afghan security forces to arrive in the summer. By December 2009, U.S. troop levels would reach 67,000 and the president would commit to another 33,000 bringing the total to 100,000 by August 2010. He also committed to a "substantial increase in civilians on the ground" to assist in economic and infrastructure development.[42] In a 1 December 2009 speech to the cadets at West Point, the president reaffirmed his 27 March 2009 strategy.

> Our overarching goal remains the same: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al-Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, and to prevent its capacity to threaten America and our allies in the future.[43]

However, he would also remind the audience that this was not an open-ended commitment stating: "after 18 months, our troops will begin to come home."

Although a lot happened in Afghanistan from 2001 to 2009, most of those events will be treated as background. The narrative for this project begins in late 2009 with a national strategy defined in terms of ends, ways, and means:

- Ends: "to defeat al-Qaeda and prevent their return to either Afghanistan or Pakistan."
- Ways: The United States and "our allies will surge our forces, targeting elements of the insurgency and securing key population centers, training Afghan forces, transferring responsibility to a capable Afghan partner, and increasing our partnership with Pakistanis who are facing the same threat."
- Means: Deploy additional troops to Afghanistan, totaling 100,000 Americans by August 2010 and over 40,000 coalition troops from 48 troop contributing nations. Additionally, the U.S. will increase civilian assistance to "enhance the capacity of national and sub-national government and to help rehabilitate Afghanistan's key economic sectors."[44]

The year 2009 not only brought a new commander-in-chief and national strategy, but a new commander of U.S. forces and ISAF, General Stanley McChrystal.

A New International Security Assistance Force/U.S. Forces-Afghanistan Commander: Immediate Changes

> There are two fundamental elements where ISAF must improve [1] The ISAF operational culture to focus on protecting the Afghan people..., and [2] Transform ISAF processes to be more operationally efficient and effective, creating more coherent unity of command within ISAF, and fostering stronger unity of effort across the international community.[45] - General Stanley McChrystal

General McChrystal conducted his own analysis in terms of the operational focus and command structure and the approach to COIN. Arguably the most important was his focus on protecting the Afghan people:

> Our strategy cannot be focused on seizing terrain or destroying insurgent forces; our objective must be the population. In the struggle to gain the support of the people every action we take must enable this effort.[46]

A New Strategy

The strategy emphasized greater partnering with the Afghan National Security Force (ANSF), accountable governance, gaining the initiative and "reversing the insurgents' momentum," and focusing resources to "critical areas where vulnerable populations are most threatened."[47] Those resources included a sizeable increase in troop strength as well as civilian capacity.

McChrystal's assessment also recognized the "conventional warfare culture [was] part of the problem" and that "we cannot succeed without a significantly improved unity of effort." He saw the threat as not only a resilient insurgency but "a crisis of confidence among Afghans—in both the government and the international community—that undermines our credibility." His final comments were cautious but optimistic: "While the situation is serious, success is still achievable."[48]

General McChrystal would operationalize that strategy by changing the culture of the force to better connect with the people. In the SOF community, that journey began with a review of Afghan history and culture to better understand and see if it could connect with what might have worked in the

past. But first ISAF and SOF had to address some lessons from both Iraq and Afghanistan.

International Security Assistance Force Reorganization

In the face of this changed mission, strategy and increased resources, ISAF was reorganized to include an operational level headquarters, the IJC, commanded by a three-star general. This allowed the four-star headquarters to focus at the theater/campaign level (political-strategic-operational) and the IJC to focus at the campaign (operational)/tactical level. The IJC was then designated as the BSO with command over the regional commands. Subsequently, the IJC commander designated the regional commanders as the BSO for their areas.[49] This concept of BSO was important. Joint force commanders could designate certain areas as joint special operations areas, but now there was no need to since all of Afghanistan was divided among the regional commands. What that meant was, SOF working in those areas had a supported/supporting command relationship with the regional commanders; in most cases, if not all, it was supporting regional commands. The changes were best summarized by Colonel Donald Bolduc, Commander, CJSOTF-A:

> In July 2009 GEN McChrystal assumed command and developed a counterinsurgency strategy that changed the strategic direction of Afghanistan. He established a population-centric counterinsurgency strategy, developed a number of directives to support the strategy, developed a 3-star Command Headquarters (HQ), International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) Joint Command (IJC) … and re-designated the Regional Command (RC) HQs, as division-level HQs in command of all the forces in their areas of responsibility. These key changes altered the previous authority in that it now established the necessary authority for all RC commanders to synchronize, develop and coordinate an operational framework in support of the counterinsurgency strategy.[50]

Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan: Securing a Seat at the Table

Admiral Olson coordinated with, and gained the approval of General McKiernan, ISAF Commander for establishment of the CFSOCC-A in Kabul. Some would question the added level of bureaucracy, in particular since the

only SOF organization under his command was the CJSOTF commanded by a SF colonel.[51] But it was not the command of the CJSOTF Olson was concerned with. He had every confidence in the highly talented, select colonels of SOF to command the CJSOTF, however, they were spread thin commanding the organization and trying to influence planning efforts at the higher headquarters. With the increased emphasis on population-centric COIN, its reliance on SOF, the anticipated surge of forces and increased force density on the battlefield, more demands both up, down, and laterally were being placed on the CJSOTF commander. As Admiral Olson described it, the CJSOTF commander had a day job and night job. During the day he travelled to Kabul to present, coordinate, and gain approval for SOF operations, influence the campaign planning, and educate the CF leadership on the employment of SOF. He then travelled back to his headquarters on Bagram Air Field and stayed up at night to command forces in combat. According to Admiral Olson:

> They were dual functioning as both Operational Commanders at night, and what you might call a board of administrative headquarters role during the day. We were wearing them out and splitting their attention in a way that was beyond, in my view, reason. And so, it became a focus to unburden them from the responsibility of the headquarters, by providing them with a senior officer on the staff, who they can talk to on the phone to make their case, not have to travel to Kabul on an almost daily basis.

In addition to commanding the CJSOTF-A, the colonel commander wasn't privy, or in some cases even invited, to all of the meetings in Kabul. In particular some of the more important meetings at ISAF and the IJC headquarters required the participants be flag officers to secure a seat at the table.[52]

Additionally, the flag officer rank provided benefits within the SOF community by leveling the playing field. With a one-star flag officer commanding the ISAF SOF and one commanding the DA TF, the one-star CFSOCC-A was now recognized as a peer within the community.

The establishment of the CFSOCC-A and later its OPCON to ISAF/USFOR-A had other benefits. Left to their own devices, but with good intentions, SF group (SFG)/CJSOTF commanders seemed to develop and implement their own strategies to fight the insurgency in Afghanistan. As

an example, some were more direct action (DA) than others who saw the path to success in building partner capacity (BPC), to "work ourselves out of a job" as one leader described it.[53] Unfortunately, this approach would change every six to seven months as the CJSOTF changed. This was not new. The same thing seemed to occur in Iraq as SFG alternated command of the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force-Arabian Peninsula, that is, strategies and priorities changed.[54] This is not a judgement on whether one was better than the other, but that those changes in approaches and/or movement of ODAs to different areas affected continuity and relationships. Locating the CFSOCC-A commander in Kabul, OPCON to the USFOR-A commander strengthened the link between CJSOTF strategies and actions and the USFOR-A intentions and campaign planning.

Left to their own devices, but with good intentions, SFG/CJSOTF commanders seemed to develop and implement their own strategies to fight the insurgency in Afghanistan.

In January 2009, Brigadier General Edward Reeder, an experienced Afghan operator with multiple command tours in Afghanistan with Task Force 32, the CJSOTF-A, and later the SOJTF, deployed to Afghanistan as commander of the CFSOCC-A. The reality of his arrival and set up of the headquarters was memorable:

> "So, I pick six guys and we go to Kabul, we're standing there and it's snowing, I mean, we don't have a building, we don't have a vehicle, we don't have weapons, we don't have commo gear, we don't have computers, we don't have a contracting officer. I'm supposed to stand up this one-star SOF headquarters. Fortunately, there was a guy named Major General John McDonald, just a great guy, his title was USFOR-A Deputy for Support and he kinda took us under his wing and got us all set up.[55]

Renewed Commitment to Afghanistan

The purpose of this chapter was to set the context for the U.S. renewed commitment to Afghanistan. It had taken a back-seat to the war in Iraq since 2003, but now the commander-in-chief refocused the nation's attention to Afghanistan, "the war of necessity." As he laid out a new strategy and

pledged additional resources, he also designated a new commander, General McChrystal to take the helm. As such, General McChrystal conducted his assessment and provided a new strategy, one that emphasized a population-centric COIN and called for tightening up command relationships to be more "operationally efficient and effective."

In addition to General Reeder's great sense of humor in the face of adversity and his extensive experience in Afghanistan, he also studied its history as well as the history and experiences of other countries that developed local defenses to counter insurgents. Anticipating additional resources and this population-centric COIN strategy that capitalized on SOF skills, General Reeder conducted his own assessment before deployment and enlisted the help of Drs. Seth Jones and Arturo Munoz

Additionally, as Drs. Seth Jones and Arturo Munoz would show, studying Afghan history would reveal promising methods and techniques that worked in the past and would be relevant and helpful to the current fight. Additionally, the past would hold some interesting revelations in terms of the Soviet and Taliban approaches. As an example, both knew that community cohesion was an issue but used different techniques to address it.

Chapter 2. Searching for Context and Solutions from the Past

Although not necessarily directly transferrable, the history of Afghanistan, as well as past experiences from other conflicts, were reviewed as command, staff, and supporting researchers from academia considered various approaches to counter the insurgency in Afghanistan. Brigadier General Reeder found insight from the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program in Vietnam. Other relevant Vietnam era programs included the Strategic Hamlet Program and the Civil Operations and Rural Development Support Program.[56]

Colonel Brian Petit mentioned the Philippine (PI) program called Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit (CAFGU). As the SOTF commander, his unit was tasked with aiding and advising the PI Army and SOF units. Although not affiliated with the CAFGU, he was aware of their operations as a local defense force and saw it as conceptually relevant to U.S. operations in Afghanistan. He credits the CJSOTF Command Sergeant Major Terry Peters (2009 timeframe) with importing the CAFGU model to stimulate thinking on potential Afghanistan solutions.[57]

While those programs have provided tremendous food-for-thought in addressing the Afghanistan problem set, this chapter focuses on the history of Afghanistan for leads. Readily available is the work of Drs. Seth Jones and Arturo Munoz, as well as other RAND researchers who are credited with the original field research that supported the development of the VSO/ALP programs.[58]

The purpose of this chapter is to provide historical and ethnographic context for subsequent VSO/ALP discussions on specific areas, populations, and relationships. Generally, it will address the people of Afghanistan and their way of life. Specifically, it will look at history, particularly from 1929 to 2009 for lessons, both positive and negative, that might inform an approach to dealing with instability. As already discovered by others, the past holds some interesting revelations in terms of the Soviet and Taliban dealings with the rural communities and the successes and failures of their approaches. That is, the Soviets and Taliban knew what worked in unifying the local communities, and used that knowledge to destroy community cohesion in

order to re-make the societal structure in their image of what government should look like. This chapter starts with the terrain—physical and human.

The Great Divide: Physical and Human Terrain

Divisions in Afghanistan are human as well as physical, that is, extreme ethnic and tribal differences that are physically divided by rugged mountainous terrain. Afghanistan is a landlocked, mountainous country in South and Central Asia surrounded by countries such as Iran, the "buffer-stans" (between Russia and Afghanistan), Turkey, Pakistan, and China. Afghanistan is about the size of Texas with 50 percent of its territory above 6,500 feet. Afghanistan is a contrast of mountainous terrain from the Hindu Kush in the northeast extending through Kabul, Jalalabad, and central Afghanistan west and southwest to the areas east of Herat, with the fertile plains of the Anu Darya [River] in the north and rolling desert and salt flats in the south.[59]

Approximately 29 million people live in Afghanistan; there are four major ethnicities in the country. The Pashtun with 42 percent of the population will be discussed in more detail later because that is the population in which most of the insurgency resides. The Tajiks with 27 percent of the population mostly live in the Panjsher valley north of Kabul and are mostly Sunni Muslim. The Uzbeks with 9 percent of the population live across the northern plains of Afghanistan and are mostly Sunni Muslim. The Hazaras at 8 percent of the population, are mostly Shia Muslim who live in the central mountainous region with some in the border areas with Iran.

All play an important role, but a short description of the Pashtun way of life is important for context.

The largest and most dominant group in Afghanistan is the Pashtun or Pashto. Pashtun means "Afghan" and they mostly speak Pashtu. They typically live in the east and southeastern parts of Afghanistan with tribal elements spreading into the northwest and western regions of Pakistan. They are primarily Sunni Muslim and practice Pashtunwali which literally means "the way of the Pashtun." Pashtunwali provides the basis for tribal life emphasizing rules of behavior to include honor/shame, law and governance.[60] As a communal society, relationships are extremely important and emphasize hospitality (*milmastia*) and the use of tribal councils (*jirga*) to reconcile differences and provide group decisions.[61] A very tribal culture, the Pashtuns can be divided into a number of tribes, the two major ones being

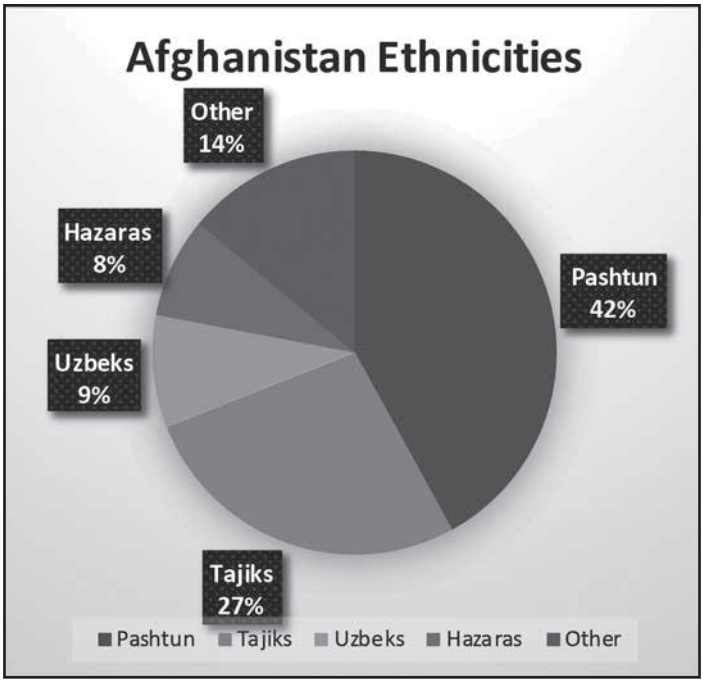

Figure 3. Breakdown of Afghanistan ethnicities. Created by authors.

the Ghilzai and Durrani [other major/subtribe will be discussed within the vignettes]. The Pashtun have dominated the Afghan political scene for the last 200 years and have dominated the insurgent ranks forming the three largest insurgent groups in 2009: The Quetta Shura Taliban, the Haqqani Network (HQN), and the Hezb-e Islami Gulbuddin.[62]

A Country of Conflict: A Search for Stability

Afghanistan's history is replete with periods of conflict and invasions by the Persians, Alexander the Great, the Arabs (and their introduction of Islam), the Turks, Genghis Khan, and the British and Russian rivalry tagged as the Great Game, and others.

Although some of those eras enjoyed stability, for the purpose of this paper, it is more instructive to look at the practices of the Musahiban Dynasty under King Zahir Shah from 1929 to 1978 to stabilize the country. Many consider this period to be the most stable the country has been and

attribute that stability to leveraging the Pashtun "way of life" to secure the rural areas.

This section will briefly describe the Musahiban Dynasty, then it will review the subsequent years of instability with the Soviet invasion, *Mujahideen* rule, and Taliban rise to power. The last sections discuss specific areas of interest: village governance and local defense as a transition to the next chapter on VSO/ALP.

The Musahiban Dynasty: A Brief History

The Musahiban Dynasty began when General Mohammad Nadir Shah was declared King of Afghanistan in 1929, a former minister of war who had worked considerably in 1929 to gain tribal support for his rule.[63] Nadir Shah favored a gradual approach to modernizing the country, constructing roadways and communication networks, reforming the economy through banking centers, and developing an army of some 40,000 total troops.[64] However, in spite of the progress that was made under his rule, King Shah also "limited the rights to free speech, and as such thousands of Afghan intellectuals were imprisoned or killed."[65] These abuses would lead to the king's assassination in 1933 by a student from Kabul. King Nadir Shah's death would lead to his son, Zahir Shah, taking power and becoming the final king of Afghanistan, reigning from 1933 until 1973.

King Zahir was pronounced king at the age of 19, and principal advisors helped him run the country. This marginalized much of his power early in his reign and allowed his uncle, Prime Minister Mohammed Hashim, to consolidate power within the government. Hashim would focus the young king on continuing many of King Nadir's policies including, "gradual political centralization and suppression of opposition, modest modernization, and neutrality in external relations."[66] In 1946, Prime Minister Hashim relinquished his post due to health issues. With that, King Zahir received a new advisor and during the transition would receive more control over national decisions. During this time, King Zahir and his government expanded Afghanistan's influence on the world stage, worked to gain legitimacy, and established new trade routes for the nation.[67]

Under King Zahir, Afghanistan was recognized as a nation by the U.S., established a new government with the objective of strengthening and training the new army raised by King Nadir, and continued to build the economy, transportation systems, and methods of communication throughout

Afghanistan.[68] King Zahir also supported the system of strengthening villages at the local level, worked to make sure that they were able to defend themselves and maintain some semblance of traditional power—something that some of his predecessors had strayed from as they worked to create a new and bolstered centralized government that had more power over local villages.[69] During the Musahiban Dynasty period, *arbakai* (a form of community policing) were used to establish order in Pashtun areas, including the Loya Paktia.[70] Although no direct salaries were paid, other forms of remuneration were used such as aid, privileged status, property, and money to tribal authorities and exclusion of tribal members from military service.[71]

In the final decade of his rule King Zahir established the 1964 constitution which allowed for the creation of new government institutions, as well as measures assuring, "freedom of the press, assembly, and association. The constitution also supported new developments in the country and furthered the women's movement by increasing their involvement in political parties and the fight for equal rights."[72] All this progress notwithstanding, King Zahir's reign, and the Afghan monarchy, would come to an end. In the early 1970s, Afghanistan was on the brink of spiraling out of control; a drought devastated crops and the economy was quickly trending downward.[73] On 18 July 1973, former Prime Minister Mohammad Daoud led a *coup d'état* ousting King Zahir Shah. Daoud abolished the 1964 constitution, created a republican government, and appointed himself president holding power for the next five years.

Soviet Involvement: The Aftermath and Effects

In 1978, President Mohammad Daoud was overthrown and killed in a communist backed coup with ties to the Soviet Union that brought the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) to power.[74] This led to fracturing of power along ethnic lines, and "the Afghan guerrilla (Mujahideen) movement [was] born."[75] In December 1979, the Soviet Union sent thousands of troops into Afghanistan to assist the communist government and immediately assumed military and political control of Kabul and large portions of the country.[76] Their occupation was brutal. According to Meredith Runion:

> Rather than guard a village against these freedom fighters, the Soviets would destroy the villages and kill all the inhabitants. If the Mujahideen fighters escaped death from the Soviet raids in the

> villages, the Soviets would set up buried mines so that if the Mujahideen [or anyone else] did return, they would be killed or injured by the buried bombs waiting for them.[77]

Additionally, the Mujahideen's use of children to support the attack on the Soviets made them fair targets as far as the Soviets were concerned. Desperate to subdue the population, the Soviets manufactured "butterfly" traps, brightly painted toy-like devices intended to lure children into picking them up. "The traps were meant not to kill but to rather to injure and maim so that the individual would require a great deal of care and attention," thus diverting the Afghan fighter's attention from the fight to caring for his injured child.[78]

According to Afsar, Samples and Wood:

> In nearly 10 years of occupation, Soviet forces and their Afghan communist allies reportedly killed 1.3 million Afghans, destroyed the infrastructure in urban and rural areas of the country, and caused 5.5 million Afghans to flee to refugee camps in Iran and Pakistan. (Most of them found their way to the tribal belt of Pakistan.)[79]

The toll on the Soviets, however, was unsustainable. During the 1980's, the Soviet Union spent billions of dollars and, at one point had over 100,000 troops deployed to Afghanistan. By 1988, after losing over 15,000 Service members, realizing that continued funding for the war was unsupportable, and facing increasing political/popular pressure at home, the Soviets finally acquiesced. In 1988 they signed the Geneva Accords to end their occupation of Afghanistan and by February 1989 withdrew their last troops. Their opponent, the Mujahideen, aided internationally by mostly the United States and Saudi Arabia, had united to evict the occupiers. With the principal objection removed, the country stabilized for a short period under Mohammad Najibullah who was president of Afghanistan from 1986 to 1992. Initially, he was able to consolidate his power "through networks and patronage and by maintaining a powerful military."[80] However, continued success depended on donor support. When the Soviet Union dissolved in December 1991, it could no longer afford to fund the regime and Najibullah's base of support throughout the country collapsed.[81] Additionally, no one else seemed interested. The U.S. and Saudi Arabia achieved their objectives to bloody the Soviets and drive the Soviet Union from Afghanistan. Pakistan's interest was installing

a Pashtun Islamist government led by Gulbuddin Hekmatyar.[82] By 1992, Kabul fell to the Mujahideen. But, the Mujahideen were fractious. So, which groups gained power?

The U.S. and Saudi Arabia achieved their objectives to bloody the Soviets and drive the Soviet Union from Afghanistan.

The Spoils of War Go to the Warlords

The reorganization of alliances and war among the various Mujahideen factions began. According to Barfield they allied according to region and ethnicity.

> The radically socialist Khalqis joined Hekmatyar's radical Islamist party to unite the Pashtuns. Dostam's Uzbeks and Kayani's Ismaili militias revolted against Najibullah's regular troops in the north and then allied with Masud's Tajiks, who had been overrunning the northeast. The Shia Hazara Hizb-i-Wadhat party joined them.[83]

Najibullah fled. Masoud's forces entered Kabul in April 1992. Burhanuddin Rabbani, a Tajik and renowned Mujahideen leader and head of the Jamiat-i-Islami residing in Pakistan assumed presidency of Afghanistan via a loosely brokered deal called the Peshewar Accord. Unfortunately, Hekmatyar did not agree to the accords and "encamped in the hills south of Kabul … began shelling the city and the troops of his 'president' Rabanni."[84]

By 1993, Afghanistan's power regions closely resembled those in the 19th century.

> Ishmael Kahn secured Herat and the west, Dostam ruled the north from Mazar in alliance with the Hazara Hizb-i-Wahhdat and the Ismailis in the Baghlan. Masud controlled Kabul and the northeast. The Nangarhar shura in Jalalabad led by Haji Qadir oversaw the east, while the southeast was divided between Jalaludin Haqqani in Paktia and Mulla Naqibullah Akhund in Qandarhar [also known as Kandahar].[85]

As regional powers increased, national power decreased and Kabul became less important as a central government. However, Hekmatyar was determined to take both power and Kabul from Rabanni. By 1994, Kabul was in ruins. Most of the population was frustrated with what was described as

an intolerable situation and realized that change, even drastic change, was a welcome alternative.

Rise of the "Students"

The Taliban rose from several conditions such as the growing pool of impressionable young Afghan males trained/educated on fundamentalist Islam in the madrassas; the increasing chaos and regional fragmentation of the country under the power of the warlords; warlord rule, characterized by conflict, self-interest, and predation on the population; and the rise of alternative, more equitable and acceptable leadership such as Mullah Mohammed Omar, the future leader of the Taliban and Afghanistan. The cumulative effect was a population that was ready for change.

The Taliban, meaning student, was comprised of mostly Sunni Muslim, Pashtun students and their teachers from the madrassas and Pashtun communities. The madrassas, also known as Islamic seminaries, grew dramatically during Pakistan President Zi-ul-Haq's rule, particularly in the 1980's. They also received funding from Saudi Arabia which was trying to counterbalance the threat posed by Iranian support to Shia minorities in Pakistan. Unfortunately, the form of Islam taught was Wahhabism, a particularly intolerant and extreme form. They were primarily located in the Kandahar and Helmand regions of Afghanistan, as well as those Afghan refugee camps in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas and North West Frontier Province of Pakistan.[86]

Many attribute the initial rise of the Taliban to Mohammed Omar's disgust over the Mujahideen's treatment of the Afghan people, and cite several cases, the first one being the Mujahideen's kidnapping, hostage-taking and continued rape of two young Afghan women. The second occurred several months later with the kidnapping of a young Afghan boy in Kandahar who suffered the same fate. In response to both, Omar led a group of students from his madrassa to rescue the hostages and punish the perpetrators. Emboldened, and with the growing support of the populace, the Taliban spread to other areas of Afghanistan and seized control of Kandahar in November 1994. Mullah Omar gained additional popular support and legitimacy when he "wore the sacred cloak of Prophet Muhammad at a public gathering and declared himself the 'Leader of the Faithful' (*Amir-ul-Momineen*). This event … allowed Omar to claim his right to 'lead not just all Afghans, but all Muslims.'"[87] The Taliban enjoyed tremendous success as

they spread across the country capturing city after city in what was described as "bloodless coups" where they dispatched advanced parties to warn the controlling Mujahideen of the Taliban impending assault– in most cases the Mujahideen leaders fled.[88] Up to that point, the populace welcomed the Taliban, but then Taliban tactics changed.

The Taliban capture of Kabul in September 1996 and treatment of Islamic offenders was shocking, as well as a wake-up call to the population and international community. In particular their public beating, torture, castration and hanging of Najibullah was a sign of things to come.[89] Additionally, in 1996 Osama bin Laden arrived in Afghanistan, formed his alliance with the Taliban and established al-Qaeda terrorist training camps with the full support of the Taliban. In turn, bin-Laden contributed millions of dollars to the Taliban. It was from his base of operations in Afghanistan that bin-Laden called for jihad against the United States and Saudi Arabia and declared it a duty of every Muslim to kill Americans and their allies.[90]

After a failed assault in 1997, the Taliban returned to Mazar-e Sharif in August of 1998. Their assault on the city and treatment of the residents has been called the "massacre of Mazar-e Sharif" and "regarded as the worst civilian abomination in the history of the country."[91] According to Commander Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq, leader of the Wahdat-e-Mardum Afghanistan political party, during a three day period in August the Taliban killed 10,000 residents of Mazar, 90 percent of which were Hazaras. On 8 August Mohaqiq escaped to the mountains and later joined forces with General Dostum and the Northern Alliance to fight the Taliban.[92] Dostum had also been forced to flee the Mazar area, but the Uzbek losses were much less than the Hazaras.

By this time the Taliban controlled over 90 percent of Afghanistan. The major opposition was the Northern Alliance, led by the legendary Ahmad Shah Masoud residing primarily in the Panjsher Valley north of Kabul.

Talban rule grew harsher with Omar's establishment of the Ministry of the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice to enforce the Taliban's strict interpretation of Sharia law. Their dictum disallowed dancing, music, and smoking. Men could not shave their heads and were forced to grow beards, but the strictest measures were imposed on women. Basically, they were barred from society, confined to their homes to take care of the children and not allowed to attend school after the age of eight, forced to wear the Afghan burqa which covered their entire body to include the face, and

could not venture outside their home unless chaperoned by a male member of their family.[93]

The Taliban increased their attacks on non-believers. On 12 March 2001 they blew

> up two 2,000-year-old Buddhist statues in the cliffs above Bamiyan. [In May 2001] religious minorities are ordered to wear tags identifying them as non-Muslims … [In July 2001] the Taliban bans the use of the internet, playing cards, computer disks, movies, satellite TV, musical instruments and chessboards, declaring they were against Islamic law … [In August 2001] eight Christian foreign aid workers are arrested for preaching.[94]

Osama bin Laden and al-Qaeda took full advantage of the sanctuary in Afghanistan to plan operations around the world. Al-Qaeda's strike on 9/11 was characterized in the *9/11 Commission Report* as a "Shock, but not a surprise" because of the increasing number and lethality of indicators. Some indicators include the February 1993 Islamist terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, bin Laden's fatwas against Americans in 1996 and 1998, the August 1998 bombing of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, and the October 2000 bombing of the USS Cole. As described in the *9/11 Commission Report*, "At 8:46 on the morning of 11 September 2001, the United States became a nation transformed."[95]

After the Taliban and their al-Qaeda guests were routed, Afghanistan was ungoverned, from bottom to top. Reconstruction efforts would focus on the top—the central government. However traditional village governance was in shambles after two decades of concerted effort to destroy it. So, what are the implications or lessons that can be learned from the past?

Potential Lessons from the Past

The purpose of this chapter was to look at the past and see what might be useful in developing solutions for the future, in particular governance and security at the village level.

The Taliban's appeal to villagers is not unusual and was used by the Maoists to work with the villagers and leverage local grievances,[96] especially when those villages were out of reach of the security apparatus of the central government.

In 2009, General McChrystal saw this disconnect:

> The Afghan government has not integrated or supported traditional community governance structures—historically an important component of Afghan civil society—leaving communities vulnerable to being undermined by insurgent groups and power-brokers. The breakdown of social cohesion at the community level has increased instability, made Afghans feel unsafe, and fueled the Insurgency.[97]

So, the question became: What was the traditional village governance structure and how had the village of yesteryear changed? In a simple sense the structure consisted of elders, *maliks* (tribal leaders), *khans* (tribal leaders), and *jirgas* (leader assemblies), all guided by the Pashtunwali honor-code. It also included a village defense system, the *arbakai*. Additionally, what are some of the challenges of rebuilding village institutions such as their governing and defense systems?

The Decimation of Village Governance

Governance at the village level started to disintegrate after the reign of King Zahir (1973) and the dissolution of the Musahiban Dynasty (1978). Although the Soviet's objective was to replace all forms of governance with a communist model, their efforts were about taming the countryside through depopulation.[98] Simply remove the problem. The warlords on the other hand preyed on the people and had very little use for any system of governance that might oppose their authorities. Unfortunately, their ruling techniques included rape, murder, and intimidation. While the Soviets sought to destroy the rural areas the warlords didn't seem to care as long as they were able to maintain or increase their power base. The Taliban capitalized on those villages. Their strategy to changing and ruling Afghanistan was through a bottoms up approach that exploited the villager's fears and frustrations, as well as their ability to relate to the villagers as Pashtuns. Their intent, however, was not to restore traditional village governance, but to "provide moral and religious clarity, since they advocated the return to a purer form of Islam."[99] Although harsh, villagers initially found Taliban methods better than the alternative provided by the warlords. But village life changed as the Taliban instituted their own approach to governance.

> [The Taliban] have deliberate social strategies that exacerbate the breakdown of Afghan social cohesion. They empower radical mullahs to replace local leaders, undermine or eliminate local elders and mullahs who do not support them, and consistently support weaker disenfranchised, or threatened tribes or groups. They erode traditional social structures and capitalize on vast unemployment by empowering the young and disenfranchised through cash payments, weapons and prestige.[100]

Additionally, they established their own justice system by installing Sharia courts to act on complaints and mete out their form of justice thereby replacing the need for jirgas to arbitrate/reconcile grievances.[101]

After thirty years of Soviet, warlord, and Taliban rule that was determined to breakdown the system, rebuilding village governance would be a real challenge. Having said that, there were still areas in Afghanistan developed during the Musahiban Dynasty that maintained strong tribal affiliations, were governed by traditional law and in which the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) sanctioned arbakai for village policing. An example is Loya Paktia in eastern Afghanistan, a region that will be discussed later.[102]

Arbakai: The Seeds of Inspiration

Forms of community policing known as arbakai have existed in Afghanistan for centuries. The arbakai is basically a tribal or community policing system whose primary mission is three-fold: to implement the Jirga's decisions, maintain local law and order, and protect and defend the borders and boundaries of the local tribe or community.[103] Arbakai usually comprise a small defensive force, and one study concluded that, "their jurisdiction is limited to the territory governed by the respective Jirga/shura they are mandated by and if a village raises an arbakai it cannot work anywhere else."[104] Arbakai and other local institutions have often been unpaid and carry responsibilities that the tribe or community see as a public good. Additionally, most villagers see serving in an arbakai as an honor, while many see belonging to a local militia as shameful.[105]

Traditionally, "one out of every 40 men in a tribe is selected to serve in the arbakai … In many cases, however, the size of the arbakai depends on the type of threat and the geographic area to be protected." There is a

strong tradition among Pashtuns utilizing arbakai, whereas, Uzbeks, Tajiks, and Hazaras have resisted using these forces in the past.[106] Traditionally, in Afghanistan, power has remained at the local level, where individuals "generally identify themselves by their tribe, subtribe, clan, *qawm*, or community."[107] When power remains at the local level, and law and order are established at that level, village stability measures are much more encouraging.[108] In fact, King Zahir Shah supported the arbakai way of village level defensing, and relied on them heavily to gain and maintain order throughout eastern Afghanistan during his rule as the final king.[109] The arbakai are not a separate and distinct sect of warriors, they are local villagers, and thus are more inclined to try and defend their villages because it is their home and their people they are defending.[110]

Community Defense Initiative: Necessary but Not Sufficient

Brigadier General Reeder fully understood General McChrystal's intent as he and his staff worked to develop a program that not only provided security at the village level, but networked to preclude insurgent access across the population.[111] In addition to his wealth of experience in Afghanistan, he looked to the past at the CIDG program in Vietnam in the 1960s—an approach taken by the CIA and SOF to secure rural areas that were beyond the reach of the government of South Vietnam.[112]

But there were other local security programs initiated in Afghanistan prior to ALP, such as the Afghan National Auxiliary Police in September 2006 under a decree signed by President Karzai. Although intended as a gap filler until other policing solutions came available, it terminated in 2008 because of poor leadership, consistent pay problems, and a lack of oversight from the central government.[113] Later, in April 2009, the Afghan Public Protection Program was initiated in Wardak Province. It was an Afghan run program that General David McKiernan, Commander, ISAF/USFOR-A compared to the Sons of Iraq program.[114] Due to Afghan leadership issues, it would not expand beyond Wardak Province.[115] However, another program initiated in July 2009, the CDI, showed promise. That program would be renamed the Local Defense Initiative in December 2009 and then transitioned into ALP/VSO in May 2010 with major changes.[116] First, a continuing discussion of community defense and the development of VSO/ALP.

Chapter 3. VSO/alp Programs

> Accomplishing the mission demands a renewed emphasis on the basics through a dramatic change in how we operate, with specific focus on two principle areas: 1. Change the operational culture to connect with the people ... we must interact more closely with the population and focus on operations that bring stability.[117] - General Stanley McChrystal

VSO was developed to do just that: "interact more closely with the population and focus on operations that bring stability." This chapter discusses two closely connected programs, VSO and the ALP. But, as Brigadier General Austin "Scott" Miller, Commander, CFSOCC-A "You can execute VSO without ALP, but you can't execute ALP without VSO."[118] You will see why as the programs are discussed. The upper case VSO and lower case alp in the title was purposeful. Much has been written about the ALP, but less so VSO.[119] The intent is to briefly discuss ALP for background and then concentrate on VSO because of its strategic value in linking the villages/villagers to the central government, and vice versa.

The U.S. Civil-Military Campaign Plan for Afghanistan, signed by the Ambassador and Commander ISAF, developed in coordination with coalition partners and most importantly the GIRoA, laid out the vision and strategy with a "focus to the Afghanistan population that requires integrated, synchronized efforts of our civilian and military teams working across *Security, Development,* [and] *Governance*."[120] Under VSO, that also became the mantra at the village level with the country-wide strategy to connect the village to the GIRoA (and vice versa). As General Bolduc reminded us, prior to 2009 there was no overall strategy:

> between 2005 and 2009 attempts to do some sort of bottom-up counterinsurgency operation, to leverage the local population all failed because they weren't connected to a larger strategy that allowed them to be supported and resourced and get buy-in at all levels of the Afghan government and certainly by NATO and by the coalition.[121]

Afghan Local Police

> Right to Bear Arms: A well-regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear Arms, shall not be infringed. - Amendment 2 to the U.S. Constitution[122]

Although started during General McChrystal's watch, the establishment of the ALP as a program was not decreed until General Petraeus took command in July 2010. Americans' understanding of "militia" is totally different than that of the Afghans. Americans see it as part of their heritage, a constitutional right to bear arms. Militia meant different things to the Afghans. Although parts of their history recognized the benefits of local defense, the more recent experiences connect militias with warlords that preyed on the people. President Karzai accepted ALP with two conditions, that "police" be part of the name and that it be subordinated to the Minister of Interior (MOI) to make it an official entity of the Afghan government. Hence, he signed Decree 3196 in August 2010:

> In order to ensure the security of local communities and pave the way for reconstruction, development, and political stability, Decree Number 3196 of the Office of the President authorizes establishment of the Afghan Local Police.[123]

ALP was envisioned to be a temporary two to five year program to provide security at the village level until other Afghan security forces were available to take over. The ALP were intended to be a defensive force with no arrest authorities, responsive to the village *Shura*/elders council but under the Afghan government control of the District Chief of Police (DCOP). In fact, ALP members had to be nominated by a shura member as well as pass a DCOP screening. This process reflected the delicate balance between informal and formal governance. Additionally, the ALP were not intended as a standalone security force, rather, they needed to be connected to a credible Afghan government security force in the event they needed back up. In terms of personnel authorizations, the *tashkil* (Dari for organization, official list of personnel and equipment) was initially set at 10,000 but that would increase to 30,000 as the program grew and achieved success. Although conceptually good, there were downsides. Because of its visibility, funding, and job creation, ALP were developed in some areas, such as in the north, more for

political patronage than local defense (see the vignette on Parwan and Panshir Provinces in chapter 4). Because the number of recruits in relationship to the funding was a ready-made metric for progress, it quickly became the most visible pacing item and drew most of the attention. Although local defense was extremely important, it was not enough to ensure stability; hence, VSO.

Village Stability Operations Methodology

VSO was much more than protecting the population, it was a program designed to develop a stable functioning community, linked to other communities and the central government through various nodes located at the district, province, regional, and national levels. The VSO methodology promoted three lines of operations, consisted of four phases, and established a structure or framework to manage linkages and build relationships horizontally (village to village clusters) and vertically (village to GIRoA), as well as coordinate resources. The basic building block in VSO is the VSP.

> A village stability platform is a task organized team with enablers which is embedded in a village or village cluster with the primary task of conducting VSO in order to enhance security, development and governance. VSPs may or may not have ALP forces.[124]

Although each VSP can be task organized differently, entities/enablers normally included elements of an ODA, MSOT, or SEAL Team, a civil affairs team (CAT), a tactical MISO team (TMT) and a joint terminal attack controller (JTAC). They might also include CSTs, military intelligence teams, explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) and military working dogs (MWD), as well as interpreters, maintenance and logistics, combat camera, and others. Vignettes from the field will address VSP conditions and composition. The VSO methodology is depicted in figure 4 and discussed next.

VSO consists of four phases: shape, hold, build, and transition. As will be shown in the vignettes, these are guidelines and were not strictly adhered to. Flexibility and adaptability were integral to implementing the plan.

Phase I, shape, starts with an assessment and ends when the SOF element embeds within the village or village cluster. It begins with an assessment of a potential site and includes mapping the human and physical terrain to answer questions such as:

- Have elders asked for help; are they willing to protect their villages?
- Is the area significant to the insurgents?
- Is the area significant to the Afghan government?
- Is the area supportable in terms of operations and logistics?
- Who are the power brokers within the village?[125]

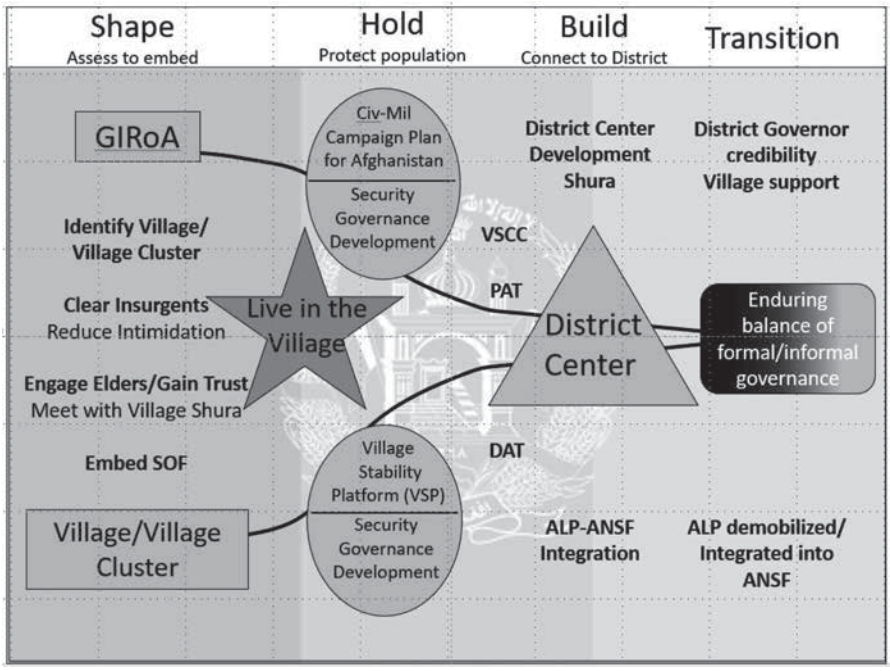

Figure 4. VSO Methodology. Source: Modified from Bolduc, "Village Stability Operations and Afghan Local Police," 7.

During the shape phase, SOF would clear the area of insurgents, meet with the elders, and if asked, would embed into their village. In many cases they would employ commandos from their partnered Special Operations Kandaks to initially clear those areas.[126] Elements of the CJSOTF (primarily ODAs, SEALs, or MSOTs) would partner with each Kandak. It is important to remember that VSO/ALP did not exist outside the broader SOF mission in the rural areas. The CT aspect was critical for keeping the Taliban at bay in areas where VSPs were established to allow natural resiliencies to take hold. The separation, but coordination, of SOF conducting COIN and SOF conducting DA, reflects a synchronization of those missions and organizations.

Phase II, hold, is focused on protecting the population (to evolve into the population protecting itself) and begins when a security bubble has been established around the area or village and ends when the villagers no longer feel intimidated by the Taliban. The security bubble allows governance and development to take place. It also provides an opportunity to recruit villagers into the ALP program, that is, to establish their own security force. This is a period when the villagers are most vulnerable because they have committed to allowing SOF to embed in their village.[127]

Phase III, build, links the village to the district center. This is a critical step in linking the village to the central government. The central government needs the village to provide local security and keep the Taliban out. This is where the village shura/governing body needs to see a benefit for supporting the national government. What is in it for them? Development. Commander's Emergency Relief Program (CERP) can help kick start development programs, but the solution is establishing economic subsistence with the village and a development corridor back to the district.

Phase IV, transition, takes place when the area is stable, that is, secure, with established local governance linked to district governance, the development corridor is established and security can be credibly passed to the Afghan National Army Special Forces (ANASF), if they are available.

Restoring Village Governance and Initiating Development

The VSO methodology emphasized locally legitimate governance (shura) and family-level wealth building measures to create and move surplus village wealth. These aspects were designed to improve local perceptions of the government and meet the population's localized needs. It required an interagency approach even though there was not one ready to go. The civilian surge, discussed later, was designed to provide that civil-military support, but due to policy, most civilian agencies would go no lower than district, if that, with most at the province level, as an example, at provincial reconstruction teams (PRT) and above.

Governance: Restoring Village Structures and Fighting Corruption

Despite the research on traditional village and community governing systems that existed before the Soviet invasion, some of those institutions disappeared by 2009 (discussed in the last chapter). So, the task became much more complicated as teams pursued key leader engagements (KLE), sometimes

with fake-maliks, local mayors, or village chieftains that were simply the messengers for local insurgent leaders that controlled the area.[128] Sometimes the teams unintentionally bestowed power on an individual because that individual stepped forward as the village representative or maybe because he spoke English. There are stories of teams spending months talking to the wrong people. In all cases, teams had to do their own research to better understand the power structure in a village.

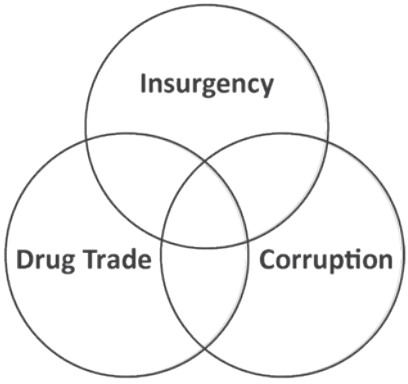

Figure 5. Breaking the Links.

A major impediment and endemic to all levels of government was and is, corruption. The large sums of stabilization dollars the United States devoted to Afghanistan in search of quick gains often exacerbated conflicts, enabled corruption, and bolstered support for insurgents. It's not the intention of this monograph to delve into the corruption issues but it is important the reader understand that corruption loomed large in the background and was an incredible challenge to establishing legitimacy. Breaking that linkage is critical (fig. 5).

Development: Rising Above Subsistence and Breaking the Cycle of Dependency

> As the insurgency grew in strength and intensity in areas with high levels of poppy cultivation, links between the drug trade, insurgent financing, and government corruption led to a range of counter-narcotics programs. At the same time, opium poppy is a mainstay of Afghanistan's rural economy. This presented a conundrum to policymakers seeking to combat the drug trade without impoverishing rural communities or turning them against the Afghan government and its international partners.[129]

Afghans have cultivated opium poppy for centuries, but it became more lucrative during periods of chaos such as the Soviet occupation in the 80s when the economy was crippled and criminal networks thrived. Although

there were periods of decline, poppy production generally increased from 2002 to a record high in 2017 with Afghanistan producing "90 percent of the world's illicit opium."[130]

But what is so special about poppy cultivation and opium production? Per Steve Coll:

> [In dire conditions] Afghan farmers turned to opium production to survive. The returns per acre were higher, crops were unusually weatherproof, and it did not require elaborate storage or marketing. An opium crops could be raised in just six months and stored as a form of savings.[131]

The U.S. approach to countering the narcotics business in Afghanistan consists of five pillars: public information, alternative livelihoods, elimination and eradication, interdiction, and law enforcement and justice reform.[132] During the last 18 years, U.S. strategy has changed several times with emphasis on different pillars at different times.

Looking to the past some have touted the Taliban's ban on poppy cultivation in 2000 "culminating in a 75 percent drop in the global supply of heroin" as a success. However, the rest of the story tells us that it was short-sighted. By providing no alternative to poppy cultivation, the ban forced farmers into debt—exacerbated if the farmer had been loaned the money to start the endeavor. It also contributed to a dramatic rise in unemployment and migration, and worsened an existing humanitarian crisis.[133]

The 2005 U.S. strategy was just as shortsighted when it supported eradication as its primary approach to countering poppy cultivation without practical alternatives for the farmer. That approach changed. While eradication efforts in 2005 represented 30 percent of the U.S. counternarcotics budget, it declined to 1 percent in 2010 while funds for alternative development increased significantly.[134]

Coll described the self-reinforcing cycle in the opium belt since the 80s:

> War created desperation, which made opium attractive for poor farmers, which created profits for warlords, who then used those resources to fight for greater wealth and power, which created more desperation for farmers.[135]

It's not the intent of this paper to detail the issues associated with narcotics in Afghanistan, books have already been written about it. But the reader

needs some context to understand the challenge the Afghans and Coalition partners face in this endeavor. If this can be solved there is a chance the other issues, such as corruption, can be brought to a manageable level.

Building the Identity Bridge Between the Population and the Government

In COIN, military forces are, in a sense, an enabling system for civil administration. Their role is to afford sufficient protection and stability to allow the government to work safely with its population, for economic revival, political reconciliation, and external non-government assistance to be effective.[136] The development of all three areas enabled the linkage between the population and the government.

This was the component that was least understood about VSO/ALP, but was and continues to have the most impact. While the idea that driving the Taliban back would create space for the government to deliver services was important, the development aspect of VSO realized that the government could provide few development and social service resources in the shape, hold, and build phases. The key to sustainable and productive relationships with villagers was to present the appearance of government support on matters that crossed tribal and ethnic divisions using SOF support systems. In most rural areas, below subsistence agriculture was a conflict driver, but it also presented an opportunity since neither the Taliban nor narco-traffickers had any incentive to help villagers improve their circumstances. In fact they targeted community cohesion because it was counterproductive to their objectives. However, from a Coalition perspective, agriculture programs were intended to be strategically designed to build SOF relationships with villagers while bolstering government legitimacy, that is, to make it appear that the government was commissioning the programs in order to demonstrate the government's concern and support for the people.[137]

The key to sustainable and productive relationships with villagers was to present the appearance of government support on matters that crossed tribal and ethnic divisions using SOF support systems.

This also meant the MISO effort was intended to amplify what the district governors were doing about agriculture, reminding people to tend to their crops in a certain way, etc. It was not about the symbols of a welfare state

(schools, clinics, and wells) as much as it was about meeting the population on its local needs and amplifying activities for a sense of improvement. This is a crucial part of the story and where CA/CIV-MIL efforts could have tremendous impact under similar situations of insurgency or identity conflict.[138]

This chapter addressed the concept and development of VSO/ALP. The next chapter discusses the practical application of those concepts and how security, governance, and development were different in each area. Not only in terms of district and provincial boundaries but from village to village. The following chapter will address the challenges of linking the central government to the villages via the provincial and district centers with the activation of VSCC to ensure government resources were delivered to the people.

Chapter 4. Adapting Village Stability Operations Concepts to Reality

The first VSO site/VSP has been attributed to ODA 7224's work in the village of Nili, the district and provincial capital of Daykundi. Although not called VSO/ALP at the time, that site was established in August 2009. Prior to 2003 Daykundi was part of Uruzgan Province, dominated by Pashtuns, but was separated to give the Pashtun persecuted Hazaras a greater say in their governance. For a comprehensive and interesting narrative of the first VSP, the authors suggest reading Dr. Michael Krivdo's account of the "Nili Experiment" in *Veritas, Journal of Army Special Operations History*.[139]

The authors had an opportunity to discuss VSO with a number of VSP members, as well as BSOs, special operations task forces (SOTF), CJSOTFs, CFSOCC-As, SOJTFs, ISAF, and interagency members.

Village Stability Platform Khakrez, Khakrez District, Kandahar Province

"Mullah" Mike, commander of an ODA from 3rd Group, led his SOF team into Khakrez District in January 2010 (see fig. 6 map). Khakrez is located in the northwest corner of Kandahar Province). His mission was to embed his team into the community and help the Afghan villagers under what was known as CDI or LDI. By the time he left in August 2010, the VSO concept would evolve and the site would be known as VSP Khakrez. His team consisted of an ODA, a CAT, TMT, JTAC, MWD and interpreters. According to Captain Neiman Young, the CAT leader who joined the team in February, they also had a USAID representative. That relationship was very valuable for working some of the larger projects.[140]

When Captain Mike Penn arrived and started his assessment in accordance with guidelines such as, "they wanted help from the government and have the ability to arm themselves," he found the village did not meet the conditions. Additionally, the people did not seem interested in his help. Finally, one of the locals explained.

> "Hey, Mike, do you want to know why no one's doing this thing you want to do?" I responded, "Yeah, sure." He said, "Have you ever heard of DDR [Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration]?"[141]
>
> I replied, "Nah, never heard of it." So he explained to me his picture of DDR. "When you guys first came here, there wasn't any Taliban out here in this area. We had our own weapons; we protected the land. Then somebody came along with this thing called DDR, and they said, 'Hey, you guys have done a great job, you've protected this area, it's time for you to turn in your weapons and go back to farming,'" and he said, "We did, then you guys pulled out of the area, and we got our asses kicked for a couple of years." He continued, "One, nobody here had weapons, because we turned them in for DDR, and two, we're not going to fall for that again." I responded, "Oh, wow!" So we kind of knew it was going to be an uphill fight.[142]

When Captain Penn first arrived he stayed at the District Center that was already occupied by another SFG's Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha (SFODA). He then moved into the local area and after a short stay at, what appeared to be an old medical clinic, the team finally moved into a school that was located in what they called the "Green Zone," an agricultural area in the center of the district. The school was surrounded by approximately 13 villages or a village cluster which made it ideal because the team embedded centrally in the area, but not in any one

Figure 6. Kandahar Province.

village to avoid any appearance of favoritism. The villagers were mostly dirt farmers/sharecroppers. Most of the landowners had moved to Kandahar with their families. According to Penn:

> They [civil affairs] had a team sergeant named Jack Butler who was good, people loved him. He was good at working locals and building rapport. The first 45 days, I think that we walked … probably 200 miles. We went through every little village in that area door-to-door. "Hey, here's who we are, we're moving here, this is what we're working on." Totally transparent with the locals of why we were there; what we were doing.[143]

Relationships were complex. There was no love lost between the District Center and the locals as exhibited by an exchange of mortar rounds between the District Center and villagers before the team's arrival. The District Center and all the police were Popalzai. However, the villages were mostly Alkozai. So the team was not sure if there was a Taliban issue, intertribal animosity or both. That posed a problem because the mission of the VSP was to connect the villages to the District Center.

SOTF Commander, Lieutenant Colonel Brian Petit, addressed that dynamic in his article, "The Fight for the Village." He mentioned the value of community kinships over tribal kinships, i.e., that the community kinship is less divisive and emphasizes linkages such as vocation, religion, hardship, and other commonalities, but he adds that, "Pure tribal engagement is often a requirement, but we should view it as a means to progress into collective community engagement."[144] One method of bringing the community together was through district shuras that exercised authorities over CERP project prioritization for the district. The CAT was very skilled in managing those programs, both in terms of quick turn around and not showing favoritism to one tribe or one village over another. They were also skilled at working with the USAID representative for high value projects that benefited the entire district. An example was the improvement of what Captain Young called "Route High Life."

> Route High Life was basically the major road that started from the center of Khakrez and took you all the way down to the major highway that led to Kandahar City. Prior to the improvements the road couldn't be navigated by the average Afghan citizen. That had a

> significant effect on citizens' access to goods and services. Once we convinced USAID that this was a worthy project and after we were able to get that road improved, you could see a dramatic reduction in the price of services and goods available in the [Khakrez District] Bazaar that were coming out of Kandahar City.[145]

Captain Young indicated that raisins were the cash crop for the area, and when asked about drugs, responded:

> We had a small footprint of poppy in the district, but we had already received our orders from CJSOTF that we were not to be involved in poppy burning or eradication. So we basically left it alone, and it basically went ignored.[146]

So how did Captain Penn get the name "Mullah Mike?" One of the local Taliban leaders, Sayed Wali, the team's archnemesis, visited the mosque in Haji Kel, a village that the team was particularly close to, when the locals were conducting night-time prayers. The Taliban took six people hostage and headed north. The next morning when the team entered the village, the villagers acted strange, but eventually explained what happened:

> "They came here and they kidnapped six people and they went north last night. Oh, God." No leads, no idea where they went. We thought through it like, man, we can't get these people to talk to us, we can't figure out where these people are, and then we started to hear on the "Icom" [radio] that they were going to kill them the next day.[147]

So Captain Penn grabbed the interpreters and the PSYOP folks and they went into another room to brainstorm a plan of action. Captain Penn is an Arabic speaker with a good appreciation for the Koran. In fact, he had memorized the first sura [God's guidance and stresses the Lordship and mercy of God]. He made a radio message reciting the first sura in Arabic and had an interpreter translate it into Pashtu because most of the locals did not understand Arabic.

> So I (Captain Penn) was kind of calling out the Taliban commander, "Hey, this is me saying the Koran in a traditional way. I'm telling you what it means, and I'm telling you why what you're doing is bad for Islam, and basically you're a terrible Muslim." It was weird because as soon as I started to recite the Koran out loud, the Afghans had

> never seen me do that before. I told them, "That's why you're here, I want to know is this too much, am I going too far, or is this what you should do?" And they responded, "No, this is absolutely what you should do."[148]

The PSYOP guys played that message on the radio back-to-back for the next 24 hours. Eventually they let the six people go back to the village, but from then on, the locals who had heard Captain Penn knew who he was. People would approach him, "Oh, we heard you on the radio." Everywhere he went after that he would have to verify who he was so that they would believe that it was him speaking Arabic:

> It was completely worth it, because later on we had an ongoing dialogue with the Sayed Wali guy through letters and through messengers, just trying to start a dialogue and get him to come in and make the peace in that area with some of the reintegration stuff that they were working. He never did, but at least there was a dialogue.[149]

Realizing there were disconnects between what the Koran said and what the Mullahs' understood prompted Captain Penn to draft a "Mullah Education program" that explained what the Koran, that is written in Arabic, was saying, in Pashto. He called it the "Madrassa in a box," where it could be downloaded to an IPOD and distributed. The program, however, was disapproved. Although the CJSOTF staff discouraged Captain Penn from discussing religion, he made the decision that it was in the best interest of the mission to continue with the reading from the Koran and gained quite a following from the locals.[150]

There were other PSYOP initiatives that took root. In addition to Mullah Mike's Koran readings, they played music, poetry, and took requests from call-ins. They also had villagers provide their thoughts on local events and conditions. Periodically, the Taliban would call in and berate the locals that listened to the show. However, immediately following, a local would call and refute the Taliban's claims.

Master Sergeant Sanchez, assistant team lead for TMT 6C26, commented that they were always in search of new material and would visit the bazaar in Kandahar for music, poetry, or other audio products that would appeal to the area—continuous replay of the same thing would get stale and would no longer listen.

Figure 7. Staff Sergeant Sanchez helps children tune a hand cranked radio to the RIAB frequency. Photo by Master Sergeant Sanchez.

Figure 8. RIAB used by TMT 6C26. Photo by Master Sergeant Sanchez.

One of the initiatives started by the TMT but implemented by a follow-on team was "the reason why the Americans were there," in that village. When the TMT first arrived they questioned one of the elders on why he thought they were there. In addition, the TMT explained what happened during 9/11 and that the Taliban had provided sanctuary to Osama bin Laden, the perpetrator of 9/11. The elder didn't seem to understand. So the TMT produced a short video clip in Pashto and Dari explaining 9/11. The DVD was produced for play on a portable player for distribution to the village elders. Although TMT 6C26 was no longer in-country when it was distributed, feedback from the follow-on TMT indicated that it was a hit with the locals.

There also seemed to be disconnects on the American approach. The ODA at the District Center was from another SFG. According to Penn, they had a different approach.

> It was clear to me as [we] … prepared to go to Afghanistan and do VSO and [an ODA from another group] prepared to go to Afghanistan, we got two totally separate pieces of guidance. Because my command directed, "Go local until it hurts." And the ODA was asking me why we were wearing beards and no uniforms. So it was a clash of cultures and the guidance we received prior to deployment. We struggled with that the whole time.[151]

Penn was impressed with the support from the VSCC located in Kandahar and led by Lieutenant Colonel Scott Mann. "Scott Mann was a guy who could cut through all that bureaucracy and talk directly to General Miller and get the things we needed."[152] That sentiment was also voiced by others in the Kandahar area such as Major Rusty Bradley, who was the DAT in Panjwai, one of the most kinetic districts in Afghanistan (to be discussed later).

Captain Young recalled that a DAT was assigned to the district at the end of his first rotation, and it was during his second rotation in February to August 2011 that he came to appreciate the value of the DAT in training and preparing those governors to lead their districts. The visible effect was that it made VSP transitioning (phase 4) much easier.

By the time that Captains Penn and Young departed the area in August 2010, a newly graduated ANASF team was assigned to Khakrez to support VSO and the development of ALP.[153] Captain Young was pleased to learn during his second rotation that the VSP had transitioned. Additionally, DOD reports indicate that 115 ALP for Khakrez were validated, on-hand, and later under the watchful eye of the BSO.[154]

Khakrez continued to develop and was noted as a "model of local stability."[155] Examples included the return of residents to the area, a thriving local bazaar with over 40 shops, increased use of local shuras to resolve community issues, and the return of tourism to the area. Specifically thousands of visitors attended *Nowruz*, the Persian New Year celebrated on 21 March 2011 at the Shah Agha Maqsud Shrine. Although it fell in disrepair during the Taliban's control of the area, CERP and USAID funding was used to repair parts of the shrine, as well as the gardens.[156]

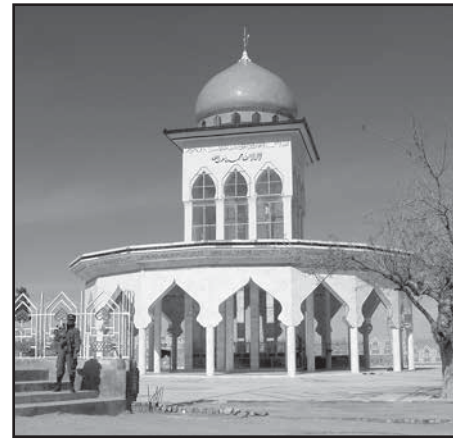

Figure 9. Maqsud Shrine. Photo by Dr. David Ellis/used with permission.

Although not necessarily part of his Khakrez deployment, it is instructive to look at Captain Young's progression in Afghanistan in terms of the evolution of the Civil-Military Operations Center (CMOC). When he first

arrived in Afghanistan in 2010 he was the Assistant CMOC chief stationed at Bagram assigned at the CJSOTF level. The teams (111, 112, 113, 114 and 115) were located at Helmand, Oruzgan, Paktika, Arghandab, and Khakrez, respectively. As indicated, he then led CAT 115 in Khakrez from February to August 2010.

At the time the CA leadership felt that the CMOC "was located too far from the fight." So the brigade decided that on subsequent rotations the CMOC would deploy and work for the SOTF and the battalion commander and his team would deploy and work at the CJSOTF level. When he returned in February 2011 as the CMOC Chief, he deployed his CMOC to SOTF-Southeast in Tarin Kowt. He reported to the SOTF commander, but the teams reported to the DATs in their districts. The company commander (the CA company is authorized two majors: the company commander and the CMOC chief) was then dual-hatted, he was the company commander but he also became the N9 for the SOTF commander who was a Navy Commander (05). He saw the transition of the CMOC from the CJSOTF to the SOTF and the division of SOTF South into SOTF South and SOTF Southeast.

When asked about potential duplication of effort between the CMOC and the VSCC, he was not sure but felt that the VSCC provided the CAT access to more resources because of its relationship with interagency partners.

Village Stability Platform Panjwai, Panjwai District, Kandahar Province

Panjwai District is generally known as the spiritual home of the Taliban. In particular, the "Horn of Panjwai" that includes the villages of Mushan, Talukan, Sperwan Gar, and Zangabad is considered the birthplace of the Taliban and notorious as one of the most dangerous regions in Afghanistan.[157] During March/April 2011, three ODAs deployed to villages in western Panjwai (see fig. 10); from west to east, Mushan, Talukan, and Sperwan.

One of the ODAs deployed to Mushan, however, the area was too kinetic and the residents not yet ready for VSO/ALP. As such, that summer they relocated to the Panjwai District Center and explored VSO/ALP opportunities to the east where conditions were more stable. During that same period, the Canadian Task Force in charge of RC-South, conducted a relief-in-place (RIP) with U.S. forces. As part of that change of command, 1st Stryker Brigade Combat Team from Fort Wainwright, Alaska, deployed to Kandahar

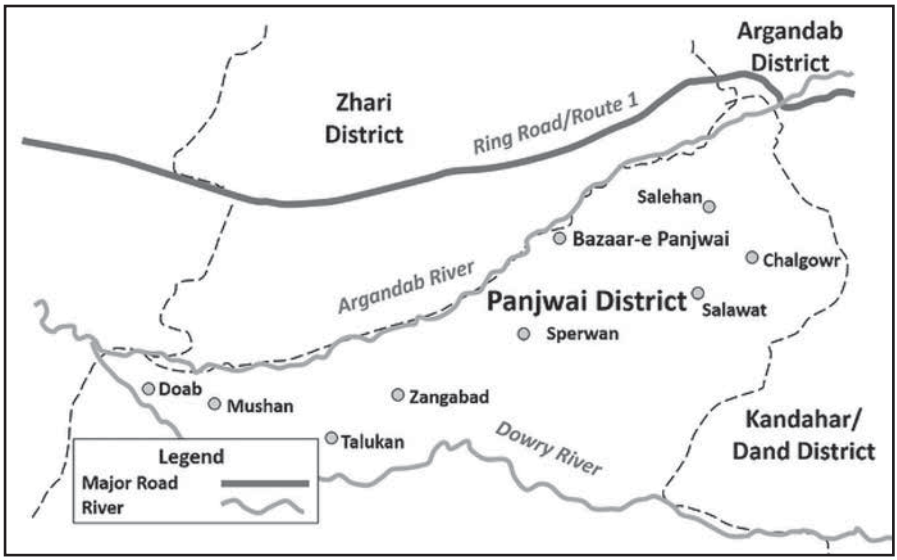

Figure 10. Panjwai District.

Air Field and assumed responsibilities for various districts to include Panjwai. Captain Derek Gedmintas, ODA Commander, worked with the Commander, 3rd Battalion, 21st Infantry Regiment to coordinate their efforts in Salehan, a village east of Panjwai District Center. According to Gedmintas the village showed potential.

> There was a guy by the name of Azim Kahn, he was not only the local ANP commander, but he also on his own initiative was paying local villagers to provide local security. So since they already have something in place, it would make the most sense to build on that; sort of guide and develop it to be an actual ALP program.[158]

Initially there was skepticism by the villagers and Azim.

> We had a lot of hesitation with folks saying, "Hey—when I was young, the Russians were here, they left. The Taliban came in, they left, now it's you guys, and pretty soon you guys will leave and the Taliban will probably come back or somebody else will come." So a lot of skepticism. And a lot of people, who just for survival purposes didn't want to attach themselves too tightly to either side of the conflict.[159]

When the team met with Azim, he responded, "Well, I don't need it here."[160] But they convinced him and eventually the village elders that their village could be a model for success to other villages. Additionally, this brought money to the village and Azim, who would no longer have to pay the locals from his own pocket. In fact, it was so successful that Azim brought adjacent villages, Chalghowr and Salawat, into the cluster. One of the biggest benefits for the Coalition was that it allowed the Coalition forces to move west to deal with the more kinetic threats.

But this was much more than an ODA operation and Captain Gedmintas had high praise for the VSP enablers such as the CA team. Captain Erickson, team leader of CAT 112 was an experienced soldier with a number of qualifications—time with the infantry and medical service corps, commissioned from ROTC and then an executive officer to an infantry company in Iraq where he learned to appreciate the CA mission and in 2010 finished the CA Qualification Course. CAT 112 linked up with the ODA in June 2011 in Mushan, made the move to the Panjwai District Center and along with the ODA explored opportunities to the east of the District Center. Generally their mission was the same—village stability—but each team (ODA and CAT) had a different skillset. Both shared and needed to develop (and in some cases establish) governance and worked by, with, and through the village to the district. But in doing so, the ODA focused on developing the relationship for security, the CAT developed relationships to further the development line of operation, both fully understanding, appreciating, and complementing each other's capabilities.

Generally their mission was the same—village stability—but each team (ODA and CAT) had a different skillset.

Working out of the District Center provided some benefits for the CAT. USAID and State Department representatives, as well as the DAT were located there. Erickson worked through the USAID representative to influence the funding of large projects (discussed later). The DAT was Lieutenant Commander Ty Bathurst, Navy SEAL and Afghanistan-Pakistan (AFPAK) Hands program trained (this program is explained on page 89). He had replaced Major Rusty Bradley, also AFPAK Hands with prior deployments as commander of an ODA to that same area.[161] The relationship with the DAT was important:

> We used him as the interface primarily to deal with the governor. As the CA team, the governor knew who I was, but I was not interested in dealing with him specifically. I was more focused on the external governance mechanism by each community. I wanted to know who had the influence and who was tied to the district governor so that we could run influence through him, to kind of solidify his status as a governor … So that's how we ran that. The DAT was directly focused on the district governor and I was the liaison to the locals, local government.[162]

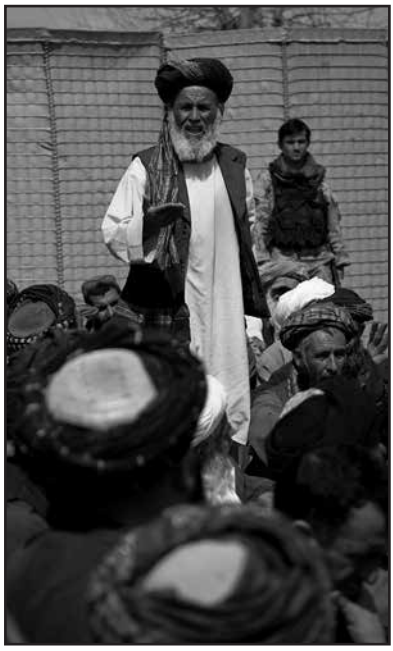

Figure 11. A village elder addresses Panjwai district Governor Haji Faizluddin Agha at a local shura on 6 March 2011, in a rural village in Panjwai district, Kandahar province, Afghanistan. Photo by U.S. Army Sergeant Benjamin Watson, Special Operations Task Force–South.

The team initially spent a lot of time analyzing the population and environment to determine issues, goals, key leaders, influencers, livelihood, etc. As an example: What were their agricultural products? The population consisted of mostly tenant farmers. The major landowners in Panjwai either lived in Kandahar or Pakistan. The crops were primarily pomegranate, grapes, and raisins. The longer term plan was to reinvigorate those items because they were still in demand but had atrophied from years of war. In the short term, the CAT started with small development programs in the villages to essentially create opportunities for military age males looking for work, such as the ALP.

> A lot of people at the time were wary of the ALP—what was their purpose? They weren't willing to sign up for the program without knowing whether they were going to get paid, if they were going to have the right equipment, and if the Americans were going to stay and help them if they got into trouble. None of that was defined.

> So it took a lot of joint patrols to build that relationship with these potential ALP members. It was a success and a platform we used to recruit the ALP.
>
> Once the ALP recruitment cycle was moving along, we [the CA team] started shifting our focus to the stability and the governance aspect of it. We had an OPFUND (operational fund), we had small de minimis-type cash available for projects. These small impact projects had been good for access and placement; but not long term stability.[163]

For those longer term projects Captain Erickson worked through USAID and State Department representatives at the District Center. Those reps would bring USAID and State Department officials from Kandahar to discuss larger programs. As an example, they were able to leverage $1.2 million as part of the southern regional agricultural development program that focused on a series of things such as farmer-to-market roads, canal refurbishments, revitalizations. It included clinics with farming or agricultural practices built into them. They were also able to influence existing programs. As an example, there were a number major road projects running north to south that, as designed, would have cut off irrigation west of the road. So, they were instrumental in reshaping the project.

In addition, the team helped focus USAID efforts:

> For us, water was the most important thing to these people. And so we concentrated on the irrigation system. That's where we leveraged a particular pot of money. There was a major aqueduct or aquifer in the mountains to the north that was collapsing in on itself. So we tried to revitalize that major waterway. And then we leveraged several small cash for work type programs to help clear some of the canals that had been run over, blown up, roads built over the top of them, you know, that stuff. Because that is where we figured we had the biggest bang for our buck there.[164]

The team also used their "targeting methodology and our human networks, and maps to show them who to talk to, what towns to go into, which towns to stay away from, how to get in, how to get out. Basic procedures for entering a village." They passed all that information to USAID and the State Department to help them manage those governance and development

programs. "We were very proud that we had and could provide that kind of information." But there were some things they couldn't change.

> We could not change the mindset of the Afghans. To give you an example, we looked at grape trellises initially. In that particular region, grape trellises are big trenches with huge mounds. They plant the seed, they irrigate, and then the vines grow on the dirt.

Figure 12. Workers from the Dashtak Demonstration Farm install a grape trellis system in Panjsher Province on 9 October 2010 to aid upward growth of grapes. Photo by Sergeant First Class Peter Ferrell/DVIDS.

> Well, that is not healthy for grapes for long-term yields. Here in the States we see them on wood or sticks, right. So we talked to them about that. We were looking at increasing yield, increasing money for these people. In their opinion, that was the way they did it for centuries and they weren't going to change because a foreigner told them to do it differently.[165]

One of the most problematic areas was opium and marijuana production. There was a push by the Coalition and GIRoA to replace all poppy and marijuana fields with saffron. The farmers did not want saffron because it's expensive and is not competitive without better, more efficient processing facilities.[166] Additionally, as tenant farmers, they may not have a say in what they were allowed to grow.

There were other options such as the "Poppy for Medicine" (P4M), although Captain Gedmintas could not attest to its potential. He was approached by representatives from the International Council on Security Development on the feasibility of P4M. They suggested that the "licensed cultivation of poppy for the production of medicine had important precedents as a counter-narcotics strategy."[167] Although interesting, there is no indication that the program progressed past the feasibility study.

In addition to the CAT, Captain Gedmintas' ODA was augmented with two Navy EODs and a JTAC (that were later transferred to another area due to pressing priorities), a K9 and its handler, a light vehicle mechanic, a cook, and in October 2011 was joined by a 12-man infantry uplift unit. The infantry unit was provided for security, however, security seemed stable and since the unit consisted of highly qualified NCOs they supported, and sometimes led, ALP training and participated in KLE and other meetings. According to Erickson, they were well engaged and not viewed as a security detachment. There was no CST.[168]

Despite vetting and leadership efforts, tragedies can happen, as marked by an incident known as the Panjwai Massacre. On 11 March 2012, Staff Sergeant Robert Bales from an infantry uplift battalion, murdered 16 villagers in the Panjwai District of Kandahar Province. In August 2013 he was convicted and sentenced to life imprisonment without parole.[169] Although there had been other incidents, none were as egregious and from President Karzai's perspective, such a tragedy was cause to terminate the program. Days after the incident he called for American troops to pull out of the villages and confine themselves to the major bases in Afghanistan.[170] Finally placated, he acquiesced to the original timetable of December 2014.

Colonel Justin Sapp, director of the VSCC provided an interesting perspective on the incident's impact on the population in comparison to the Qur'an burning:[171]

> The Quran burning thing actually turned out to be worse, I think, overall for Afghanistan, because it was perceived as an affront to the word of God. It is hard for westerners to understand, but the massacre of sixteen people at [VSP] Belambai actually had a much shorter shelf life than the Quran burning event. People were obviously furious, but people get killed in Afghanistan all the time.

> In Afghanistan, it was my experience that the murders were not perceived as being as disrespectful, on a national level, as someone burning a Quran. Unfortunately, the folks who burned the Quran at Bagram were just trying to get rid of stuff [and not be disrespectful]. But the bottom line is that Belambai was like a couple weeks of angst and then it kind of went away...until the trial of course.

Sapp next discussed Afghan leadership response, in particular, General Abdul Raziq who was the Provincial Chief of Police:

> I must also highlight the important role played by the late General Raziq, who was the Kandahar Chief of Police. The morning after the murders, Raziq travelled to Belambai and waded out into a clamoring crowd of locals imploring them to stand down and promising that justice would be served. That was the right thing to do, and this was obviously risky.

Figure 13. Abdullah, who lost a leg after stepping on an insurgent-placed IED while farming, talks with an Afghan National Civil Order Policeman at a shura on 6 March 2011. Abdullah walked to the shura to hear the Panjwai District Governor Haji Faizluddin Agha speak to elders about how to improve district security. Photo by Sergeant Benjamin Watson, SOTF-SOUTH/DVIDS.

Colonel Sapp mentioned "shelf life" of the incident and the role that solatia (compensation) plays in restitution in the quote below.

> A few weeks later at the district shuras in Panjwai, I was told that the local elders were squabbling over who was entitled to the distribution of USAID wheat seed, and hardly mentioned the Belambai murders—that's Afghanistan. Furthermore, I believe that the restitution paid to the families of the slain people went a long way to

> mollifying the event—solatia payments have traditionally been an acceptable method of conflict resolution in Afghanistan.[172]

But there were successes as well. According to Gedmintas who had a good rapport with the BSO and maintained contact with the 3-21st commander:

> From my perspective and the battalion commander later told me via email, that our efforts as sort of unglorious and un-sort of ego-building as they may be, enabled those infantry battalions to push west, and really focus where they should have been focusing as an Army infantry formation.[173]

Additionally, by 2013, the residents of Panjwai had tired of the Taliban cruelty, strong armed rule, and indiscriminate laying of IEDs in vineyards and orchards with "between 300-400 civilians killed or injured by bombs or ambushes by the Taliban in the past six months in Panjwai." In February, 70 residents accompanied district police to ambush the Taliban, "killing three and chasing the remainder south toward the desert." An interesting note is that the Panjwai Police Chief, Sultan Mohammad, was from Zangabad (the village in which Staff Sergeant Bales murdered the 16 villagers).[174]

According to the March 2012 ALP map, the Panjwai tashkil was validated, and according to the September 2012 report, 200 ALP were authorized and

Figure 14. Paktiya.

154 were on hand.[175] The July 2013 Congressional report indicated that the Panjwai tashkil was at its authorized strength of 200.[176]

District Stability Platforms Dand Patan and Ahmed Khel, Paktiya Province

The reader may recall the discussion of the Loya Paktiya during the Musahiban Dynasty which today consists of the Paktiya, Paktika, and Khost Provinces. It was known for its adherence to traditional law of Pashtunwali and employment of arbakai. Captain Chris Bolz, Commander of an ODA from 1st SFG out of Japan,[177] was going to find out how strong some of those traditions were.

Captain Bolz deployed to Afghanistan from January to October 2012 to work the VSO/ALP programs. His ODA deployed to the Dand Patan District of Paktiya Province under SOTF-East at Bagram. Their advanced operations base (AOB) was located at Forward Operations Base Salerno near the city of Khost.[178] The AOB 3110 controlled two other ODAs in the province, one at Chamkani and the other at Jaji (see fig. 14).

Before deploying, the ODA pre-mission training was conducted at Yakima Training Center in Washington. They had developed a model training ground for IEDs as well as a mock Afghan village to help train engagement and relationship building. Bolz gave them high marks as well as the Academic Week run by Lieutenant Colonel Scott Mann at Fort Bragg. Additionally, six months before deployment he reached out to Captain Nick Kramer, the ODA in-country commander via Secret Internet Protocol Router (SIPR). Kramer provided him situation reports (SITREPs) and other reports to bring him up to speed on the situation. According to their research and reports from the field, the threat in the area was mostly connected to the HQN which provided sanctuary across the border in Pakistan. They received their fair share of contact, but because Dand Patan and adjacent districts were transient areas into Kabul and not objective areas, HQN may have been less interested in becoming significantly engaged with them.

VSP enablers included a CAT, a JTAC, and MWD with handler, and later they were joined by a CST. Although the team was good, the site was well-developed and they were familiar with the area and people. Had it been a new site, the CST would have been much more valuable in gaining access

to areas, but as it was they confirmed ODA assumptions about the attitudes of each village.

By the time his ODA arrived in Dand Patan, the tashkil of 320-350 had already been filled and they were preparing to put the district in tactical overwatch. The Afghans were running operations without any Americans or American involvement. In fact, Bolz was cautious about doing anything in the security line of operations (LOO). He was concerned that any action he might take could upset the balance of the various security forces—Afghan National Army, ALP, and Afghan Border Police—that had already established. According to Bolz, the development LOO was also doing very well.

> The previous CA team had done a great job of working on the development side to the point where the only thing the Afghans couldn't do themselves was get funding. They would identify their own projects, they would get local buy-in, they would get local vendors, and they would get approval. So they got the whole cycle down except getting funding from the national or provincial level. Only a couple times did we step in to provide that funding. One was when one of the aqueducts busted prior to the spring farming season; if that had not been fixed the whole area would have been screwed.[179]

Captain Bolz spent most of his time working "governance" with the district governor, on how to "run the district in terms of administrative processes, how he was going to run his local ministers and work with the people."[180] The district's biggest challenge was its connection to the province. Bolz was visited periodically by PRT representatives, so the Coalition link from district to province was working, but the Afghan link from district to province, or actually from province to district, was challenging. They, those who worked the system, finally got the process for paying the ALP to work, but logistics was an issue. It was not until the Afghans realized that the Americans were no longer going to do it, that the logistics process started to work.[181]

As Dand Patan entered transition, Captain Bolz started to look for another VSP site. Bolz commented that most places had been receptive to ALP. Dand Patan, Jaji, and Chamkani wanted ALP and quickly filled their tashkil. On the other hand, Jani Khel to the south was just the opposite—there was no local support for the program. Ahmed Khel looked promising. The villagers wanted ALP and the village lay at the crossroads between Dand

Patan, Chamkani, and Jaji. So, his team spent a good deal of time assessing the area, meeting with local leaders, identifying potential ALP commanders, assessing potential VSP sites, etc.[182] Afghan National Army and Afghan National Police contingents were also based near the Ahmed Khel district center. Additionally, Ahmed Khel essentially sat atop a ridgeline that separated two rival subtribes.

SOF/CF integration worked well. They needed to be sensitive to battlespace owned by someone else and they looked for gaps and seams that the BSO was not covering in order to support the operation plan of the BSO. One of the gaps or seams existed at Ahmed Khel where the battalion had positioned two companies, one on each side of the village. Placing the platform at the District Center was an opportunity to support their efforts. This in turn helped the ODA obtain support from the BSO, whether it be logistics, engineering, aviation, or artillery support. The only thing that Bolz might have done differently was in choosing his CF partner. Rather than partnering with the companies, he felt that he should have been partnering with the battalions or brigades.

Captain Bolz indicated that poppy wasn't really a factor.

> Once we ran into a large marijuana field in Ahmed Khyel. We had to deal with our ALP and security guards smoking hash or chewing khat, but I never had to deal with someone so stoned they were a distraction.[183]

According to Bolz, in the areas his team worked, rice was the principle crop since they were so close to the river. Additionally, timber was another commodity that was traded in Chamkani. As his ODA was leaving, the market of Dand Patan was enlarging with the addition of a hostel, restaurants, and brick makers.

Captain Roland Griffith, CAT 624, deployed to Afghanistan from July 2012 to May 2013.[184] In-country, the team initially deployed to Chamkani District, Paktiya Province and met with Captain Bolz and his ODA. They would move to Ahmed Khel and in October meet with the next team, Captain Alex Deep with his ODA from 3rd SFG. They would work together to establish the platform at Ahmed Khel.[185] The platform also included a JTAC and a MWD with

Together they worked through all four phases of the VSO framework (shape, hold, build, and transition).

handler. They worked briefly with an outgoing CST who shared educational resources prior to redeploying.

Captain Griffith with CAT 624 led the Development LOO and the SFODA was the lead for the Security LOO. The CAT and ODA split the Governance LOO as it related to their respective focus LOO (Development/Security). Together they worked through all four phases of the VSO framework (shape, hold, build, and transition). They worked within existing Afghan cultural and social constructs to navigate the Hasan Khel and Ahmed Khel subtribe nuances. Prior to their arrival, there had been conflict between the subtribe over a number of issues, but the one that stood out the most from an economic standpoint was "pine nuts," and who had control of this resource. According to Griffith they were the biggest obstacles to developing local government capacity at the Ahmed Khel District Center.

The CAT took the lead on obtaining a copy of an existing district development plan. It was a few years old, but at some point members of the tribes came together and generated a list of projects and priorities for the districts. They used this list of projects and priorities as leverage, as initiatives that would complement support for the establishment of the Afghan Local Police. The projects were simple, small scale, mostly water initiatives—water procurement from an existing stream from up in the mountains down to a centrally located area for one of the subtribe; conveniently enough it was very close to one of the most vocal supporters of the ALP. In addition, in the Southern district the priority objective was to build retaining walls for erosion, especially when it came to spring flooding.

The projects were important in-and-of themselves, but they also were used as an incentive for Afghan leaders because, their names as sponsors on those projects increased their influence and power in the community. They were able to also tie the list of prioritized projects to the development of an ALP force.

> Alex [Deep] and I thought a lot about how we can utilize the existing Afghan social and cultural norms and tie them to ALP, [such as] the arbakai construct. Moreover, at that time, when we talked about ALP in terms of arbakai, it resonated with the tribes: they knew there was a system in place for conflict resolution and that was through the armed wing of the Shura, the arbakai. So that was our entry point—to utilize the initial development plan to increase

> buy-in and really incentivize the assumption of ALP, arguing from a development perspective when it came to the LOOs.[186]

One of Captain Griffith's assumed roles was mapping out the personality of the district center. As an example, "we had a slide deck showing that these are our boundaries, this is the area, these are the tribes, and here is the snapshot of the baseball cards for each personality in the district center."[187] He went around to all the offices to meet and gather atmospherics regarding their personalities, duties and responsibilities, relationships with other offices, and how they executed or didn't execute those duties. As one example, this helped him link up his medical people with locals, both medically trained as well as those that needed help. Later that proved helpful in developing rapport with a person-of-interest who was also the parent of a child they had helped.

There were a number of initiatives that were low-to-no cost that contributed to village stability. One example was having electricity and cell phone access turned on, that had previously been turned off at night because of Taliban threats. This now allowed medical facilities to work at night as well support ALP operations and local communications.

When the team arrived, the Development Shura had not been active for a while because the shura leader was corrupt. He had pocketed money for a number of projects and was not trusted. Griffith travelled to Gardez and met with the PRT leader, who in turn introduced him to the head of the Provincial Development Shura, who was actually aware of the situation. At Griffith's request, he (the head of the Provincial Development Shura) travelled to Ahmed Khel to remove the shura leader and replace him with someone more trustworthy.

The team continuously linked the workings of various shuras, such as the Validation Shura for the ALP and the Development Shura at the district center, together so they would be seen as complementary rather than standalone efforts.

The team's interagency relationships were mainly though the PRT in Gardez. Griffith visited them two or three times. They were incredibly short-staffed with one State Department representative and two from USAID. From a collaboration standpoint, when he did meet with the USAID representatives, they were able to provide information on the Afghan nongovernmental Organizations (NGOs) they were utilizing to execute their USAID funded

initiatives. Because they were so shorthanded, USAID just did not have the ability to check on them. As a result, without follow-up, there was an opportunity for corruption. When elements of the District Stability Platforms (DSP) patrolled in an area in which USAID had a project, the team could review the effort. Reciprocally, USAID recommended Afghan NGOs that had training programs of instruction (POI) to support workshops for the community. As an example, they obtained an Afghan POI written in Pashtu from the Department of Agriculture representative at the PRT. Members of the Development Shura were recruited and, utilizing the POI and presentations, conducted a day of workshop classes for the local community. "That was a big hit and it happened as a result of our relationship with members of the interagency that were in Gardez in support of the PRT."[188]

The reward for the DSP was that they not only started it, but were able to see it transition as well. They only spent six months there but rapidly went through all four phases. There was a lot of pressure from the SOTF to continue to expand, in particular the ALP, because the U.S. would be drawing down soon. Captain Griffith felt that the biggest threat to stability in the area was that the Hasan Khel and Ahmed Khel subtribes would turn on each other. Without the Americans, it was now up to the Afghans with their shuras to arbitrate any disagreements. Additionally:

> If you've seen one village stability platform, you have seen one village stability platform. It worked in Ahmed Khel at that time. Initially it was kinetic through the initial embed - we were attacked, relatively frequently. However, we were quickly able to quell that. We had a commando operation happen very quickly that was very aggressive, and removed some very important actors off the battlefield. And that was a collaboration between the SOF team there at Ahmed Khel and the commando team in [Gardez]–it was awesome. It helped that both of those [ODAs–one working VSO/ALP and the other working FID with the kandak] were in the same company, so we already had that relationship.[189]

Although the authors did not interview the second ODA commander, Captain Alex Deep's article in the *Small Wars Journal* in April 2014 is very informative. His contention is, "VSO combines aspects of UW and FID into a comprehensive counterinsurgency methodology."[190]

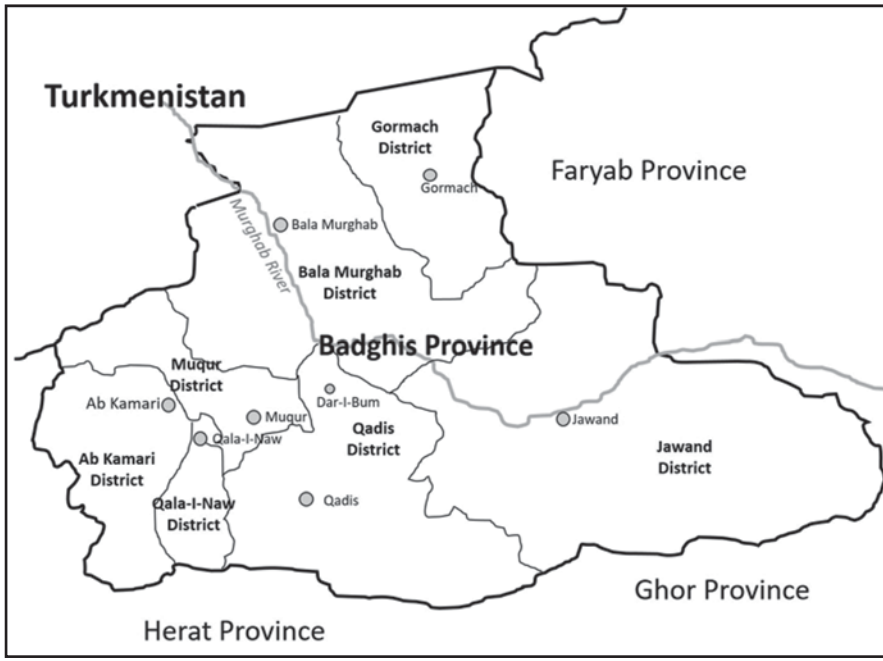

Figure 15. Badghis Province.

Village Stability Platforms Dar-I-Bum, Qadis District, Bagdhis Province: Site Selection and Unintended Consequences[191]

Captain Timothy Scott was the team leader for MSOT 8233. His team deployed to Afghanistan from May 2010 to December 2010 and was directed to establish a permanent presence in the Dar-I-Bum area, Qadis District. See the map at figure 15 (Dar-I-Bum is located below the B in Badghis).[192] Later it was designated VSP Dar-I Bum.

His MSOT was augmented with a K9 and its handler, a JTAC and Joint Fires Observer, EOD Tech, Counterintelligence/Human Intelligence Marine, a Signal Intelligence Marine, a TMT, and CAT 134. Captain Scott also had a CST that consisted of a female CST-trained Marine from the SOTF and a CAT 2 interpreter.[193] With all the attachments he had about 27 people. Additionally, his team was supported by a platoon from the 207th Afghan Corps.

The site at Dar-I-Bum was selected because of the importance of the road networks in the area, particularly the development of Route 1. The area was also important to the Taliban as a sanctuary and staging area.[194] Although

located far from any forms of governance and U.S. ground support the logistical sustainment of the CJSOTF, by air, in Scott's words, "was really good." The medical evacuation capability from Bala Murghab was responsive as well as the concept of operations approval process.

However, the site location had some shortcomings. In addition to being far from any forms of governance and U.S. support, its physical location forfeited the high ground to the Taliban. Now-Lieutenant Colonel Scott described the area:

> Dar-I-Bum … is a fairly long narrow piece of low ground that's surrounded by high ground. So from our VSP within a kilometer radius, there was about a 600 or 700 foot elevation gain; we were surrounded by high ground on 270 degrees of our position … The south was the only place we were free of a significant height advantage that the enemy had over us … In fact, out of the 50 or so small arms and medium machine gun engagements we had between July and December [2010], most of it was them waiting for a patrol to get back into the wire and then shooting at us after we got back in.[195]

In addition to harassing Taliban, fire from the high ground could be effective and a constant reminder that the team was at a disadvantage. According to Major General Paul Lefebvre, Scott was the victim of Taliban harassing fire.[196] As Scott was moving from his Tactical Operations Center to the roof top in response to Taliban fire, he got hit in the boot with a ricocheted PKM (Russian-made machine gun) round. The round had found its way through an open door of their building. Additionally, in July/August 2010, the MISO team sergeant was shot in the face and evacuated.[197]

The distance from other Coalition forces, however, had its advantages from a MISO perspective. They did not have to de-conflict messaging; all friendly forces were outside of the range of their radio. Scott was not sure as to the effectiveness of the anti-Taliban messaging, but they flooded the zone with hand-crank radios and he knew the CA broadcasts were being received. He cited one example of trying to get a village elder to return. The team knew he was corrupt and after numerous attempts by the team and promises from the elder to meet, they grew tired of the excuses and being stood up, so the team sent a radio broadcast as a last resort to bring him to the table.

> We put out a broadcast where we said he was a bad guy and that he was stealing all your [villagers] money. And that got him to the table pretty quickly. If there had been other forces within the ring of that radio broadcast, I don't think we would have been able to say some of the things we said. We certainly did not violate any of the rules … [but] we just did not have to ask anybody.[198]

Additionally, the CAT stood up a clinic and ran Medical Civil Affairs Patrols (MEDCAP); they were never attacked when villagers were at those events. The CAT also worked well through their USAID contact in Qala-I-Naw at the provincial support base to connect through the provincial headquarters on the Afghan side to the various ministers. However, at that time none of the DATs, PATs, PRTs, DSTs were operational in the area as part of a support structure.

When asked about the CST, Scott said it was effective. Especially when they were operating on the objective, the CST segregated, and spoke to the Afghan women. The team was also very effective at the clinic.

Occupying an area that has not been properly shaped led to some unintended consequences. Such as Scott's first meeting with village leadership:

> "Hey, we're here to help. What can we do?" Village leadership responded, "Well, now that you're here, that road? We cannot drive that road anymore [because of IEDs], so now we have to go 40 miles out of our way to get things to the Muqur market, so our prices just went up 30 percent. Thanks a lot."[199]

The immediate effect of locating the VSP in Dar-I-Bum was an increase in prices at the market.

After Captain Scott's team departed, follow-on teams recruited and developed a 284 member ALP unit to support villages in Ghadis District.[200] According to Lieutenant Colonel Larry Huggins, the SOTF commander for RCs West and Southwest from September 2012 to May 2013, the Badghis ALP was very successful. However, after all the MSOTs were pulled from the province, some of the outer areas were unsustainable.

> What we saw in this and other outer areas, the ANA [Afghan National Army] and the District Chief of Police couldn't support some of these villages, so the ALP had no choice but to move to the District Center with their families or turn in their weapons. So

> those were some hard times, because it was a hard fought, successful operation to secure those areas, but then you see the reality of the Coalition forces leaving and the ability of the Afghans to sustain what's out there.[201]

Having said that, experiences in Badghis became lessons for Helmand. Huggins described the Kajaki experience as a "reverse of the traditional ALP establishment," where the RC Southwest commander, provincial governor, and chief of police wanted a VSP site and the district chief of police did all of the ground work such as assemble the shura, etc. "So it was kind of a reverse process; put more ownership on the Afghans. And, you know, it seemed to be working pretty well."[202]

Afghan Local Police, Parwan and Panshir Provinces

In 2010 Sergeant Major Rod was part of a two-person team responsible for training ALP in Parwan Province. Initially, as the J3 Sergeant Major, CFSOCC-A, he was tasked along with a Marine officer to deploy to Parwan Province to train ALP to be employed in both Parwan and Panshir Provinces. Three week classes were conducted for no more 30 students per class over a period of 9 months for a total of 180 trained ALP. The only breaks in the cycle were to allow for the team to pick up funds and equipment from the CJSOTF in Bagram. He indicated that this was done under the authority of the MOI Bismillah Khan Mohammadi, known as BK, to ensure that there was a trained and equipped force in those areas. Sergeant Major Rod knew BK from 2001 when he fought alongside him and other Afghans who would later become officials in the Afghan government. When they saw each other in 2010, BK was introduced as the minister of security. There were no other Coalition forces involved in the train-up and no indication that this was part of the VSO program. Rod's contact was the ALP commander that controlled the recruits at every training cycle and had direct contact with the MOI.[203]

Three week classes were conducted for no more 30 students per class over a period of 9 months for a total of 180 trained ALP.

The MOI's influence was apparent to Rod. He was impressed with the efficiency and support provided to the effort, particularly when, as the J3

Sergeant Major, he had access to all the ALP development reports and was aware of all the problems that other ALP sites had encountered.

Evidently, there was concern that with all the ALP training taking place, the residents of the Northern provinces were being denied the same opportunities. It was also rumored, in the event of ethnic tensions or Taliban encroachment, that Tajiks in the area would not be able to defend themselves in the event of a conflict. Accordingly, the MOI would not approve any further development of the ALP for other areas until the ALP for Parwan/Panshir were trained and equipped.

But this problem did not go away with 180 ALP trained by the team. Brigadier General Christopher Haas, Commander of the CFSOCC-A from July 2011 to July 2012, faced those very issues with BK during his tenure and was directed to train more ALP in the northern areas.[204]

Discussion Points and Summary

There are many, many more stories of successes and challenges associated with implementing VSO/ALP. These were only a few vignettes. The program grew to over a 103 VSO sites by March of 2012. By December 2012, 21 districts had transitioned to tactical overwatch where the ANSF assumed supervisory responsibility but U.S. forces were close enough to provide emergency support if needed.[205]

But there were still program challenges—some attributed to the United States. This section amplifies some of the topics introduced above.

Elbowing Our Way In

Lieutenant Colonel Scott Mann commented on what he later called the need to "move at the pace of the population" and emphasized some of the things that Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Scott mentioned in Badghis.

> One thing the Marines learned that I think was courageous on their part and that I hope history will continue to amplify is that they were in a lot of ways forced to create ALP in some places it shouldn't have been [created]. The population wasn't ready, the population was too distrustful of the government, they smelled a rat, a timeline of withdrawal, something. A lot of the guys had a nickname for it: Smashmouth VSO. Basically you elbow your way into the village,

> "Dudes, we're going to do VSO now, any questions?" That's not what that program was designed for by any stretch.[206]

Go Local 'til it Hurts

A great bumper sticker, but where were the red lines? One example concerns Major Jim Gant. Gant spent 50 months in combat zones and was awarded the Silver Star in Iraq for heroism. He had been to Afghanistan in 2003 and later from June 2010 to March 2012 and did some incredible work with the tribes in Kunar Province. In 2009, between deployments, he published a paper "One Tribe at a Time: A Strategy for Success in Afghanistan," widely read in the military and used by some in the SOF community for education and training. He was hailed by General Petraeus as the "perfect counterinsurgent."

> He was courageous … wasn't intimidated by a tough fight. He led from the front. And in many respects he did go native. You go native so that the natives feel that you respect them, are comfortable with them and trust them … And he was adopted as a son of Sitting Bull [Malik Noor Afzhal, Tribal chief, Mohmand tribe in Mangwel village, nicknamed Sitting Bull].
>
> We asked a great deal of this individual and he provided a great deal. Frankly, to see his career end the way it did was painful to hear about and obviously disappointing and he clearly took actions that were not in keeping with the standards and he paid a very high price.[207]

While dubbed by some as "Lawrence of Afghanistan," in July 2012, Lieutenant General John Mulholland issued Gant an administrative reprimand for "Dereliction of duty, disobeying a lawful order and conduct unbecoming an officer," and listed Gant's "wrongful actions."[208] That list included: wrongful possession and consuming of alcohol, wrongful possession of controlled substances, allowing an uncleared U.S. female civilian to reside in his quarters … the list goes on."[209] Major Gant was subsequently demoted, lost his SF tab, and was retired.

It took a lieutenant, fresh from the academy to recognize that drinking alcohol and taking unauthorized medications, living with a female reporter, and lying in situation reports to higher headquarters was wrong. Mulholland's memorandum cites the period of wrongful actions as 15 June 2010 to 14 March 2012. Why did it take so long for this behavior to be observed and

reported? According to an ABC news report, Gant's leadership indicated they were unaware of the situation.[210] Some have suggested that the leadership had a role in this—not only to ensure the mission was completed, but to recognize and take action when a soldier is being harmful and needs help. We leave those questions for the leadership discussions at the training and education institutions.

When Did VSO/ALP Become ALP/vso?

There was a perception by some—particularly after President Obama's June 2011 announcement on the withdrawal of 33,000 troops by September 2012 and leave by December 2014—that ALP started to outpace VSO. That is, the numbers of ALP became a convenient metric for the program and VSO would take a backseat.

The next chapter describes the realities of linking the Reeder/Miller/Bolduc concepts with the McChrystal/Petraeus strategy. Specifically, bottoms-up was working reasonably well, the next chapter looks at "top down meets bottoms-up."

Chapter 5. Top-Down Interagency (Supporting Governance and Development) Meets Bottom-Up Counterinsurgency

> This push must be joined by a dramatic increase in our civilian effort … we need agricultural specialists and educators, engineers and lawyers. I'm ordering a substantial increase in our civilians on the ground. - President Obama[211]

The civilian surge, launched in 2009 to accompany the military surge, increased the number of U.S. Government civilians in Afghanistan from approximately 300 to 1,000, as well as their "overseeing thousands of contracted civilian implementing partners." This not only included an increase in U.S. civilian expertise and support at the higher levels of the Afghan National government, but also at the provincial and district levels.[212] As with Iraq, that civilian component became integral to the strategy—particularly to the build phase—and as the administration later added—the transition phase.

This chapter first addresses interagency or civilian support to governance and development as a top-down approach to the civilian-military population-centric COIN effort. It then addresses the birth of the VSCCs to coordinate among the various civilian organizations, as well as Afghan organizations from the national level to the districts. As the ODAs, MSOTs, and SEAL platoons developed the VSPs at the bottom, General Miller recognized that someone or something had to ensure that resources made their way from Kabul to the villages. The VSCCs were tasked to do that.

Interagency: Supporting Governance and Development

More than 16 agencies/sub-agencies were represented in Afghanistan including: Department of State (DOS); USAID; the USDA; Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with elements of Customs and Border Patrol, Immigration and Customs Enforcement and Transportation Security

Administration; Department of Justice with representatives of the Drug Enforcement Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and U.S. Marshals Service; Department of Treasury; Department of Transportation; Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; and the Department of Commerce.[213] All of those agencies were important to the mission, however, this section will discuss DOS, USAID and USDA because of their connection to the VSO/ALP mission.

Although the regional commands, PRTs and DSTs were military-led, the Embassy in Kabul established civilian-led regional platforms to oversee chief of mission (COM) civilians in their respective areas.[214] Figure 16 reflects the

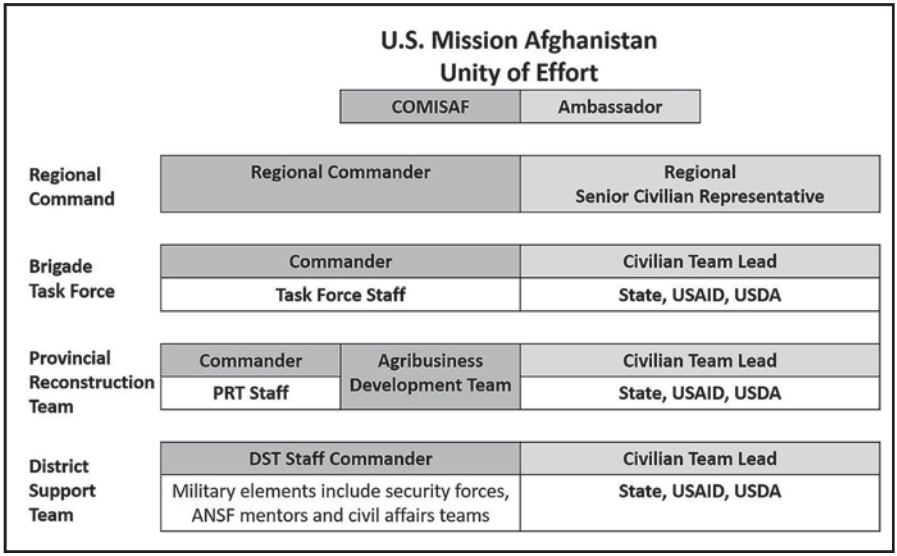

Figure 16. U.S. Mission in Afghanistan Field Structure. Source: Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Audit 11-2, Strategy and Oversight/Civilian Uplift, 3.

civilian-military unity of effort from the ambassador at the national level to the civilian team lead at the district level.

This section starts at the top with the ambassador, and addresses contributions of DOS, USAID, and USDA, and then discusses their initiatives.

The Ambassador/Chief of Mission and the Department of State Responsibilities

The senior civilian in the country is the ambassador. He is the COM, the head of the Country team and appointed by the president of the United States as his personal representative to the country. As such, and in concert with the Secretary of State, the COM implements the president's responsibilities for the conduct of foreign relations.[215] The "country team serves as the multi-faceted 'face' of the USG interagency process" within the country.[216] Ambassadors have also been described as the chief executive officer of interagency missions.[217]

The ambassador is supported by a deputy and other FSOs from the DOS as well as USAID, DOD, Commerce, Justice, DHS, Agriculture, and others. The DOS is responsible for security of the ambassador, the embassy, and its staff.

In developing his Afghan strategy and team, President Obama appointed retired Lieutenant General Karl Eikenberry as ambassador to Afghanistan. General Eikenberry served from 21 May 2009 until 25 July 2011. The ambassador and General McChrystal, Commander, ISAF/USFOR-A, developed the "United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan." The plan laid out the vision and strategy with a "focus to the Afghan population that requires the integrated, synchronized efforts of our civilian and military teams working across *Security, Development, Governance*, [italicized for emphasis] and Information in new, comprehensive ways." The plan was developed in collaboration with all U.S. government departments and agencies working in Afghanistan, as well as partner nations and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan. It stressed that its, "most important component is a strong partnership with the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan (GIRoA) that will build the capacity needed to provide Afghanistan with a stable future."[218] As SOF know, relationships are important—at all levels. As can be imagined, a good working relationship among the COM, ISAF commander, and the president

The plan was developed in collaboration with all U.S. government departments and agencies working in Afghanistan, as well as partner nations and the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

of Afghanistan was critical. General McChrystal worked hard to earn President Karzai's trust, and despite a number of horrific civilian casualty events, felt his relationship with President Karzai was good.[219] However, Ambassador Karl Eikenberry's relationship with President Karzai was strained, particularly after Eikenberry's leaked cable to "Madam Secretary" where he indicated that "President Karzai is not an adequate strategic partner."[220] In fact the relationship was so toxic that General Petraeus, who assumed command of ISAF in July 2010 considered asking President Obama that Eikenberry be replaced.

> I actually could not take him [Eikenberry] to meetings with Karzai without eruptions to the point where he [Karzai] would say, "You're the guy who said I'm an unsuitable partner and the guy who tried to force a run off in the elections together with Richard Holbrook."[221]

Former Ambassador Ronald Neumann, 1 August 2005 to 10 April 2007, has remained involved in Afghanistan affairs as a highly respected consultant, senior advisor, and mentor on Afghan affairs and still meets periodically with President Karzai. He advises that no one should "embarrass the man. I understood that when we started getting into an argument and we were at a larger meeting that it was time to say 'Mr. President, can we go to the other office and talk about this?' Do not try to exert your power in front of others, which is very misunderstood by Afghans." Evidently Neumann and President Karzai got along well; President Karzai called Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice and asked if the President would extend Ambassador Neumann. Unfortunately, the request was denied.[222]

When Eikenberry's tour of duty expired in July 2011, Ryan Crocker was recalled to active duty by the president to serve as ambassador to Afghanistan. Crocker was the ambassador to Iraq in 2007-2009 during General Petraeus' tenure as the Multi-National Force–Iraq Commander. Ambassador Crocker would serve as the U.S. ambassador to Afghanistan from July 2011 to 2012.[223]

Hiring to Meet Civilian Surge Requirements

The section of the embassy responsible for overseeing COM civilian personnel was the Office of Interagency Provincial Affairs section in the embassy. But the surge requirements exceeded the capacity of the various agencies.

To accommodate surge requirements, the DOS was authorized to use a 3161 direct-hire system to recruit personnel for one-year assignments.[224]

According to Dr. Carter Malkasian, who deployed from 2009 to 2011 to work with, and then lead the district support team in Garmser District, Helmand Province, and later the political advisor to General Joseph Dunford, Commander ISAF from 2013-2014:

> It's not technically a contract position. You are a GS [General Schedule] employee, but you fit under the 3161 hiring capacity, which means the State Department can go and find people who are qualified for that job and hire them directly to be a GS. [Normally] to hire someone for a GS position takes a lot of interviewing, takes a lengthy process, but this didn't have that process attached.[225]

He went on to say that the 3161 hiring process became quite controversial, that is, "whether or not the 3161s performed as well as they should have. A lot of debate over whether or not the program got all of the right people that it should have."[226] Nevertheless, USAID and USDA filled billets from the Embassy down to the DST in select districts.

U.S. Agency for International Development

USAID was created by the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 to be the single agency charged with foreign economic development. Its purpose was to "further America's interests while improving lives in the developing world."[227] Although an independent federal agency, there is tension between USAID and the Secretary of State over responsibilities for administering U.S. development assistance.[228]

President Obama's surge of civilian support to Afghanistan was massive for USAID. Personnel levels, mostly to fill PRTs and DSTs, went from 92 "staff in 2009 to 237 in 2010 to 323 in 2011, to more than 570 in 2012." This "made the USAID presence in Afghanistan its largest since Vietnam."[229] But as Mr. Larry Sampler, former assistant to the administrator for the office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs at USAID cautioned: This "surge" of civilians should not be viewed in comparison to the military surge, the numbers were not comparable and the economy of scale was so different between the two organizations. Secondly,

> Our manpower structures are different than the military's. Military personnel do not have the option to say 'no.' State and USAID foreign service officers absolutely do; they are union protected, they both have the [backing] of the American Foreign Service Association. As far as we were able to find out, since the 1960s USAID has never force-placed a Foreign Service officer anywhere. They may have twisted some arms or coerced a few people to go somewhere, but they never used the authority that it presumably has to issue movement orders saying, "You're being assigned to Afghanistan even though you don't want to go." State has done that, but very few times, and they did not do it in Afghanistan.[230]

But they did have, and used, direct-hire authorities to recruit volunteers. However, by September 2013 the number of "direct-hire" Americans had decreased to 217 and by 2015 to 100.[231] This sudden growth and subsequent drawdown of the force was not without issue in terms of project quality control and accountability. USAID came under increasing scrutiny by Congress to account for various projects and the billions of dollars spent. It is not the intent of this monograph to review USAID project and performance, but, as William Hamink noted in his special report on USAID in Afghanistan:

> demands on USAID in Afghanistan since 2002 have pushed it well outside its traditional boundaries … Expectations were high that USAID would provide development to match the major U.S. military effort: delivering enduring development results in a war zone and billions of dollars of assistance in the face of ever-changing priorities and urgency in a country torn apart by decades of civil war.[232]

USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI) has supported the VSO program since its inception in 2010. Its objectives, shared with the SOTF with which they worked, included "building linkages between communities and local government, and empowering local representative governance through shura development and small-scale infrastructure projects."[233]

Colonel Chris Pflanz, former governance director within the Village Stability National Coordination Center in 2011 commented that, from his perspective at the Afghan National level,

> overall cooperation and partnership between USAID, CA, SF, and other SOF was excellent. There was solid partnership and

> communication between leaders at echelon … with many relationships built in Iraq and in other countries and embassies around the world.[234]

U.S. Department of Agriculture

> In Afghanistan, our focus is building the capacity of Afghan institutions to withstand and diminish the threat posed by extremism, and to deliver high-impact economic assistance—especially in the agricultural sector—to create jobs, reduce the funding that the Taliban receives from poppy cultivation, and draw insurgents off the battlefield. - Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton[235]

The USDA was created by President Abraham Lincoln in 1862 as the "People's Department" because of their work on "food, agriculture, economic development, national resources conservation and others.[236]

Prior to the U.S. invasion in 2001, Afghanistan had suffered five years of drought and lost almost 50 percent of its irrigated lands to include the loss of almost half of its orchards. Comparisons have been made between the U.S. "Dust Bowl" during the Great Depression and Afghanistan's situation in 2003. USDA's work in Afghanistan to help the country recover started in July 2003 with the start-up of the Afghan Conservation Corps (ACC) with technical assistance from USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service. ACC objectives included providing "jobs to thousands of Afghans; to implement conservation actions, especially reforestation; and to establish and foster a commitment to conservation in the Afghans who participated in ACC projects."[237]

As of October 2009, prior to the surge, USDA had a foreign service officer and expert advisor in Kabul, 11 agricultural experts and one PRT liaison officer deployed throughout the country. By 2010, they expected to expand that number to 64 agricultural experts, mostly located in the field with PRTs. Projects included: experts to help install windmills to pump water for irrigation and livestock, trained veterinarians, stabilization of eroded river banks and canals, establish nurseries, reforested areas … "all projects were aimed at helping Afghanistan reconstruct the physical and institutional infrastructure of its agricultural sector."[238]

Provincial Reconstruction Team

PRTs, established in Afghanistan in 2003, evolved from existing CMOCs mostly located in major population centers. In 2006, a team sponsored by the Joint Center for Operational Analysis (JCOA) and in 2007 a study team from the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA) validated the importance of the PRT for the stabilization of Afghanistan. According to the JCOA report, the PRTs

> have strengthened provincial and district level institutions and empowered local leaders who support the central government. In many locations PRTs have helped set the conditions where increased political, social, and economic development is possible.

The report emphasized the growing need for effective PRTs as the "operational center of gravity for security, reconstruction and governance" slowly shifted from Kabul to Afghanistan's provinces.[239]

The CNA report was equally supportive indicating that civilian reconstruction agencies are important but, in and of themselves insufficient to provide the necessary services that PRTs bring to the table. Their bottom line was, "absent the PRTs, the 'build' in clear-hold-build efforts deemed essential to effective counterinsurgency would fall flat."[240]

The PRTs provide the expertise and capacity to initiate security, governance, and development reflected in the "Civil-Military Strategic Framework for Afghanistan" beyond Kabul to the provinces.

U.S. PRTs were comprised of 50 to 100 members. They were led by a military commander and included an operational staff, a security element, and two CATs (of four members each). They also included civilian representatives from DOS, USAID, and USDA. The civilians worked for their agency supervisors located in Kabul, but the power of the PRT was to provide them security and collocated teammates so that they could easily coordinate their efforts. There may have been an Afghan representative from the MOI as well.

Dr. Carter Malkasian explained the command structure:

> Every PRT had what they called a combined command element. It was supposed to be shared leadership between the PRT commander, the State Department representative, and the USAID representative. But in reality, the military commander was in charge of those PRTs … the military commander was the one who had authority

> over all the military forces there. The PRT had about 70 people in it, of whom only 3–5 were civilians … [Additionally] the funding primarily came through military channels for the projects they would be executing. The PRT commander he himself fell under the local brigade commander. It put it very much within the military structure.[241]

The following is an example from one PRT that was led by a Navy commander. Capacity to fill PRT positions was a problem. Even before the surge, the U.S. Army's capacity to fill PRTs was thin and they sought help from other services. Navy Commander David Adams, a speechwriter for Admiral Mike Mullens, chief of naval operations in 2006, joked that he had written a bad speech for the admiral and was shipped off to Afghanistan. Truth is, the admiral wanted the best and handpicked those leaders. So did the Air Force. For the most part it was Navy and Air Force officers that led the U.S. sponsored PRTs with the Navy leading six PRTs until they were disestablished in 2012 and 2013. They were mostly in the tough areas as reflected on the map at figure 17.

Adams led the Khost PRT in RC–East from April 2007 to April 2008. He followed Commander John Wade who was later selected for admiral. His team consisted of about 87 people. It included two CA teams, and a platoon of Arizona National Guard for security. Half of his staff were Navy reservists, the other half were active duty Navy. The USAID, USDA, and DOS reps met him in-country. He also had 67 Afghans that provided security, interpreter support, and a cook. His PRT fell under the Brigade Combat Team where he worked directly for Colonel Marty Schweitzer, the brigade commander. According to Adams:

> Schweitzer's guidance was very clear. It was classical counterinsurgency guidance. Separate the enemy from the people, connect the people to the government, and then transform the environment. So my job was not as much to separate the enemy from the people, my job was to connect the people to the government and then help transform the environment. So that's my two lines of operation. Scott [Custer, the maneuver battalion commander in the area] has security, and I had reconstruction and development. But we did it together; to do that we built a plan.[242]

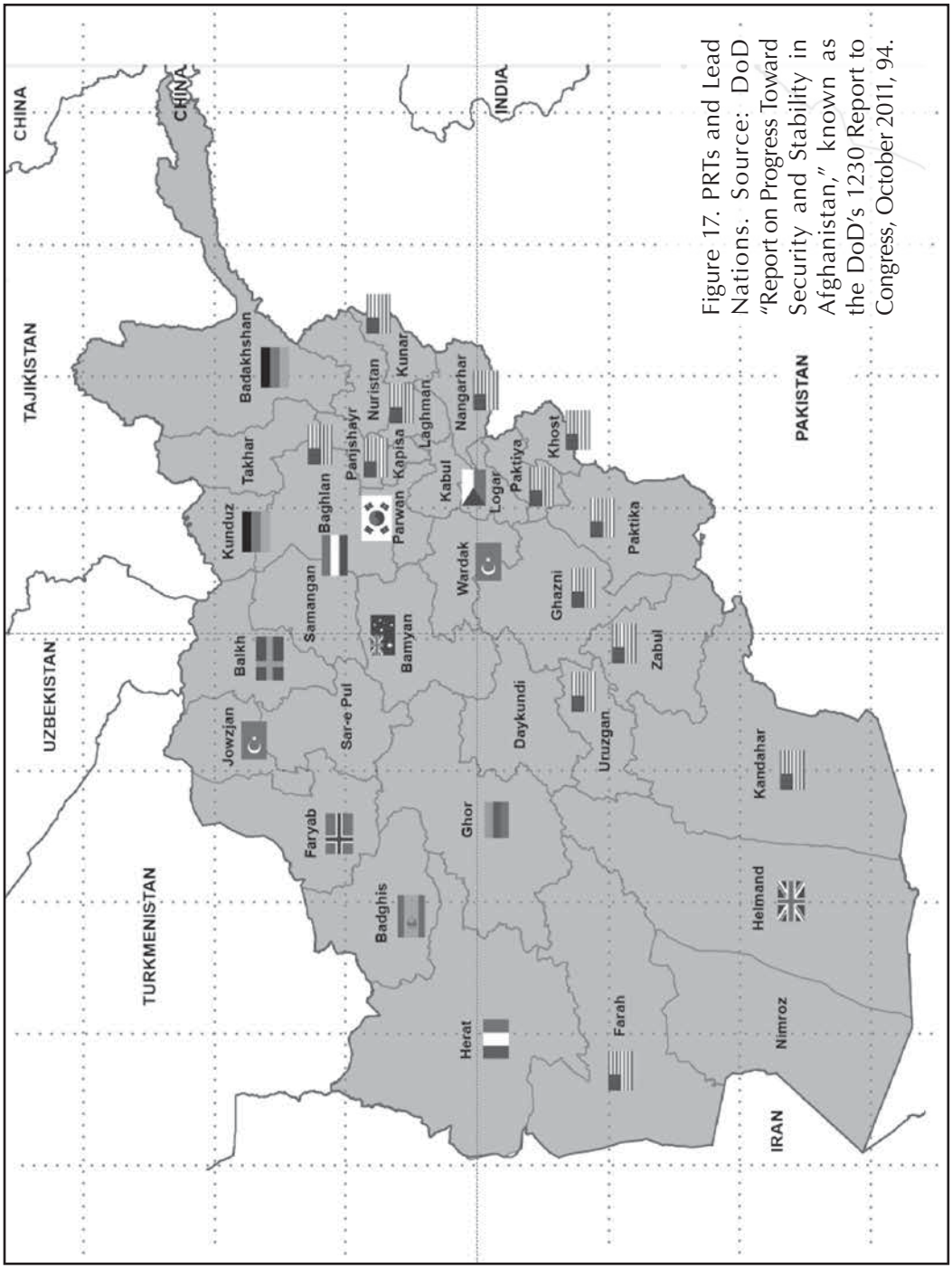

Figure 17. PRTs and Lead Nations. Source: DoD "Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan," known as the DoD's 1230 Report to Congress, October 2011, 94.

His team managed over $75 million in projects to include infrastructure, road, schools, hospitals. Adams ended the interview with three takeaways. The first was building relationships with the tribes, and included stopping the night raids. The second was understanding how to do reconstruction and development projects that were sustainable. And the third, was holding the Afghans accountable, "making them realize that they have to be accountable."[243] To his team's credit, Adams was able to connect the short-term CERP funded projects to longer-range USAID contracted work.

There are many success stories like the above. However, there were also numerous stories of fraud and abuse in other areas as highlighted by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction reports, some of which have already been mentioned.

The number of PRTs in Afghanistan remained pretty constant. In January 2007 there were 25 PRTs of which 12 were U.S. led.[244] Four years later (January 2011), there were 28 PRTs, of which 12 were U.S.-led. The April 2012 DOD "Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan" indicates that the "PRTs were transitioning from service to capacity building" and were expected to be disbanded or incorporated into the sponsoring country's support to Afghanistan, but would no longer exist as a PRT.[245] This was part of the PRT transition plan announced in the October 2011 DOD report to congress. In addition to the PRTs, there were 35 DSTs, with 20 of them located in RC-East.[246] By 2014 they were withdrawing with the rest of the force. According to Major General Michael Bills, Commander (and BSO), RC-South from June to October 2014,

> PRTs were there, but again as they started to drawdown Kandahar a lot of those things started to go away … We had a PRT structure that was on post but I honestly did not see much out of the PRT. I was always worried that, like in Iraq, they always needed security, you always have to go back in and work the governance piece the local government for certain things, we supported that piece but honestly [by that time they were largely ineffective]; I was actually doing more touchpoints [through Security Force Advisory and Assistance Teams] than they were.[247]

The topic of PRTs is a good transition to the next section. As the leadership realized that the COG was not Kabul and the central government and

they needed to introduce and deliver security, governance, and development outside of Kabul, to provinces, which was not good enough. The COG was the population which required exporting capabilities to the villages where the population resided. Therefore, the district level was the critical node between the Kabul government and people, where formal governance met local informal governance.

The Structural Gap with Top Down Resourcing and Bottom Up Village Stability Operations

> After taking command of CFSOCC-A … BG Miller recognized the critical need to fill the gray space at levels above the SOF teams, linking the district and provincial governance to critical national leaders by establishing Village Stability Coordination Centers and District Augmentation Teams.[248]

The ISAF population-centric COIN strategy focused its operational resources on 121 districts comprised of 80 key terrain districts and 41 area of interest districts.[249] Additionally, the IJC determined that it only had the resources to operate in 48 focus districts (consisting of 45 key terrain districts and three area of interest districts). To complement the IJC strategy and fill the gap at the bottom, the CJSOTF conducted VSO in Taliban occupied areas that would support the "RCs and BSOs in the key rural areas and gaps and seams associated with the key focused districts." By 1 July 2012, the VSO program had "worked more than 634 villages in 72 districts throughout Afghanistan."[250]

ALP was important in working with the traditional village governing system to develop a local defense system. But, the uniqueness of VSO/ALP was implementing a program that recognized the importance of governance and development as well as security and that, to be sustainable, it needed to be linked to the central government. That linkage was a major step toward building legitimacy. Legitimacy has always been an important theme in COIN doctrine and is mentioned over 150 times in the 2018 version of Counterinsurgency,

But, the uniqueness of VSO/ALP was implementing a program that recognized the importance of governance and development as well as security and that, to be sustainable, it needed to be linked to the central government.

Joint Publication 3-24.[251] However, saying it and doing it are two different things. Legitimacy was arguably the most important (missing) characteristic in Iraq and it led to the return of al-Qaeda in Iraq (as the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria) in 2013/2014.[252] The point is, the acronyms may change, but legitimacy is an enduring concept no matter the region or time frame, and VSO is one example of how to manage that.

Village Stability Operations: Bridging the Gap

Hence, the CFSOCC-A, under General Miller, developed an elaborate network connecting VSO sites or VSP at the village level to the national level, via DAT, PAT, Regional VSCCs, and the VSNCC in Kabul. A critical part of their job was to ensure that services and resources were delivered to the people. This was a major challenge in a society endemic with bribery, fraud, and other forms of corruption.

As of December 2012 there were "42 PATs and DATs working in 36 separate locations across Afghanistan in the Combined Joint Operations Area. This included 20 Afghan Hands operating directly at the district/community level, with another 16 Afghan Hands operating at the provincial level and higher."[253]

The Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands Program

AFPAK Hands program was established in 2009 to develop a pool of regional experts that understood the language, culture, and relationships within their areas of expertise. It was modeled after "China Hands—a World War II program that developed and focused regional experts to support operational needs. Program participants receive about five to seven months training in language, typically Dari or Pashto, culture and regional expertise in areas such as customs, politics, economy, governance, development, COIN, and the military situation.[254] Program tour lengths were typically 45 months, with one or two deployments and the interim periods devoted to "key positions where they could contribute their expertise."

It was a proven concept, and for those that filled positions that required regional expertise such as the DATs and PATs, VSCC, VSNCC or others working outside SOF but in relevant positions working with the Afghans or Pakistanis, it was well worth the investment. However, there were questionable management practices in that some of the AFPAK Hands were assigned to positions where they had no interaction with Afghans and never spoke

the language. Another issue concerns career enhancement, i.e., will this help or hurt an individual's career. Some of the interviewees felt that, while the program was important, it was not necessarily career enhancing.[255]

District and Provincial Reconstruction Teams

DATs and PATs partnered with the governors (district and provincial) to promote governance and development. Having said that DATs did not report to PATs. Nor did they report to the SOTFs. According to Lieutenant Commander Ty Bathurst, Panjwai DAT and Lieutenant Colonel Justin Sapp, VSCC-South, DATs, and PATs reported to the VSCC who helped coordinate resources from the national level through the provinces to the districts.[256]

The success of the DAT was their access to the district governor, district chief of police (DCoP), tribal leaders, and other U.S. and foreign agencies at the various levels via the VSCC. Communication with the VSCC was normally in the form of a weekly video teleconference (VTC) and daily situation reports (SITREPs) (to be discussed in the VSCC section). Lieutenant

Figure 18. Villagers draw boundaries of their farmlands in Panjwai district before a shura with Haji Faizluddin Agha, district governor. Photo by Sergeant Benjamin Watson/SOTF-SOUTH/DVIDS/U.S. ARMY

Commander Bathurst was paired with a category 1 interpreter (local, unvetted national) in the Panjwai District Center where there were a number of other agencies and organizations supporting governance, development, law, etc. as well as nearby elements from the Brigade Combat Team.[257]

The governor held weekly shuras with the village elders and daily meetings with key U.S. personnel to discuss district activities, which included projects, enemy plans, local governance, key atmospherics and likely critical points of conflict. Bathurst spent several hours every day with the district governor and his team as well as participating in many discussions with local elders in separate quarters with them.

The district governor, Haji Faizluddin Agha, was a warlord from his time fighting the Russian forces. His livelihood was provided by his team of supporters. Nearly all the village elders of Panjwai had lived through and fought the Russian forces and were adept at surviving. Haji constantly attempted to reconcile Taliban and GIRoA interests. As such he conducted multiple meetings at the district center in the evenings, many of which were attended by Bathurst. Haji was ultimately killed [by the Taliban] for playing both sides. Per Bathurst:

> Leave no doubt, he was in it for the money and positional power and funding that came from the U.S., but he was a manipulative player in the Panjwai district and could be very persuasive to his enemies and friends alike, often not knowing which were which.[258]

Bathurst worked closely with the ODA, SOF CA, and Panjwai conventional troops, as well as partnering with the USAID and other development partners to stabilize a historically violent flashpoint district. However, "the synergy was difficult to maintain" with the rapid and frequent changeover of partnering and rotational forces. "Relationships were severed much more quickly than established and each incoming team approached key Afghan personalities differently; some were effective and others less so." Often the new approach was to "force results based on the tasking rather than having tactical patience." Additionally, the Taliban were keenly aware of the key personalities and power players in the district and played them accordingly.[259]

Bathurst's "tactical patience" was described by Lieutenant Colonel Scott Mann, the first director of the VSCC–South as "designed to move at the pace of the population to not only address the security dynamic, but economic

development and governance." The VSCC's mission was to support that design.[260]

Village Stability Coordination Centers

This linkage between VSO and interagency support for governance and development was critical. As such, the mission of the VSCC was to help make those connections. Then-Lieutenant Colonel Justin Sapp, Director of VSCC-South from March 2011 to April 2012 explained the VSCC mission and relationship to other elements of the program as:

> a dedicated line of effort solely focused on building the governance and development lines of effort. The SOTFs were thereby freed up to focus more on the security line of effort … [The SOTFs] built ALP, created white space using the commandos to disrupt the Taliban… while we helped build the Afghan institutions. … To facilitate that, we usually had one guy, we called them district augmentation teams; that we had put in each district. And then we would also have a provincial augmentation team that was at the provincial level.

Those DATs and PATs reported to him at the VSCC and he in turn reported to the VSNCC in Kabul. He had a daily deliverable—a situation report that he provided to the VSNCC, the SOTFs, and to the Commander, RC-South—that provided a summary of those field reports and focused on governance and development. Sapp said that they were well-received and at one point, then-Major General Terry, Commander, RC-South remarked that it was "one of the most useful SITREPs" that he had received because it was current, relevant and short, about two pages long comprising a paragraph for each DAT and PAT.

But it was much more than a reporting chain and situation reports. Sapp's biggest contribution was connecting resources, in particular at the regional level. Recall figure 16 that reflected the senior civilian at the regional level who led the regional platform. The platforms were run by State Department personnel and they hosted a weekly meeting that Sapp attended. In turn, Sapp hosted one or two VTCs per week where the DATs and PATs dialed in. Regional Platform personnel attendance included State, USAID, USDA as well as civilians from Coalition partners. This was a great opportunity to bring everyone up-to-date on the field requirements as well as the status of on-going programs as an addition to what the district and provincial

governors were doing (as summarized by the DATs and PATs). In particular, the VSCC- hosted meetings were also a great venue for facilitating and/or deconflicting projects between CA and USAID.

> Basically, we were heavily bolstering the Regional Platforms because their freedom of movement was seriously constrained due to the security situation. The Regional Platform construct might work well in a safer country, but not when your life is on the line.
>
> Part of the challenge with State and USAID was due to constraints imposed by Chief of Mission authority and the RSO's [Regional Security Officer] proscriptions for security. It was my impression, and a valid complaint, that like the military they were fixated on metrics to a fault. … They were usually at the districts, just one or two guys. But they weren't really allowed to travel out to the hinterland and be at the VSPs. So they didn't have insight into what was going on. And what was worse and probably the biggest indictment is that their metrics were sort of like, 'How much money I spent and what projects do I want in my district.'[261]

Unfortunately, they could not inspect the work that they contracted, so they asked the ODAs and CAT do that. Essentially, USAID was getting credit for doing the work, but Service members were "risking their lives" to see if the work was really accomplished.[262]

The VSCC also provided direct support to the Afghan institutions such as the MOI and Ministry of Education (MOE). As an example:

> We would facilitate the transport of the MOI paying agent for ALP monthly paydays. We also would arrange and transport the Minister of Education to some far off district. Those institutions were the weak links—and probably remain so.[263]

Figure 19 reflects the pivotal role that the VSCC played in promoting legitimacy—that is providing a "way" to link the strategic ends of "domestic order/stability," primarily in terms of governance and development, with the means available at the tactical level (the people).

When asked about the stand-up of a CMOC Sapp responded that the CMOC would eventually replace the VSCC structure.[264]

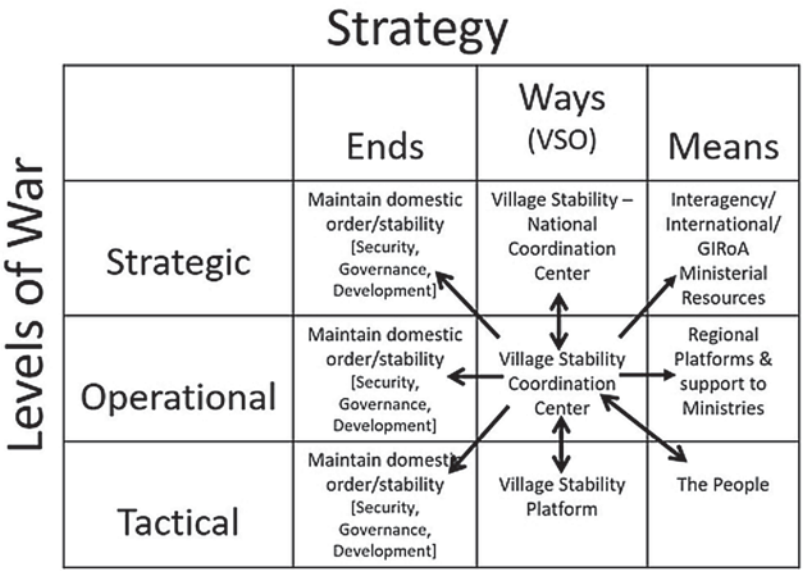

Figure 19. The VSCCs in supporting legitimacy, i.e., linking strategic ends with the tactical means.[265]

Village Stability-National Coordination Center

> The VSNCC synchronizes and coordinates VSO/Governance and Development efforts in support of COMCFSOCC-A campaign objectives.[266]

VSO has been described as bottom-up COIN. But the creation of the VSNCC reflected the need to have something at the top to coordinate and energize the agencies that controlled the resources and move those resources down the pipeline to the people at the bottom. Those Afghan agencies, in addition to the MOI, include (but are not limited to): the Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development,[267] the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock[268] the Independent Directorate of Local Governance,[269] and the MOE.[270]

The challenge was getting the resources, as an example, all of the international donations as well as the U.S. and other nation's agencies and non-governmental organization contributions (assistance, funding and other resources) into the Afghan system and making the system work.

Colonel Chris Pflanz provided some thoughts on VSO as they concerned Afghan governance and development:

- "Put the request into the system and ensure it is coordinated with the appropriate Afghan agency. Do not short circuit the system, 'force everything to go through the existing structures.'"
- "Processes that reconnect Afghans with Afghan institutions are worth far, far more than physical project outcomes."
- "Avoid handouts–we have created a welfare mindset already; let's not make it worse."
- "Take a 'glass half empty' approach when developing expectations; take a 'glass half full' view of outcomes."[271]

Summary

The civilian surge, launched in 2009, more than tripled the number of U.S. government civilians in Afghanistan to approximately 1,000, as well as the thousands of contracted civilians. This not only included an increase in U.S. civilian expertise and support at the higher levels of the Afghan national government, but also at the provincial and district levels. The ambassador/COM had oversight responsibilities of those civilians and accomplished that through a senior civilian at the regional platforms. The real challenge was getting those services and resources down to the village population. The VSO system of DATs, PATs, VSCC, and VSNCC, was designed to do that. In doing so, it recognized the importance of developing legitimacy in the system—top down and bottom up. Although an ad hoc system, General Miller recognized that all the efforts at the bottom meant nothing if they were not connected to the top. This was the unique contribution of VSO/ALP. This may not translate into success or victory in defeating the insurgency, but it is recognition that legitimacy, bottom-up and top-down, is critical to that success. There is no illusion that this recognition of legitimacy means that the Afghan at the bottom will consciously say, "I like this Afghan government in Kabul." But there is an expectation that if the community promotes a "way" for the Afghan to feel secure, provide for the family, be treated fairly and practice their religion and way of life, that they will support that community and government.

There were, and continue to be challenges:

- Announcing our troop drawdown immediately following the announcement of the surge broadcast to the world that all the insurgents needed to do was wait. Recent application of the old adage applies: "The American's have the clock, but the Taliban have the time."[272] This was reinforced by the subsequent rapidity of the troop and civilian drawdown as well as the final troop count.
- The ability of all agencies such as USAID/OTI to oversee their own work at the village level in a non-permissive environment.
- The incredible challenges associated with corruption and ethics.

The next chapter discusses the evolution of SOF C2 from the CFSOCC-A to the SOJTF-A.

Chapter 6. Activating the Special Operations Joint Task Force: Synchronizing Missions and Managing Resources

> There are two fundamental elements where ISAF must improve …[2] Transform ISAF processes to be more operationally efficient and effective, creating more coherent unity of command within ISAF, and fostering stronger unity of effort across the international community.[273]

In July 2012, the SOJTF-A was established to bring all USSOF under the command of one organization. By August the Commander of the SOJTF-A, Major General Raymond A. "Tony" Thomas was also designated the commander of NSOCC-A effectively bringing all in-country SOF under his command. In particular, the three tribes: ISAF SOF, Theater SOF (CJSOTF-A), and the in-country DA TF, reported to him, albeit under different authorities and command relationships.[274] Additionally, a fourth tribe, the Combined Joint Special Operations Air Component–Afghanistan (CJSOAC-A) was created to consolidate in-country SOF air assets under the SOJTF-A Commander.

This chapter addresses the evolution of those authorities and command relationships from unity of effort to unity of command making for a more effective and efficient SOF contribution to the fight in Afghanistan. As such, it had already started with the establishment of the CFSOCC-A in January 2009. As indicated, the major effects of that initiative were to: 1) allow the CJSOTF-A Commander the maneuver room to command his units and, 2) just as importantly, influence planning at the operational to strategic levels by virtue of having a seat at the ISAF/USFOR-A leadership table. That was successful as evidenced by the adoption and expansion of VSO/ALP before activation of the SOJTF-A in 2012. As an example, seven months after Brigadier General Reeder arrived in-country the first ODA was established in the village of Nili in Daykundi Province in what would be hailed as the first VSO site. The number of sites would expand to five in April 2010, 46 by

March 2011, and 103 by the end of 2011, well before the establishment of the SOJTF.[275] The point is, success in VSO/ALP was established well before the SOJTF was activated and not dependent on the SOJTF. However, the major contributions of the SOJTF, in addition to providing the ISAF/USFOR-A commander one SOF voice, was synchronizing the various SOF missions, particularly between population-centric COIN and CT; representing SOF as a division-level command on par with the other RCs; and more efficiently managing SOF resources.

The SOF mission that seemed to gain the most attention, in particular, was the CT mission and how it fit into the overall COIN campaign plan.

Population-Centric Counterinsurgency and Counterterrorism

The debate on COIN versus CT was at the national level. Vice President Biden was deeply concerned about committing more troops to Afghanistan and sought a less troop-intensive alternative. His approach suggested an off shore strategy that targeted "hard-core ideologues," who were the irreconcilables, those extremists that wouldn't change their minds.[276]

Figure 20. Finding the right balance.

At the theater, operational and tactical levels COIN and CT were seen as two different approaches, sometimes at odds with each other; there were challenges to implementing both. In particular, General McChrystal saw first-hand the potential for conflict associated with different chains of command for the DA TF and the Theater SOF in Iraq. He spoke of the friction between two in-country headquarters in which he, then-Lieutenant General McChrystal answered to the USCENTCOM commander and not to General Casey who was the four-star Multinational Force commander in Iraq. According to McChrystal, the friction was noticeable when,

> The ground-holding commanders' occasional annoyance with TF [redacted]–over disruptive targeting missions in their domain or our greater share of resources–all percolated up to the MNF-I [Multinational Forces-Iraq] headquarters.[277]

Conventional force commanders were more visceral in their descriptions. Lieutenant General Berger commented on SOF raids in the early days of Iraq and the frustration of being a BSO.

> Part was colored by … the early days when they [SOF] showed up in the middle of the night unannounced— From day 1 as a Marine leader or Army leader, you're belief is, 'I'm given this piece of terrain. I control everything that happens in it,' and now there were these units that would just parachute in during the night, make a big mess and leave. Where did that rule come from?[278]

Lieutenant General Daniel Bolger, USA, described SOF/CF integration in Iraq as major lessons for Afghanistan:

> Interestingly enough, in Iraq they never unified the [SOF] tribes, there was always … sort of [different types of SOF], task force guys versus SF, and they never quite came together. So that creates a scene, and as a result there would be incidents, accidents, you know a raid occurs, you don't know about it, there's a mess, the villagers come "you know they killed grandma" and we would respond, "Who killed grandma?" "Oh it was Americans," and you [really] didn't know [who it was].[279]

The tribes saw it as "the Americans," the CF saw it as "SOF," the theater SOF saw it as the "Task Force." But that was going to change in Afghanistan.

An Emphasis on Unity of Command

> Rod [Lieutenant General Rodriguez, the IJC Commander] and I pushed relentlessly to achieve "unity of command," the simple military concept that a single person should be in charge of every significant mission.[280] - General Stanley McChrystal

General McChrystal, as the Counterterrorism Task Force commander in Iraq understood the frustrations of CF commanders as well as the friction between headquarters where unity of command did not exist. But the solution—unity of command—was not as easy as it may sound and did not happen immediately.

> Although I'd outlined my position to Dave Petraeus and Admiral Mullen that I needed control over all U.S. forces in Afghanistan, I faced resistance from some organizations. This was a historically contentious issue, and I didn't obtain formal operational control over the Marines and special operations until Secretary Gates directed it, months after I'd assume command.[281]

By April 2010 General McChrystal had achieved unity of command of the three SOF tribes with NATO OPCON of ISAF SOF, TACON of the DA TF and OPCON of CFSOCC-A. Additionally, Brigadier General Austin "Scott" Miller was the new commander of CFSOCC-A and was one of then-Lieutenant General McChrystal's deputy commanders in the Counterterrorism TF. That relationship was no doubt helpful in furthering some of the Theater SOF initiatives such as VSO/ALP.

In general, the ISAF/USFOR-A structure as of April 2010 is reflected at figure 21.[282] General McChrystal also understood General Berger's issue with BSOs and designated the IJC as the BSO who in turn delegated that responsibility to the regional commanders. SOF now had to coordinate any operations in the regional command areas with the BSO.

USSOCOM supported the consolidation of SOF under one commander and was already working on a structure called the SOJTF. The SOJTF accomplished that and much more.[283] Not only did it provide a single SOF voice to the Joint Force Commander and determine the right CT/COIN balance at the operational level, it also more efficiently allocated resources. Additionally, a survey of BSOs in Afghanistan was almost unanimous in the support for the two-star SOF command in addressing SOF/CF conflicts indicated above.

Another major change, effective after the publication of figure 21, was the establishment of RC Southwest on 14 June 2010. RC-Southwest was activated to "address the excessive span of command and the operational tempo in Regional Command-South (RC-South)."[284] But there were more changes to come.

NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan/Special Operations Joint Task Force-Afghanistan

By 2010 all three SOF tribes reported to the ISAF/USFOR-A commander. But USSOCOM was already working on an initiative to unify the tribes under

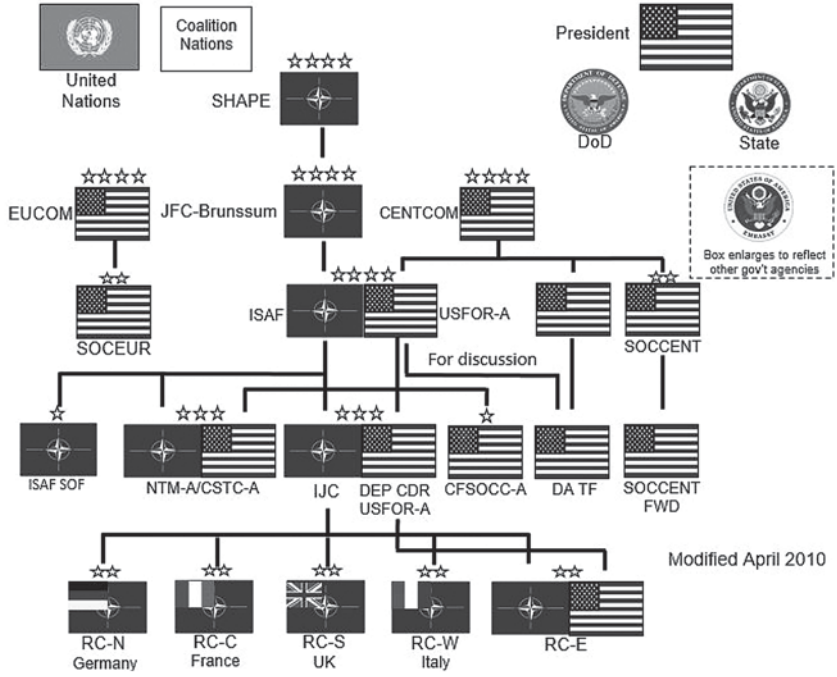

Figure 21. By April 2010, the ISAF/USFOR-A commander had OPCON or TACON of the various SOF tribes.

one SOF commander and provide the ISAF/USFOR-A commander one SOF voice in-country rather than three. According to Admiral Olson:

> General McChrystal taking all of the SOF tribes under him was sort of phase one. But we recognized that that's not the level at which the tribes should be brought together. They should be brought together under a certain Special Operations officer … a guy responsible for just the three tribes of SOF … And so, we came across a term "presentation of the force." It was a term coined by then Colonel, later Major General Tim Leahy, who was on the staff here at Special Operations command. He took the lead on crafting what we would call the doctrine for the SOJTF.
>
> The SOJTF concept was intended to be a flexible concept … Those forces assigned could include national forces, international forces, or theater forces. So, the SOJTF concept was generated here in the

> USSOCOM headquarters and then the SOJTF in Afghanistan was the first sort of execution of that concept, bringing together the three tribes under then-Major General Tony Thomas.[285]

That concept became doctrine on 18 April 2011 with the publication of JP 3-05, *Special Operations*:

> For crisis response, contingency, and major operations and campaigns, SOF may deploy a special operations joint task force (SOJTF) where all SOF report to one SO commander and the packaged force includes all enabling capabilities (organic to SO formations and those Service-provided CF capabilities) required to optimize the effectiveness of the SOJTF. A SOJTF is an operational level organization that may have one or more subordinate joint special operations task forces (JSOTFs).[286]

In January 2012 Major General Thomas, at the time the Deputy Commander for JSOC, was directed by then-Vice Admiral William McRaven to establish the SOJTF-A.

> the intent was that it would be all three existing components in Afghanistan working for a single commander. I was given six months to bring the concept together, deploy and have an initial operational capability by July 2012 with the goal of reaching full operational capability by January 2013, and we met those goals much faster than that.[287]

In addition to bringing together the three SOF tribes, the SOJTF also created the CJSOAC-A:

> a single joint special operation air component that didn't exist prior which was probably the biggest evolution of the whole thing, because it forced together the unified effort; that was probably the major adjustment.[288]

Not only was it "probably the major adjustment," it yielded tremendous benefits. Centrally managing those resources across the SOF enterprise allowed for greater efficiency in supporting SOF air requirements, and "air sorties went from 4,000 to 6,000 per month."[289]

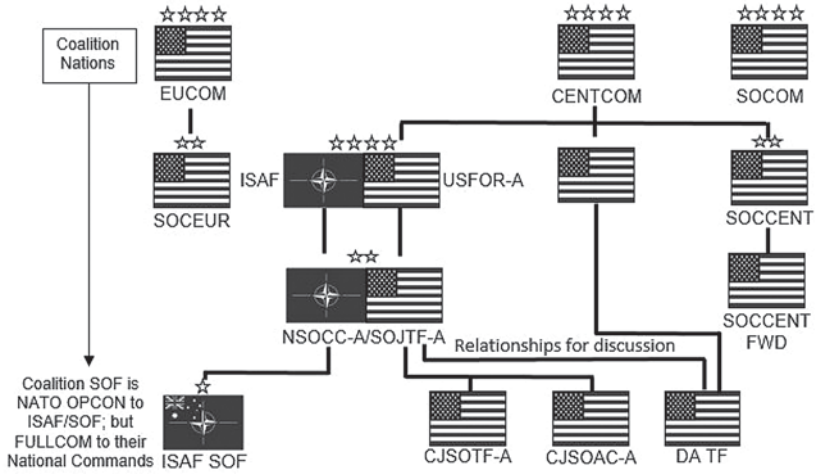

Figure 22. ISAF/SOF, CJSOTF, and the DA TF and development of the CJSOAC-A unified under the NSOCC-A/SOJTF-A after August 2012. Source: Figure Developed by Authors from USSOCOM Briefing, "VSO in Afghanistan," 2012. Also see DoD report to Congress, April 2010, November 2010, And March 2011, specifically the command and control structures.

In July 2012 SOJTF-A was established with Major General Thomas the commander. Within the next month he would be dual hatted as the NSOCC-A commander and assume command over ISAF SOF (see fig. 22).

His relationships and authorities would be different for each of the tribes. As an example he would have OPCON of the CJSOTF-A (the CFSOCC-A position was deleted after the SOJTF-A was activated). He would have TACON of the DA TF; OPCON would remain with its parent unit. Lastly, he would have NATO OPCON of the ISAF SOF. This one was the most interesting and probably the most politically sensitive relationships and discussed in the chapter on multinational forces. Additionally, each one of those components had a different mission set. As an example, ISAF SOF developed and worked with the Police Special Units to include the National Mission Units and the Provincial Response Companies under the MOI.[290] The CJSOTF was responsible for VSO and the FID mission with partnered ANSF to include the Commandos and ANASF.[291] The DA TF was focused on CT.

In addition to simplifying the ISAF/USFOR-A commander's relationship with the in-country SOF by having one SOF voice, the concept provided other major benefits.[292]

1. Per Major General Thomas: "Literally being able to effect, synchronize all of the SOF operations in theater toward a common goal/common purpose, was the clear powerful take-away of the establishment of the organization."[293] In doing so it was able to better contribute to the ISAF/USFOR-A campaign plan, as well as represent those operations to the Regional Commanders who were the BSOs.
2. Additionally, the SOJTF, as a two-star command at the operational level, evened the playing field as SOF discussed operations, to include the supporting role of SOF, with the other two-star tactical BSO.
3. As indicated, limited resources were more efficiently allocated, especially helicopter lift and unmanned intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance, primarily full motion video. The SOJTF allowed one commander to look across the board at SOF requirements and allocate those resources as necessary. As an example, sources indicate that this centralized reallocation of air assets yielded a 40 percent increase to the CJSOTF-A and 300 percent increase to ISAF-SOF.[294]

Although the course seemed already set for VSO/ALP, the two-star provided added emphasis on support at the various levels and agencies for the program. According to Lieutenant Colonel Scott Mann:

> You asked me if they needed a SOJTF? Absolutely they needed a SOJTF, they needed a two-star who could represent up and out what needed to happen in Afghanistan within the ministries, within the U.S. country team, and within ISAF.
>
> Here's why: Because those organizations … didn't have a clue what was going on at the bottom in the rural areas. Because their focus, by definition, is top-down. Their access and placement to these areas is extremely limited … So having a commander like Miller or Thomas [was crucial. Someone] who could go into those ministries

> and provide the top cover and representation of what our guys were doing at the bottom.[295]

The 16 July 2014 version of JP 3-05, Special Operations, described the development of the SOJTF-A in support of ISAF:

> The SOJTF headquarters, commanded by a general/flag officer, was designed as a complete package for theater and multinational SOF, special mission units, SOF aviation assets, SOF organic enablers, and attached conventional forces. The SOJTF efficiently unified special operations in support of International Security Assistance Force.

It went on to note and quote General John Allen, Commander of ISAF in November of 2013:

> The success of SOJTF-A led the ISAF Commander, General John Allen, to state in November 2013 'The SOJTF headquarters brings coherence to the ISAF campaign plan. The SOJTF is my covering force. It is a great partner for the ISAF Joint Commander and connects into NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan. It brings a synergy that we don't yet fully appreciate and brings effects that would otherwise not be achievable [created]. It should have been established years ago.'[296]

The doctrine has since been executed for operations in Iraq and Syria. The greatest issue associated with fielding the SOJTF is resourcing. Where do they get the people to man the force? USSOCOM continues to work through that issue as of this writing. The next chapter addresses the contributions of the coalition partners who contributed over 30,000 troops to the fight as well as taking responsibility for RCs in Afghanistan and contributing civilian expertise plus financial aid and other forms of economic development and humanitarian assistance.

Chapter 7. International and Multinational Contributions

> The only thing worse than fighting a war with allies is fighting a war without them. - Winston Churchill[297]

International and Multinational Support

On 12 September 2001, U.S. allies invoked Article 5 of the NATO Treaty "declaring the [terrorist] act against the United States [on 9/11] as an act against them all."[298] Under a separate but related initiative, ISAF was established in December 2001 under United Nations Security Council mandate, per the 5 December 2001 Bonn Agreement, to help the Afghan Government provide security in the Kabul area.[299] From 2002 to 2003, ISAF was led by various NATO nations on a six-month rotational basis from its headquarters in Kabul. In August 2003, NATO assumed the responsibility for ISAF, and on 13 October 2003, under United Nations Security Council Resolution 1510 it expanded operations beyond Kabul to include all of Afghanistan in four stages: North, west, south and east–completed in 2006.[300] At its height in 2011, ISAF grew to a force of over 130,000 representing over 50 nations, NATO and partners.

Although it has been said that the U.S. will not fight another conflict without partner nation support, there are some challenges working with allies/coalition partners as indicated in the quote from Winston Churchill. During Operation Enduring Freedom-Afghanistan those challenges were documented in DOD 180 day reports to Congress. As an example, the April 2010 report indicated the following in reference to national caveats:

> Presently, the caveats imposed by 17 nations limit operations outside of originally assigned locations (usually the province in which they are based), conducting CN [counter-narcotics] operations with ISAF (predominantly imposed by Allies in RC-South), and Rules of Engagement caveats (the majority being held by non-NATO nations).[301]

Countries to be generally recognized in this monograph include the NATO partners, Troop Contributing Nations, and others that may have contributed resources other than military. Of interest to this chapter is the development of ISAF SOF (see fig. 23).

International Security Assistance Force Special Operations Forces

> ISAF SOF will build enduring tactical, operational and institutional capabilities with Afghan Special Police and designated … security elements within Afghan ROL [rule of law], in order to neutralize insurgent networks, protect the population and set the conditions for the transfer of responsibility to our Afghan partners.[302]

ISAF SOF Headquarters consisted of 22 nations and 17 task forces from 17 nations. Command of ISAF SOF rotated between an Australian and United Kingdom Special Operations General officer. Australian Brigadier Mark Smethurst commanded ISAF SOF from October 2011 to October 2012. His charter was to train, advise and assist 23 independent Afghan Special Police units from the GDPSU (General Directorate of Police Special Units), 19 of which were Provincial Response Companies, and 3 National Mission Units, to conduct independent operations. During his tenure, the ANSF increased the percentage of ANSF-led operations from 20 to 60 percent and the number of unilateral operations from 0 to 13 percent. The ultimate goal was to transfer all mission requirements to the Afghans by December 2014.[303]

Command of ISAF SOF rotated between an Australian and United Kingdom Special Operations General officer.

An added complexity to ISAF SOF was the C2 arrangements. NATO C2 relationships were defined differently than those of the United States and where required to accommodate individual country caveats. As an example, what the U.S. calls command relationships [combatant command, OPCON, tactical control (TACON), and supporting/supported] NATO also calls degrees of authority.[304] They categorize/define those degrees of authority as: full command (FULLCOM); Operational Command; OPCON; Tactical Command; TACON; Administrative Control; and Logistic Control. As

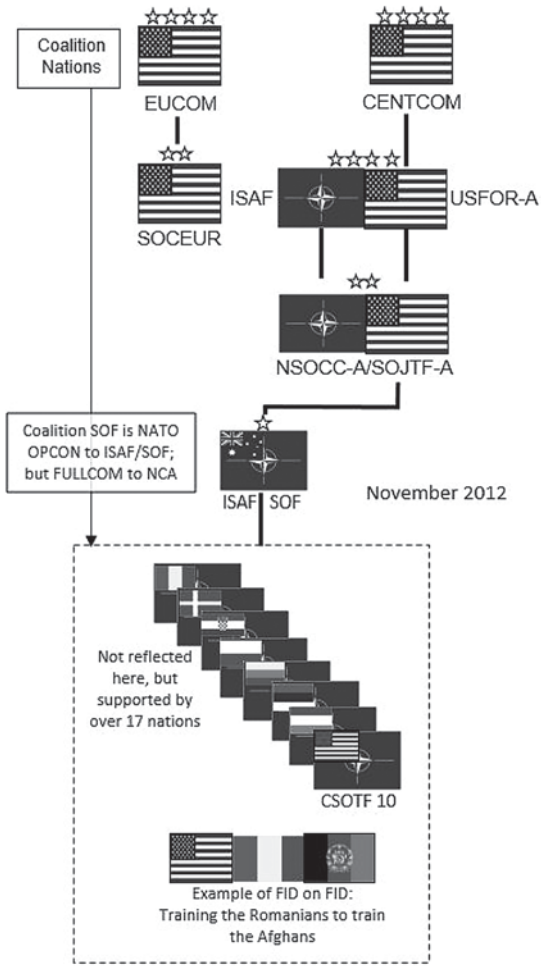

Figure 23. ISAF SOF.

an example FULLCOM can only be exercised by a national authority, "No NATO or coalition commander has full command over the forces assigned to him, in assigning forces to NATO, nations will delegate only operational command or operational control."[305] It is not the intent of this monograph to detail all of the differences, but to emphasize that there is a difference and that troop contributing nations ultimately retain control of their troops.

Although it sounds challenging, Brigadier Smethurst didn't find it as worrisome as it might sound. Most of the SOF units supported their conventional units and their chain of command was through those CF in their AO. As an example, the Italians and the French were under the C2 of their nation's CF. Other SOF forces that may not have their nation's CF in the area might have their approval authorities located in Kabul. The Brigadier added that he would normally approve operations but in rare cases non-concur if the unit did not have approval of the BSO or their country's release.

USSOF operations under ISAF were different than those under the CJSOTF or the DA TF. The most visible example was the deployment of TF 10 in February 2007, later to be named the Combined Special Operations

Task Force (CSOTF) 10. However, there was more work behind the scenes to deploying the task force (envision the TF deployment as the tip of the iceberg). The NATO SOF Coordination Center (December 2006) and later, the NATO SOF Headquarters (February 2007) was established to C2 ISAF SOF. In doing so, the Special Operations Command Europe (SOCEUR) Commander encountered numerous challenges that he described as "The Horns of a Dilemma." Although the establishment of the NATO SOF Headquarters was an imperative for NATO SOF leadership and the European Command, it was resisted by USSOCOM because of the already high USSOF global operational and deployment tempo. As such TF 10 received no USSOCOM support and it was attached, not OPCON to ISAF SOF in the event it needed to be pulled back to support other contingencies.[306]

Despite the obstacles, TF 10 was deployed in February 2007 to the vicinity of Kabul, Afghanistan; it grew to a CSOTF in June 2012 and was deactivated in December 2014 as the security mission was transitioned to the Afghans.[307] Captain Ty Flinton commanded an SFODA from 1st Battalion 10th SFG, as part of TF 10 and later CSOTF 10 from 2010 to 2013. In that capacity he worked with SOF from Romania, Lithuania, Poland, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom and others. Flinton described it as FID within FID. As an example, they were training, advising, and assisting Romanian SOF to train, advise, and assist Afghan Special Forces and Provincial Response Companies.[308]

Major Flinton commented that one of the differences in working for NATO versus USFOR-A was the ROE.

> Technically, I was there as a NATO representative, and I had additional ROE. NATO didn't have all of the authorities under the ROE to initiate action, but what NATO did have was a lower level of approval for fires under defensive ROE. Whomever the NATO ground force commander was, retained the right to release munitions and indirect fires, as opposed to American forces where the SOTF (O-5) commander retained release authority for indirect fires.[309]

Once making contact with the enemy, this allowed them more flexibility in carrying the fight to the enemy under ROE within the mandate of defending and protecting the force.

The story of SOCEUR support to European Command (EUCOM), the establishment of NATO SOF/ISAF SOF Headquarters and the early

implementation of those initiatives in the deployment and actions of TF10 and later CSOTF 10 is worthy of a separate monograph in-and-of-itself to document an important part of SOF history.[310]

The next chapter discusses CF/SOF integration to include how some of the above SOF organizational changes were perceived by CF commanders.

Chapter 8. Special Operations Forces/ Conventional Forces Integration

The topic of SOF/CF integration generally refers to the working together of those two forces to meet a common objective.[311] As such, we normally think of SOF and CF working in the same area with a supporting/supported relationship at the Brigade Combat Team or higher level. But in Afghanistan it also referred to the building of U.S. capacity to support the VSO/ALP programs at the SFODA split team and CF squad level as well as the integration of CF headquarters into the command and staff structure. This section will start with the former, to include the development of the "one in-country SOF voice" from CF commanders' perspectives as a follow-up to the previous chapters, and then address the latter, CF support to VSO/ALP.

SOF/CF: Supported/Supporting Relationships and Development of the Special Operations Joint Task Force

As indicated before, ISAF was reorganized in 2009 to include an operational level headquarters, the IJC, commanded by a three-star general. The IJC was designated as the BSO with command over the regional commands. Subsequently, the IJC commander designated the Regional Commanders as the BSO for their areas.[312] This provided the Regional Commanders the responsibility and authority to synchronize, develop, and coordinate operations in their areas. It also meant that, while the SOTFs were OPCON to the CJSOTF, they were in support of the regional commanders as they operated in their AO. This section discusses some of the implications of that relationship as SOF C2 transitioned to the SOJTF. First it provides CF commanders' comments on the activation of the SOJTF and then it discusses some of the issues associated with Afghan partnership development.

Conventional Force Perspectives

Internally, the rebalancing of resources for ISAF SOF and the CJSOTF, specifically in terms of air assets tells a good news story about this consolidation of SOF under one command. But, what did those non-SOF leaders of organizations outside think of this single SOF voice concept? The comments were mostly positive, but there were challenges. Some examples of both:

Major General Mike Bills, RC-South commander, June–October 2014:

> I liked it. As a matter of fact, the two-star [Major General Ed Reeder was the SOJTF commander at the time] and I talked a lot. Every time we did an op I made sure that I cleared it through him; these are his folks. He understood exactly what we were doing.[313]

RC-Southwest Marine Corps commanders compared SOF, in particular the numbered task forces actions in Iraq to those in Afghanistan and overwhelmingly saw an improvement. Brigadier General Larry Nicholson commanded the 2nd Marine Expeditionary Brigade–Afghanistan, Task Force Leatherneck from May 2009 to April 2010 and returned in February 2012 for a year as the Operations Officer for the IJC in Kabul, Afghanistan. He recalled his time working with SOF in Fallujah, Iraq.

> As a regimental commander in Fallujah, sometimes SOF would go in and do a raid and we were left to clean it up a little bit. And sometimes that was the downside of it. But even in Fallujah, the relationship was good, and I think they never had to ask for permission to do something, but we did ask for coordination. … So for me personally, I learned to work with SOF in Fallujah ... [but] I think we perfected it in Afghanistan.[314]

According to Lieutenant General David Berger, USMC, who commanded the 1st Marine Division (forward), in Afghanistan from February 2012 to February 2013, coordination between SOF actions and CF was one of the major improvements from Iraq to Afghanistan. But Berger voiced concerns over the added layer of bureaucracy and the SOJTF commander's authorities to move ALP sites, potentially counter to the desires of the RC Commander.

> … there were top-down driven things and top-down driven timelines on the SOF side that we were surprised by. Then there were also some differences of opinion on priorities or areas. We never had differences of opinion before because there wasn't anybody to have a difference of opinion with.[315]

He acknowledged that from a top down perspective it was an efficient way to organize, but, if you are the regional commander, with responsibility for the area, and the SOJTF commander has the final say on where he is moving ALP sites in your area, then there is going to be friction,

> Before that construct, you just drove the timeline. That ALP site stayed in existence until you did not need it anymore, and you made the decision when to disestablish it. You were not negotiating with anybody … I don't think it was personal, just different perspectives.[316]

Linda Robinson in, *One Hundred Victories: Special Ops and the Future of American Warfare*, cites an example of that perspective, before the standup of the SOJTF.[317] In this example, Brigadier General Marty Schweitzer, Deputy Commander of RC-South in March 2012, pushed for the development of the ALP into eastern Maiwand rather than to an area in southern Maiwand proposed by the ODA. Schweitzer evidently threatened to take the issue to his two-star regional commander, Major General Huggins, who, as the commander of the 82nd Airborne Division, had provided Colonel Curtis Buzzard's 1st Battalion of the 505th PIR of the 82nd Airborne Division (1-505th PIR) to General Petraeus as one of the uplift battalions for VSO/ALP. Robinson made the point that Schweitzer trumped Brigadier General Haas, the CFSOCC-A Commander with the threat of going to the two-star regional commander for a decision. Hypothetically, had there been a two-star SOJTF-A Commander, the reconciliation would have gone before two, two-stars and the outcome may have been different. Also recall in Chapter 6 that the PRT commander, David Adams had high praise for then-Colonel Schweitzer, as the BCT commander, as a BSO in Khost.

Lieutenant General Daniel Bolger, United States Army, (Ret.), served as Commanding General, NATO Training Mission–Afghanistan and Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan from 5 November 2011 to 2 April 2013.

> Interestingly enough, in Iraq they never unified the [SOF] tribes, there was always … task force guys versus SF, and they never quite came together….So in Afghanistan there was a conscious effort by 2011/2012 to unscrew that and I think it was driven by ALP and VSO. I think with the successes that they saw in Iraq and then the successes in the VSO program in integrating conventional land owners, Afghan forces, and local police, they said: 'We have to take the next step and integrate the SOF stream with NATO, the SOF stream with the task force and the SOF stream with CFSOCC-A and bring them all together.' There was much wailing, screaming,

> moaning, hollering, but it happened and it worked. Right now that is the most effective force over there.[318]

The jury was still out for General Petraeus. When asked about the consolidation of SOF under one organization, he was cautious:

> I was never sold on the idea of mixing [SOF] … I really thought those [CJSOTF and the Direct Action TF] were distinct missions with distinct casts, functions, intelligence requirements, distinct assets; I am not sure I would have agreed to that on my watch had I gone longer. … I still am not completely sold on that. I intended the [Direct Action TF] as a truly different mission with truly different assets, and truly different focus, truly different mode of operation and op centers that need to be *riveted* on that, because stuff can go seriously wrong.

But what he was sold on was "building up all the Coalition pieces much more effectively, because we had some very good Coalition SOF but many of them were just under their respective national commander, and we wanted to get closer integration there."[319]

Developing Afghan Partnerships

The integration of SOF and CF generally went well as attested to by the CF commanders and SOF. But there were some issues. As an example, "Afghan partnerships."

Both SOF and Coalition forces were tasked with building relationships. As the battle space became denser as in the surge, relationships with those key Afghan leaders in the districts, provinces and regions, were dominated or claimed by the BSO. One example provided by Colonel Justin Sapp, Director of the VSCC-South (2011-2012) was General Abdul Raziq in Kandahar. When Lieutenant Colonel Bill Carty, the SOTF commander departed, the RC "high-jacked that relationship" claiming that Raziq was at echelons above the SOTF and should be catered by the RC.[320] This was also noted by Colonel Brian Petit a former SOTF-South commander (2010) and later Special Operations Advisory Group commander (2013-2014) who indicated that battle-space owners monopolized those relationships

> leaving SOF, and specifically U.S. Army Special Forces with inadequate partnerships, or none at all (officially) or borrowing or

> part-timing with Afghan forces who wanted USSF, but who were officially paired with [other nation forces].[321]

Building Capacity to Support Village Stability Operations/ Afghan Local Police

The rapid growth of the VSO/ALP programs demanded more capacity than SOF could muster both in terms of teams and command structure. VSO/ALP exceeded the capabilities of Special Forces Command, but with the support of Admiral Olson at USSOCOM, Rear Admiral Ed Winters, of Naval Special Warfare Command and Major General Paul Lefebvre, Marine Special Operations Command (MARSOC), SEAL platoons, and MSOTs were deployed to develop and man VSO sites.[322] But that still was not enough. So in the fall of 2010, Colonel Bolduc and Brigadier General Miller met with General Petraeus to discuss the use of CF to support the program.[323] As Colonel Bolduc explained to General Petraeus:

> Not for them to be guards, but under the supervision of SOF leadership to be able to support our VSO operations and our training and employment of the Afghan Local Police. If we can thicken this, and put some conventional units, infantry units in support of SOF, I think we can move your intent.[324]

General Petraeus was fully behind the proposal and in November 2010 requested Secretary of Defense approve the deployment of an infantry battalion to support the programs. The first battalion to be assigned was 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry Regiment (1-16th Infantry), also known as Task Force Iron Ranger, from Fort Riley Kansas, the home of the First Infantry Division, "Big Red One." The battalion arrived at the end of January 2011 and was OPCON to the CFSOCC-A (Brigadier General Miller) and TACON to the CJSOTF-A.[325] The use of the battalion literally doubled the available teaming to support VSO. As an example, ODA's were halved with each split team of six paired with a squad of infantry. These combined teams filled 58 sites across Afghanistan.[326]

This integration was not conducted without some angst on the part of both the CF and SOF communities; most of the issues seemed to boil down to culture. According to Dr. Craig Whiteside, the infantry units found the MARSOC teams the easiest to relate to because of their infantry

backgrounds. SEAL team bonding seemed more difficult because of Service cultural differences. But, after what Lieutenant Colonel James Smith, 1-16th Infantry Battalion Commander, described as initial "butt sniffing encounters," and in-country operations, relationships seemed to smooth out.[327] In addition to manpower, 1-16th Infantry brought the admin and logistical support that allowed the teams at the various sites to focus on operations and not on admin/log. Almost one-year tours by 1-16th Infantry Soldiers (January to December 2011) also provided operational continuity as SOF teams rotated after seven months on the ground.

Lieutenant Colonel Smith was then dual-hatted as the VSCC in the north, responsible for coordinating the activities of the DATs and PATs with the resources of civilian agencies through the RC.

Success begets success. Not necessarily complete success, but successful enough for General Petraeus to request a second infantry battalion to support VSO. One of the early lessons from the deployment of 1-16th Infantry was, "How to employ/make the best use of the battalion headquarters?" Initially the SF-led SOTFs were overextended, in particular in 2010 SOTF-South commanded four AOBs and 27 ODA/MSOT/SEAL equivalents. As the main effort, they were also heavily weighted with aircraft, Special Operations Teams Alpha, CA, PSYOP, MWD teams, EOD, electronic warfare assets, intelligence, and to some extent, logistics. But, missions were not limited to VSO/ALP. In addition to operating 10 plus VSO sites they had another 10 "district level advise, assist, train, facilitate governance, etc." ODAs who were partnered with different types of Afghan forces. SOTF-South also advised two commando battalions, the 3rd Kandak in Kandahar and 7th in Helmand, and episodically hosted the 6th Commando Kandak on their red cycle. According to Colonel Petit:

> In short, it was too much, we ruptured here and there and could not properly support all these elements. At our outgoing RIP/TOA [relief in place/Transfer of Authority] in Sept 2010, my command was broken into two SOTFs [SOTF-South and SOTF-Southeast], effectively giving a 14 ODA missions to one SOTF and a 13 ODA mission to another.[328]

Still not enough C2 structure; to help, CF battalions, augmented with SOF staff, picked up some of the SOTF responsibilities. A good example was the deployment of the 1-505th PIR in May 2011 to support VSO/ALP,

again OPCON to the CFSOCC-A and TACON to the CJSOTF-A. This battalion assumed C2 of SOF in RC-North and would be known as TF Panther. As with the 1-16th Infantry, the VSO/ALP mission required the integration of the 1-505th PIR's infantry platoon and squads with SOF from multiple services at remote sites across Afghanistan. This standup of an additional TF headquarters in the north provided dedicated support to the area and allowed SOTF-East that previously commanded SOF in the north, to focus its efforts in the east. Lieutenant Colonel Buzzard described the integration:

> General Miller saw the need for a battalion-level headquarters in the north due to the political and ethnic complexity of the region. He invested heavily to ensure conditions were set—it was important to get it right. In terms of task organization, I had two of our maneuver companies, part of the forward support company, and the AOBs in our command. One of the rifle companies would blend in at squad or platoon (minus) with the AOB to thicken their efforts at VSO. I would have the other company to conduct mounted sustainment operations throughout our AO. In addition, I had companies integrated into efforts in SOTF-South, Southeast, and West, depending on the timeframe. The CJSOTF provided me with a SF DCO [deputy commanding officer] and an SF Plans Sergeant Major, which was very helpful.
>
> In RC-North, we were spread out at about 10 different sites across virtually all of the provinces. General Miller really set the tone. 'These guys (us) aren't coming over here to guard the site, they're part of the mission. Integrate them.' I was really proud of how our unit responded—tactically sound, ton of ranger qualified Paratroopers, and I really think the integration worked. My CSM [Command Sergeant Major] and I emphasized being adaptable and team players, and we're enormously proud of how the unit moved to friction, solved problems, and made a huge impact on the mission.

Colonel Buzzard then related several examples of "building credibility" with the SOF once he stood up TF Panther, as there was some apprehension about a CF commander in charge of SF. One example was his Paratroopers' proficiency in employing 60 mm mortars in support of the SEALs out west in Faryab when the unit took machine-gun fire while on patrol. "All of a

sudden they [the SEALS] were the biggest fans of our guys." But, he was also frustrated periodically when he travelled to see his forces attached to other SOTFs, where the Paratroopers weren't as well integrated into the mission. However, this was not the norm.[329]

There were others. Lieutenant Colonel John "JD" Highfill deployed the 2nd Stryker Battalion, 3rd Infantry Regiment (2-3 Infantry) to Afghanistan from November 2011 to November 2012. The battalion was reorganized to support the VSO/ALP programs with infantry Soldiers working with SOF as the other CF battalions had been. His headquarters operated as a SOTF-like headquarters, first in Ghazni, with a SEAL Platoon and two ODA teams, and later responsible for both Paktika and Ghazni provinces (TF Paktika), with an SF Company and additional SF teams—seven total. Enablers attached to his task force included a CST, intelligence analysts, JTAC's, Staff Judge Advocate (lawyer), explosive ordnance disposal (EOD) specialists, and MWD teams.[330]

In the summer of 2012 there were six SOTF-level headquarters in operation: "Two of them were infantry task forces (TF Balkh and TF Paktika) and the others were from MARSOC, 7th Group, a SEAL team, and another from 3rd Group." By the end of Lieutenant Colonel Highfill's tour in November 2012, "nearly all of my ODAs were managing their full, what they called tashkil, which was the U.S. Army's Modified Table of Organization and Equipment, but for ALP units, which varied in size [between 100-300 police] depending on what village they were from"[331] Those teams were either in, or moving into a Tactical Overwatch posture, that is, far enough away to allow the Afghans to be in charge, but close enough in case something happened that demanded U.S. support. Lieutenant Colonel Highfill received positive comments from ODAs and SEAL units on the "the rigor of planning, admin and log capacity that were brought …by the officers and enlisted members of the infantry units."[332] Generally, he rates his battalion's experiences as 80 percent positive with 10 percent middle of the road, and 10 percent terrible (referring to the Bales and Gant incidents, discussed in chapter 4). Both were major deviations from the VSO/ALP-SOF/CF split team integration concepts that included vetting, roles, structures, mentorship, and accountability. Had those guidelines been followed, the leadership may have been more aware and sensitive to some of the indicators.[333]

Cultural challenges were previously mentioned. They seemed to occur mostly on the "special" side. There was reluctance by some in calling the

CF battalion commands "SOTFs" because they were conventional and not "special." Additionally some AOB commanders had issues working for CF commanders. Having said that, the SOF in-country leadership was totally supportive as indicated by Colonel Buzzard's comments above. According to Brigadier General Bolduc, the major resistance to the programs, the use of other-than SF, and specifically the use of CF, came from the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) top leadership. This was a SF mission, "Why would we ask other than special forces to do it?" Additionally, USASOC leadership questioned the split team concept claiming that it was placing SF teams at unacceptable risk.[334] Regardless, the use of MSOTs, SEALs, and CF was deemed successful. Important factors in that success are selecting the right people, early integration (during pre-deployment training if possible), complementing CF staff with SOF, adherence to VSO/ALP standard operating procedures (SOP) guidelines by SOF as well as CF, and an understanding that integration means assimilation. For cultural considerations, lessons learned recommends that light infantry units be selected since their training and experience, although not SOF, more closely replicates SOF than other CF units.[335]

According to Brigadier General Bolduc, the major resistance to the programs, the use of other-than SF, and specifically the use of CF, came from the United States Army Special Operations Command (USASOC) top leadership.

Most of those interviewed indicated that the main risk to the program was the shortness of time allowed for it to mature and become sustainable. That is discussed in the chapter on VSO/ALP and in the next chapter.

Chapter 9. Discussion/Summary: Successes, Failures, and Implications

This chapter will discuss themes that surfaced during OEF-A that are relevant to VSO/ALP and the evolution of SOF C2. Specifically, it will discuss elements of the purpose statement listed in the introduction and repeated below:

1. Document the development of the VSO/ALP programs including the integration of SOF and CF in developing the programs and building the capacity of those local forces. Additionally, it will identify the successes and failures of the programs and provide examples of, and lessons from, SOF/CF integration. It will discuss the applicability of the approach to other regions.
2. Trace the evolution of special operations C2 in Afghanistan from 2009 to 2014, to include command relationships, authorities and organizational structures. It will discuss the efficacy of those changes and their value to future conflict.
3. Analyze the complementary effects of those initiatives. The monograph will discuss how the development of those initiatives made for a more effective force and broadened the set of strategic options for the Coalition's approach to Afghanistan and other regions beyond 2014.

The authors contend that both initiatives (the VSO/ALP programs and the evolution of SOF C2) were generally successful in-and-of themselves. However, true success lay in the convergence of those initiatives and their contributions to strategic options beyond 2014.

Background: A War of Necessity and a Change in Strategy

President Obama called it a war of necessity. Whether people agree with that characterization or not, it was treated that way in terms of emphasis. That emphasis was backed up by a surge of resources—planning, people-power, funding and expertise. In most cases it was the right people, followed by the right people during those formative years of 2009 to 2011.[336]

In addition to a surge in resources and the change to a population-centric COIN strategy; the focus on security, governance, and development; the emphasis on civilian support agencies and their one-of-a-kind expertise; and Coalition contributions, were critical to success. However, this war of necessity had an exit clause stated upfront, America would start withdrawing troops from Afghanistan by mid-2011.[337] This would have psychological and sustainment implications for any long term programs. Unfortunately, by its nature COIN is long-term.

Below are most of the themes that surfaced from the research and analysis of the VSO/ALP programs and evolution of C2 in Afghanistan. They are categorized as successes, failures, and implications.

Successes

There were a number of SOF successes from 2009 to 2014 as they relate to VSO/ALP and SOF C2. Although generally considered successes, associated challenges are also discussed.

Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan: Setting the Conditions for Innovation

The success of the CFSOCC-A was in the effects it was able to generate, such as setting the conditions for innovative ideas to take root and develop while allowing the CJSOTF commander the latitude to command his forces. In this case it was the activation of the CFSOCC-A, i.e., the placement of a high-level staff officer with access to the three- and four-stars. It is the authors' contention that the birth and sustainment of ALP and VSO would not have happened without the establishment of the CFSOCC-A. Additionally, the CFSOCC-A was a stepping stone to the development of the SOJTF. Innovative leaders such as Brigadier General Reeder started the program with Brigadier General Miller moving the concept forward by establishing a structure to support VSO from the bottom to the top and vice versa.

General Reeder deployed to Afghanistan as a SOTF, CJSOTF-A, the first CFSOCC-A, and SOJTF-A commander. He spoke of the importance of building relationships:

> It was a time [2002] where we were understanding the relationships. We were meeting the Ismail Khan's, we were meeting the Jan Mohammad Khan's for the first time. We're still the best of friends,

> and every time I go into Afghanistan, I'm meeting with all these former warlords and ministers and generals and such because it really is about relationship building and that started back in '02 when we first went in.[338]

He continued to build those relationships through his tenure as the SOJTF commander in 2015.

> So you fast forward to '15, I honestly felt that I could get anything done in Afghanistan. I was briefing the President on Saturdays, so I made a really good relationship with the President. The National Security Advisor and I were really good friends from previous rotations, I knew almost all of the generals, half the ministers, but the point was, that over that period of time, you learn who the "people influence" are. You do not have to be in the government, but you can be outside the government. As long as you know 'people influence,' that is the relationship that can help you.[339]

The significance of this was not just because General Reeder knew what he had to do, but because of who General Reeder is. He is a people-person commander who understands the importance of relationships, particularly in that society. Those relationships enabled the development and sustainment of (at least while the Coalition was there to lead, manage, and provide oversight to) those programs.

Village Stability Operations/Afghan Local Police: Building and Sustaining Legitimacy

The uniqueness of VSO/ALP was implementing a program that recognized the importance of governance and development as well as security and that, to be sustainable, it needed to be linked to the central government. That linkage was a major step toward building legitimacy. As previously mentioned, legitimacy has always been an important theme in COIN doctrine and is mentioned over 150 times in the 2018 version of Counterinsurgency, Joint Publication 3-24.[340] However, saying it and doing it are two different things. The VSO structure that included the VSCC and VSNCC along with the DATs and PATs provided one example of how to make it work. There were a number of other enabling programs that should be recognized. The PRTs provided structure and security for military and civilian organizations

supporting governance and development to access the population. As the JCOA and CNA studies indicated, absent the PRTs, "the 'build' in clear-hold-build efforts deemed essential to effective counterinsurgency would fall flat."[341]

Issues associated with linking those resources to the people included USAID/OTI's inability to monitor their contracts at the village level. However, the VSO system adapted to provide a measure of oversight via VSPs in the area. Not an ideal solution, but a solution never-the-less. As Lieutenant Colonel Sapp discovered, much of the regional platform's work was coor-

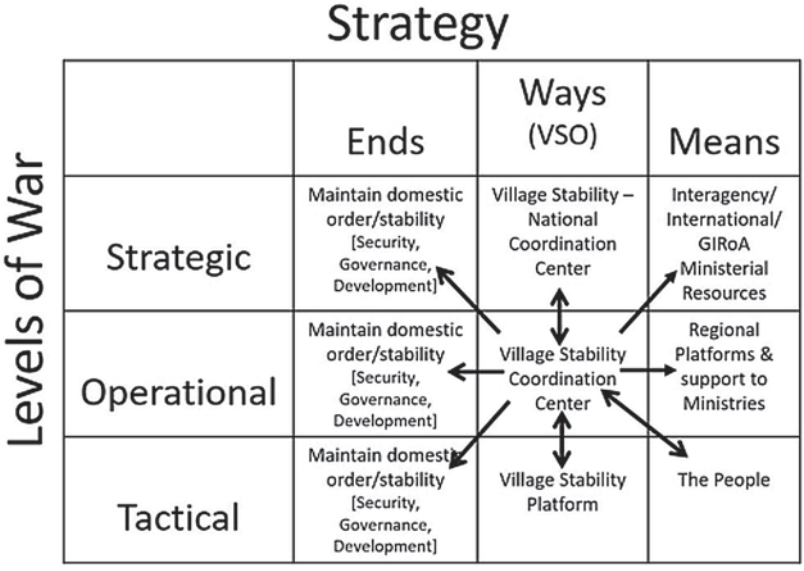

Figure 24. VSO: Enabling Legitimacy. Created by authors.

dinated through his VSCC. This network actually made the interagency relevant to the fight.

Some have asked, "Why didn't CMOC assume those functions?" As indicated in chapters 4 and 5, the CMOC was fully engaged supporting the SOTF and did not have the capacity, and the rank commensurate with VSCC responsibilities. Additionally, General Miller wanted direct access to that process at the CFSOCC rather than having it routed through the SOTF, the CJSOTF, and then to the CFSOCC. After 2012 the VSCC was deactivated and its functions were assumed by the CMOC.

Some have said, "We lost our way." That was reflected in two ways:

1. **VSO/ALP Became ALP/vso.** As Lieutenant Colonel Scott Mann described, rather than working at "the pace of the population" with those villages that wanted VSO, we "elbowed our way in." Additionally, President Karzai's recognition of the ALP program to include U.S. funding and an easily recognizable "body count" metric in terms of numbers of ALP would overshadow the VSO aspect. People saw ALP as the Sons of Iraq, and as in Iraq, lost the bigger picture in terms of government legitimacy and the importance of tying the top to the bottom and vice versa. Over time, VSO/ALP became ALP/vso and by 2012 ALP outpaced an understanding of what VSO was all about.
2. **Direct Action (DA) Mindset.** Some were more DA, i.e., kill/capture, than others who saw the path to success in BPC to "work ourselves out of a job" as one leader described it.[342] DA was a necessary tool but only as it complemented the intent of VSO/ALP and supported the ISAF commander's campaign plan.

Some might suggest that this has SOF cultural underpinnings. The DA/CT aspects of USSOCOM are rooted in the mission and subsequent failure of Operation Eagle Claw—a hostage rescue situation. The "influence"/by, with, and, through aspects are rooted in USSOCOM's link, via SF, to the Office of Strategic Services in World War II. How do we reconcile or balance the two? This is a good lead-in to C2 and the development of the SOJTF.

Unity of Command: The Evolution of Special Operations Forces Command and Control

Unity of command and the evolution of C2 to the SOJTF-A was a major success in Afghanistan. Citing the CFSOCC-A, some have asked about the challenges associated with transitioning to the SOJTF.[343] The CFSOCC-A was a major step in setting the conditions for VSO/ALP and the development of the SOJTF. Having said that, the responsibilities of the SOJTF were much broader than the CFSOCC. The SOJTF picked up the CFSOCC-A responsibilities as well as three other significant missions. As the one in-country SOF voice to the ISAF/USFOR-A commander, it assumed responsibility for the CFSOCC-A mission (the one-star CFSOCC-S position was then deleted), the DA TF, the ISAF SOF (as the NSOCC-A commander), and the activation and command of the JSOAC-A (previously noted in chapter 6).

One area that stood out as a major issue from Iraq was the ability to coordinate, communicate, and balance CT operations within the ISAF commander's COIN mandate. Reconciling the two in Iraq seemed to be a failure as CF suddenly found SOF (DA task force) conducting raids in their areas of operations for which they had to "clean-up" with resident tribes.[344] However, Afghanistan was a different story and CF commanders had nothing but praise for the SOF/CF coordination efforts (although they may not have agreed with some of the decisions—see chapter 8 on SOF/CF integration).

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Despite finding a solution to the CT/COIN balance at the theater/task force SOF level, there are those that contend "we lost our way (discussed above)," and in particular the Special Forces in the mini-CT fight, or DA versus the train, advise, and assist role in protecting the population. Although the introduction of the one-star, and later the two-star, was critical in aligning plans and strategies, it did not eliminate heavy-handed versus more population centric approaches exhibited by rotating organizations. This was a major issue in Iraq and, although improvements were noted, still a visible issue in Afghanistan.

International Security Assistance Force Special Operations Forces

ISAF SOF Headquarters consisted of 22 nations and 17 task forces from 17 nations. Its charter was to train, advise, and assist Afghan Special Police units and National Mission Units to conduct independent operations. Challenges associated with multinational operations were the difference in ROE and national caveats. As challenging as that might sound, the approval process for operations, according to Brigadier Smethurst, became very workable.

USSOF operations under ISAF were different than those under the CJSOTF or the DA TF in terms of mission sets and ROE. As an example, TF 10, later to be named the CSOTF 10, conducted "FID on FID" where elements of the 10th SFG trained, advised, and assisted Romanian SOF to train, advise, and assist Afghan Special Forces and Provincial Response Companies.[345] In

terms of ROE, some rules were more restrictive, such as the offensive ROE, and some less. As an example, TF 10 seemed to have more latitude, depending on the situation, when it came to applying ISAF ROE to a defensive posture.

SOCEUR support to EUCOM, the establishment of NATO SOF/ISA SOF Headquarters and the early implementation of those initiatives in the deployment and actions of TF 10 and later CSOTF 10 is worthy of a separate monograph to document an important part of USSOF history.

Special Operations Forces/Conventional Force Integration

SOF/CF integration is addressed from two aspects: 1) generally, the working together of those two forces to meet a common objective. As an example, working in the same area with a supporting/supported relationship at the Brigade Combat Team or higher level. But it also refers to 2) the building of U.S. capacity to support the VSO/ALP programs at the SFODA split team and CF squad level.

First, the supported/supporting roles. The integration of SOF and CF generally went well as attested to by the CF and SOF commanders, particularly as it involved the coordination of DA task force operations. But there were some issues, as an example, "Afghan partnerships." Both SOF and Coalition forces were tasked with building "relationships." However, as the battle space became denser as in the surge, relationships with those key Afghan leaders in the districts and provinces, in some cases were dominated or claimed by the BSO.

Second, building U.S. capacity to support VSO/ALP. Generally it went well. One of the pluses was that the CF developed a better understanding of special operations and was able to carry that perspective back to the CF. As an example, Lieutenant Colonel Buzzard later commanded the Joint Multinational Readiness Center (JMRC) in Germany and, due to his experiences in VSO/ALP took the initiative to integrate NATO SOF into his JMRC exercises.[346]

Initially, there were some cultural issues that were eventually overcome. As an example, the infantry units found the MARSOC teams the easiest to relate to because of their infantry backgrounds. Conversely, the SOF teams found the light infantry units easiest to relate to, as compared to mechanized units for the same reasons.

There were also learning curves in how to use the headquarters. As an example, Lieutenant Colonel Smith became the VSCC in the north

and Lieutenant Colonel Buzzard became the commander of TF Panther, previously designated (and some would say it remained designated) SOTF-North.[347]

But there was also a down side. There were two previously identified incidents, Staff Sergeant Bales and Major Gant. Both incidents were major deviations from the VSO/ALP - SOF/CF split team integration concepts that included vetting, roles, structures, mentorship, and accountability. Had those guidelines been followed, the leadership may have been more aware and sensitive to some of the indicators.[348]

The Complementary Nature of those Initiatives

The growth of the forces, and in particular SOF due to an increase in the SOF mission demanded an in-country one-star commander for the CFSOCC-A. The continued growth as well as diversity of SOF missions across Afghanistan (DA, VSO/ALP and FID, and the international SOF partnering with special police units such as the Provincial Response Companies) demanded the two-star position. Not only did it provide one in-country SOF voice to the ISAF/USFOR-A commander, it synchronized SOF operations, represented SOF to the two-star division level headquarters at the regional commands, and it managed limited SOF and supporting resources.

The continued growth as well as diversity of SOF missions across Afghanistan (DA, VSO/ALP and FID, and the international SOF partnering with special police units such as the Provincial Response Companies) demanded the two-star position.

Although the course seemed already set for VSO/ALP under the CFSOCC-A, the two-star provided added emphasis on support at the various levels and agencies for the program. According to Lieutenant Colonel Mann the two-star was able to better represent the program within the ministries, the U.S. Country Team, and ISAF.

Failures

There were a number of failures. Some of those were discussed as part of the above successes. Those include: the Gant and Bales incidents, the (in)ability of USAID/OTI to provide first-hand oversight on their projects at the village level, "losing our way" on VSO/ALP to ALP/vso and on the difference in approaches that ODAs took to executing security responsibilities, some

of them being heavy-handed DA. However, overall the programs themselves were listed as successes. Not so for the failures listed below. They deserve monographs in-and-of themselves and won't be belabored, but they are major contributors to U.S. failure in Afghanistan.

A Failure of National Policy

- Diverting America's attention and resources to Iraq in 2003.
- Announcing our troop drawdown immediately following the announcement of the surge.
- Rapidity of the troop drawdown as well as the final troop count.[349]

The point is that countering insurgencies requires time; time is not measured in days, months or even years. Time to counter insurgencies is measured in generations. This is a clash of cultures: America's culture of quick fixes versus the generational demands of changing attitudes and other societal cultures. Developing legitimacy is not a short term project.

The Inability to Deal with Narcotics and Corruption

Although there were periods of decline, poppy production generally increased from 2002 to a record high in 2017 with Afghanistan "producing 90 percent of the world's illicit opium." Additionally, opium poppy is Afghanistan's largest cash crop.[350] This is the elephant in the room.

Sadly, this monograph does not offer a solution, but expects that if the issues with poppy cultivation and opium production are not solved, corruption will never be resolved and government legitimacy will never be established.

Implications

VSO/ALP and the evolution of SOF C2 have implications across the DOTMLPF spectrum.[351] The following focuses on doctrine, training, and education.

VSO was a "way" to track and build legitimacy. Doctrine speaks to legitimacy as an "end" and the population as a "means" but it doesn't offer a "way" or how. Most doctrine aficionados would argue that the "how" is situation dependent and does not belong in a doctrinal publication. Generally, the authors would agree; however, current doctrinal publications provide vignettes as examples—and VSO is a good example of how to operationally tie strategic ends with tactical means.[352] At a minimum VSO/ALP should

be mentioned in the next versions of Joint Publications 3-24 and 3-05 as an example of how to address legitimacy.

This has training and education implications as well. Although the nucleus for the VSO/ALP mission was SF, and UW and FID techniques have been lauded as major contributors to success, the integration of the various disciplines under the ODA (and later the MSOT and SEALs), such as CA, MISO, and others, to pursue "stability" is new, and needs to be addressed in training and education. A good start were the training centers with mock Afghan villages and academic week run by Lieutenant Colonel Scott Mann—both received high marks from interviewees. The SOJTF-B train-up as the next SOJTF to deploy was also a good initiative in preparing the in-coming staff to assume SOJTF-A responsibilities.

Teaching VSO/ALP and the evolution of SOF C2 in the professional military education institutions as a case study in innovation to generally meet the demands of future irregular conflicts provides a different perspective on linking strategic ends to tactical means. It is a good lesson in bringing together different disciplines and expertise, whether that be intra service, joint, interagency, or coalition.

The SOJTF is discussed in the last two versions of Joint Publication 3-05, with the most recent version providing the right touch of structure, authorities, and flexibility. Conventional force appreciation for its functionality/ability to overcome issues from Iraq is near unanimous, in particular its ability to balance and coordinate CT/COIN operations. It has also been recognized internally for its ability to efficiently manage resources across the in-country SOF community making resources available that might otherwise have been held in reserve. The issue now becomes one of resourcing and training.

Both of these areas (VSO/ALP and SOF C2) have implications for future operations. The SOJTF has already been implemented in Iraq and is part of doctrine. While VSO/ALP is not doctrinal it provides lessons that, in a general sense transcend geographical areas as demonstrating one "way" of addressing legitimacy, arguably the most important challenge in COIN.

Acronyms

ACC	Afghan Conservation Corps
AFPAK	Afghanistan-Pakistan
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ANASF	Afghan National Army Special Forces
ANSF	Afghan National Security Force
AO	area of operations
AOB	advanced operations base
BPC	building partner capacity
BSO	battle space owner
C2	command and control
CA	civil affairs
CAT	civil affairs team
CAFGU	Citizen Armed Force Geographical Unit
CDI	community defense initiative
CERP	Commander's Emergency Relief Program
CF	conventional forces
CFSOCC-A	Combined Forces Special Operations Component Command–Afghanistan
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CIDG	Civilian Irregular Defense Group
CJSOAC-A	Combined Joint Special Operations Air Component–Afghanistan
CJSOTF-A	Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–Afghanistan

CMOC	civil-military operations center
CNA	Center for Naval Analyses
COG	center of gravity
COIN	counterinsurgency
COM	chief of mission
CSOTF	Combined Special Operations Task Force
CST	cultural support team
DA TF	direct action task force
DAT	District Augmentation Team
DCOP	District Chief of Police
DHS	Department of Homeland Security
DOS	Department of State
DOTMLPF	doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy
DSS	Department of Strategic Studies
DSP	District Stability Platforms
EOD	explosive ordnance disposal
F3EAD	find, fix, finish, exploit, analyze, and disseminate
FID	foreign internal defense
FULLCOM	full command
GIRoA	Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan
HQN	Haqqani Network
IDA	Institute for Defense Analyses
IDLG	Independent Directorate of Local Governance
IED	improvised explosive device

IJC	ISAF Joint Command
ISAF	International Security Assistance Force
JAWD	Joint Advanced Warfighting Division
JCOA	Joint Center for Operational Analysis
JSOU	Joint Special Operations University
JTAC	Joint Terminal Attack Controller
JMRC	Joint Multinational Readiness Center
MARSOC	Marine Special Operations Command
LOO	line of operations
LDI	Local Defense Initiative
MISO	military information support operations
MOE	Ministry of Education
MOI	Ministry of Interior
MSOT	Marine Special Operations Team
MWD	military working dog
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NSOCC-A	NATO Special Operations Component Command-Afghanistan
ODA	Operational Detachment Alpha
OPCON	operational control
OSD	Office of the Secretary of Defense
OTI	Office of Transition Initiatives
P4M	Poppy for Medicine
PAT	Provincial Augmentation Team
PI	Philippine

PIR	Parachute Infantry Regiment
PRT	provincial reconstruction team
RC	Regional Command
RIP	relief in place
ROE	rules of engagement
SEALs	Sea, Air and Land Forces
SF	special forces
SFG	special forces group
SFODA	Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha
SIPR	Secret Internet Protocol Router
SITREP	situation report
SOCEUR	Special Operations Command Europe
SOF	Special Operations Forces
SOJTF	special operations joint task force
SOJTF-A	Special Operations Joint Task Force–Afghanistan
TACON	tactical control
TF	task force
TMT	tactical MISO team
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development
USASOC	United States Army Special Operations Command
USCENTCOM	United States Central Command
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
USF	University of South Florida
USFOR-A	United States Forces–Afghanistan

USMC	United States Marine Corps
UW	unconventional warfare
USSOCOM	United States Special Operations Command
VSCC	Village Stability Coordination Center
VSNCC	Village Stability National Coordination Center
VSO	Village Stability Operations
VSP	Village Stability Platform
VTC	video teleconference

Endnotes

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4. Others have been more cynical and described it as, "shoot, ready, aim."
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17. Lack of legitimacy will continue to plague Iraq until it is fixed.
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19. Actually, doctrine responded rather quickly with the SOJTF introduced in the 2011 version of *Special Operations*, Joint Publication 3-05
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43. White House, "Remarks," 3.
44. White House Fact Sheet: "The Way Forward," 1 December 2009, www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/way-forward-afghanistan; "ISAF Key Facts and Figures," *NATO*, 15 November 2010, https://www.nato.int/isaf/placemats_archive/2010-11-15-ISAF-Placemat.pdf.
45. Stanley McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment," Headquarters International Security Assistance Force, Kabul, Afghanistan, 30 August 2009, 2-1, http://media.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/politics/documents/Assessment_Redacted_092109.pdf?hpid=topnews. The above quote cites the second fundamental element. The first fundamental element for improvement is to change "the ISAF operational culture to focus on protecting the Afghan people." This is addressed in the chapter on VSO/ALP.
46. McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment," 1-1.
47. McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment," 1-3.
48. McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment," 1-1, 1-2. Lack of confidence in the central government was not boosted by the reports of widespread fraud during Afghanistan's 2009 presidential elections. www.theguardian.com/world/2009/sep/18/afghanistan-election-fraud-evidence, on 11 March 2015.
49. U.S. Department of Defense, "Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan, in accordance with section 1230 of the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2008 (Public Law 110-181), as amended and United States Plan for Sustaining the Afghan National Security Force, in accordance with section 1231 of the NDAA for FY 2008 (Public Law 110-181) (Washington, D.C.:, April 2010) 13. These reports, published every 180 days, will hereafter be known as DOD Report to Congress, date of publication, page number(s), https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/Report_Final_SecDef_04_26_10.pdf. Also see Olson interview, 29 May 2018.
50. Donald Bolduc, *Village Stability Operations and Afghan Local Police: Bottom-up Counterinsurgency*, Headquarters, Combined Joint Special Operations Task

Force-Afghanistan, Bagram Airbase, Afghanistan, 1 April 2011 on file with the author.

51. Sean Naylor, "Another Headquarters for Afghanistan," *Military Times* (January 2009), http://army.ca/forums/index.php?PHPSESSID=bua31bbcqt6tbhsnbl33do7kt5&action=printpage;topic=83643.0.
52. According to Admiral Olson, they had tried to establish an in-country CFSOCC in Iraq for OIF. Despite sending a general officer to Iraq with the intent of establishing that position, he was diverted in-country to a Multi-National Security and Transition Command–Iraq (MNSTC-I) slot for training. It seemed that the in-country leadership did not want to have to deal with a SF flag officer, they were satisfied with a Colonel. Admiral Eric Olson interview by William Knarr, Tampa, 29 May 2018.
53. Lieutenant Colonel Chris Hensley, U.S., retired, interview by William Knarr and Mark Nutsch, 7 March 2017.
54. William Knarr, *Al Sahawa—The Awakening, Volume 2: Al Anbar Province, Final Report*, IDA Paper P-5100 (Alexandria, VA: Institute for Defense Analyses, 2015) 4-5, 5-11, 6-16.
55. Major General Ed Reeder, U.S., retired, interview with Dr. William Knarr, at Joint Special Operations University, 28 March 2018.
56. Michael Krivdo, "Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–Afghanistan: CJSOTF-A 2002-2014," *Veritas, Journal of Army Special Operations History*, V12/N2, 66.
57. Brian Petit, email exchange with Dr. William Knarr, 21 Oct 2018.
58. See Madden, "The Evolution." Major General Reeder also credited Lieutenant Colonel Carlos Perez as being one of the architects of the VSO/ALP program.
59. Afghanistan Geography, World Atlas, accessed 9 September 2018, https://www.worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/asia/afghanistan/afland.htm.
60. Lutz Rzehak, "Doing Pashto," *Afghanistan Analysts Network*, 2012, http://www.afghanistan-analysts.org/wp-content/uploads/downloads/2012/10/20110321LR-Pashtunwali-FINAL.pdf.
61. Countries and their Cultures, "Pashtun," accessed 27 June 2018, http://www.everyculture.com/wc/Afghanistan-to-Bosnia-Herzegovina/Pashtun.html. Some contend there is a big difference between the terms Jirga and shura. As an example, Major Jim Gant and William McAllister, in "Tribal Engagement: The Jirga and the Shura," *Small Wars Journal*, say that there is a big difference. "The Jirga is an assembly of village elders and reflects the rituals of the Pashtun traditional assembly in which village and valley notables gather to discuss and resolve disputes and make collective decisions about important social issues … this a tribal mechanism." Whereas, "Shura is an Arabic word for "consultation" or "council." The word itself can describe an assembly, an organized body of participants, an administrative body or council, or may describe a decision-making process." However, USSOCOM's *Donovan Review*, "Village Stability Operations 101,"

January 2012, page 22 says, "Although Jirga is historically a Pashtun-centric term, Jirga and shura are used interchangeably throughout rural Afghanistan today." It is interesting that the publication capitalizes Jirga but not shura.

62. McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment," 2-6.
63. Meredith L. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan* (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2007), 92.
64. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 93.
65. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 93.
66. Amin Saikal, *Modern Afghanistan: A History of Struggle and Survival* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co LtD, 2012), 108.
67. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 94-95.
68. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 99-100.
69. Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 9-11
70. "Afghanistan: Reconciliation and Reintegration in Loya Paktia | Heinrich Böll Foundation," Heinrich Böll Foundation, accessed 20 November 2018, https://www.boell.de/en/navigation/asia-reconciliation-and-reintegration-in-loya-paktia-10925.html. The region known as Loya Paktia consists of Paktia, Paktika, and Khost. It is also known for its strong tribal affiliations and is still governed by traditional law known as Pashtunwali and in many areas employs arbakai for community policing.
71. Seth G. Jones and Arturo Munoz, "Afghanistan's Local War: Building Local Defense Forces," *RAND Corporation*, 2010, 34.
72. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 100.
73. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 101.
74. Thomas Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 216.
75. "Timeline: The History of Afghanistan," CNN, 24 September 2001, http://edition.cnn.com/2001/WORLD/asiapcf/central/09/24/ret.afghan.timeline/.
76. "The Soviet Invasion of Afghanistan and the U.S. Response, 1978-1980," U.S. Department of State: Office of the Historian, https://history.state.gov/milestones/1977-1980/soviet-invasion-afghanistan.
77. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 114.
78. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 113.
79. Major Shahid Afsar, Major Chris Samples, and Major Thomas Wood, "The Taliban: An Organizational Analysis," *Military Review*, May-June 2008, 58-72.
80. Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, 245.
81. Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, 248.
82. Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, 247.
83. Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, 248

84. Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, 250.
85. Barfield, *Afghanistan: A Cultural and Political History*, 252.
86. Afsar, Samples, Wood, "The Taliban," 60.
87. Afsar, Samples, Wood, "The Taliban," 60.
88. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 122.
89. Stanley McChrystal, *My Share of the Task: A Memoir* (New York: Penguin Books, 2013), 297; Runion, The History of Afghanistan, 123.
90. Osama bin-Laden, "Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places," 1996, www.actmemphis.org/usama-bin-laden-1996-declaration-of-war-against-the-americans.pdf, and "Osama bin-Laden's 1998 Fatwa," 1998, https://www.911memorial.org/sites/default/files/Osama%20bin%20Laden's%201998%20Fatwa%20declaring%20warpercent20against%20the%20West%20and%20Israel.pdf.
91. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 123.
92. Commander Haji Mohammad Mohaqiq interview with Dr. William Knarr on 13 December 2002 at his office in Mazar-e Sharif. See William Knarr, *Mazar-e Sharif Battle Site Survey Support Documents* (Revised), IDA Document D-4350, June 2011. Also in William Knarr, *Operation Enduring Freedom Battle Reconstruction: Battle Site Survey and Ground Force Data Reconciliation (Revised)*, IDA Document D-4223, December 2010, IV-6.
93. Runion, *The History of Afghanistan*, 123.
94. Al Jazeera, "Timeline Taliban in Afghanistan: Key Events and Developments Related to the Taliban," 4 July 2009, https://www.aljazeera.com/news/asia/2009/03/2009389217640837.html.
95. The 9/11 Commission Report: Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, Executive Summary, 2004, https://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report_Exec.pdf, 1.
96. Tompkins, *Insurgencies*, 16.
97. McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment", 2-9.
98. Seth G. Jones, *In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan* (New York, NY: Norton, 2010), 29.
99. Jones, *Graveyard of Empires*, 59.
100. McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment, 2-7.
101. In some ways the villagers were more receptive to a system that was just, albeit harsh, as better than no system at all.
102. "Afghanistan: Reconciliation and Reintegration."
103. Mohammed Osman Tariq, "Tribal Security System (*Arbakai*) in Southeast Afghanistan, *Crisis States Research Centre*, Occasional Paper No. 7, December 2008.

104. Seth G. Jones and Arturo Munoz, "Afghanistan's Local War: Building Local Defense Forces," *RAND Corporation*, 2010, 28.
105. Jones and Munoz, "Afghanistan," 28, 29, 30.
106. Jones and Munoz, "Afghanistan," 30, 31, 43.
107. Jones and Munoz, "Afghanistan," x, 9.
108. Seth G. Jones, "Going Local: The Key to Afghanistan," *Rand Corporation*, 8 August 2009, https://www.rand.org/blog/2009/08/going-local-the-key-to-afghanistan.html.
109. Jones, "Going Local," 2009.
110. Tariq, "Tribal Security System (*Arbakai*) in Southeast Afghanistan."
111. It is also important to note the percentage of Afghans that reside in the rural versus urban areas. According to the Central Intelligence Agency World Fact Book, accessed 11 February 2019, https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/af.html, 25.5percent of the population live in the cities with, generally, the rest in rural areas. That figure has been growing by about 3.37 percent per year.
112. Reeder interview, 28 March 2018.
113. Mark Moyar, *Village Stability Operations and Afghan Local Police* (Tampa, FL: JSOU Press, 2014). Also Ronald E. Neumann, *The Other War: Winning and Losing in Afghanistan* (Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2009) 124; also, Ambassador Neumann interview at his office in Washington, D.C. with Dr. William Knarr, IDA on 21 March 2017.
114. Donna Miles, "McKiernan views incoming troops as opportunity in Afghanistan," *American Forces Press Service*, 7 May 2009. Major General Reeder credits General McKiernan's Afghan Public Protection Program–AP3, as being the genesis of the ALP. He further stated that "people ought to give credit to General McKiernan for having that defense initiative." Reeder interview, 23 March 2018.
115. Moyar, "Village Stability," 9.
116. Bolduc, *Village Stability Operations*, 3.
117. Stanley McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment," Headquarters International Security Assistance Force, Kabul, Afghanistan, 30 August 2009, 2-1. The second fundamental element is used as the lead in quote for chapter 7 and addresses unity of command and unity of effort.
118. Krivdo, "Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–Afghanistan," 20.
119. For a comprehensive look at the ALP see, Linda Robinson, *One Hundred Victories: Special Ops and the Future of American Warfare* (New York: NY: Public Affairs, 2013). For a comprehensive look at VSO, see Lieutenant Colonel Scott Mann, U.S. Army, (Ret.), *Game Changers: Going Local to Defeat Violent Extremists* (Leesburg, VA: Tribal Analysis Center, 2015).

120. United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan, 10 August 2009, Executive Summary, https://www.politico.com/pdf/PPM130_civ-mil_plan_afghanistan_090907.pdf.
121. Brigadier General Don Bolduc telephone interview with Dr. William Knarr, IDA, on 4 April 2017.
122. U.S. Constitution, Amendment 2, https://usconstitution.net/xconst_Am2.html.
123. Minister of Interior Affairs, *Afghan National Police Strategy*, accessed 30 June 2018, http://moi.gov.af/en/page/5076.
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125. Quoted from Colonel Donald Bolduc, *Village Stability Operations*, 11. Copy on file with author.
126. Austin Long, Todd C. Helmus. Rebecca Zimmerman, *Building Special Operations Partnerships in Afghanistan and Beyond*, RAND 2015, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR700/RR713/RAND_RR713.pdf, 31, 32. Also Reeder interview, 23 March 2018.
127. Bolduc, *Village Stability Operations*, 14-15.
128. Moyar, *VSO/ALP*; Brian Petit, "The Fight for the Village," *Military Review*, May-June 2011, 25.
129. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Counternarcotics," 1.
130. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Counternarcotics," 37.
131. Steve Coll, *Directorate S: The C.I.A. And America's Secret Wars in Afghanistan and Pakistan* (New York, NY: Penguin Press, 2018).
132. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Counternarcotics," 17.
133. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Counternarcotics," 7.
134. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Counternarcotics," 145.
135. Coll, *Directorate S*.
136. "U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide," U.S. Department of State, 2009, Home Page, accessed 22 November 2018, https://www.state.gov/documents/organization/119629.pdf, 15.
137. Dr. David Ellis, JSOU, review notes to Dr. William Knarr on 23 October 2018 and 15 January 2019, posted almost verbatim.
138. Ellis review notes, 23 October 2018 and 15 January 2019.
139. Krivdo, "Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–Afghanistan," 65.
140. Major Neiman Young, U.S. Army, (Ret.), telephone interview with Dr. William Knarr on 10 August 2018.

141. Caroline A. Hartzell, "Missed Opportunities: The Impact of DDR on SSR in Afghanistan," United States Institute of Peace Special Report 270, April 2011, https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/SR270-Missed_Opportunities.pdf. DDR in Afghanistan was an element of Afghanistan's New Beginnings Program. The objective was to "enable the Afghan government to establish a monopoly on the use of force by helping break the linkages between former Afghan Military Forces (AMF) commanders and their troops, helping former combatants make the transition from military to civilian life, and collecting weapons in the possession of the AMF."
142. Major Michael Penn, telephone interview with Dr. William Knarr on 24 August 2018.
143. Penn interview, 24 August 2018.
144. Petit, "The Fight for the Village," 30.
145. Young interview, 10 August 2018.
146. Young interview, 10 August 2018
147. Penn interview, 24 August 2018.
148. Penn interview, 24 August 2018.
149. Penn interview, 24 August 2018.
150. Master Sergeant Carlos Sanchez, former assistant team chief for TMT 6C26, telephone discussion with Dr. William Knarr on 15 October 2018.
151. Penn interview, 24 August 2018
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154. DOD report to Congress, October 2012.
155. Lieutenant Colonel Basil Catanzaro and Major Kirk Windmueller, "Taking a Stand: Village Stability Operations and the Afghan Local Police," *Special Warfare*, July–September 2011, 32-35.
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158. Major Derek Gedmintas telephone interview with Dr. William Knarr on 21 August 2018.
159. Gedmintas interview, 21 August 2018.
160. Gedmintas interview, 21 August 2018.
161. Major Bradley participated in Operation Medussa with the Canadians. Based on his experiences, he authored: Rusty Bradley and Kevin Maurer, *Lions of Kandahar: The Story of a Fight Against All Odds* (New York: Bantam, 2011).

162. Captain Jesse Erickson interview with Dr. William Knarr on 12 June 2018 at 97th Civil Affairs Battalion, Fort Bragg, NC.
163. Erickson interview, 12 June 2018.
164. Erickson interview, 12 June 2018.
165. Erickson interview, 12 June 2018.
166. The Christian Science Monitor, "Why Some Afghanistan Opium Farmers Turn from Poppies to Saffron," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 10 June 2010, https://www.csmonitor.com/World/Asia-South-Central/2010/0610/Why-some-Afghanistan-opium-farmers-turn-from-poppies-to-saffron.
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168. Erickson interview, 12 June 2018.
169. Jack Healy, "Soldier Sentenced to Life Without Parole for Killing 16 Afghans," *New York Times*, 23 August 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/08/24/us/soldier-gets-life-without-parole-in-deaths-of-afghan-civilians.html.
170. In fairness, this was not the only incident, but it seemed to be the final straw. By Rod Nordland, Elisabeth Bumiller, and Matthew Rosenberg, "Karzai Calls on U.S. to Pull Back as Taliban Cancel Talks," *New York Times*, 15 March 2012, https://www.nytimes.com/2012/03/16/world/asia/taliban-call-off-talks-as-karzai-urges-faster-us-transition.html?ref=asia.
171. Masoud Popalzai and Nick Paton Walsh, "Obama Apologizes to Afghanistan for Quran Burning," *CNN*, 23 February 2012, https://www.cnn.com/2012/02/23/world/asia/afghanistan-burned-qurans/index.html. Afghans were enraged and protested over the burning of Qurans by NATO troops in February 2012. President Barack Obama apologized.
172. Colonel Justin Sapp former VSCC director and AFPAK Hands trained, telephone interview with Dr. William Knarr on 29 July 2018.
173. Gedmintas interview, 21 August 2018
174. Carlotta Gall, "Afghan Villagers Take on Taliban in Their Heartland," *New York Times*, 20 March 2013, https://www.nytimes.com/2013/03/21/world/asia/afghan-villages-rise-up-against-taliban.html.
175. Report to Congress, December 2012, 81 [Figure 13, ALP Disposition map dated 26 September 2012];
176. Report to Congress, July 2013, 25.
177. 5th Detachment out of A Company, 1st Battalion, 1st SFG out of Okinawa.
178. AOB 3110 means the 3rd SFG, 1st Battalion, A Company Headquarters team, of the 1st Special Forces Command from Fort Bragg, NC.
179. Major Chris Bolz interview with Mr. Mark Nutsch, Institute for Defense Analyses, at Fort Leavenworth, KS, 15 March 2017.
180. Bolz interview, 15 March 2017.

181. Bolz interview, 15 March 2017.
182. Bolz interview, 15 March 2017.
183. Bolz interview, 15 March 2017.
184. CAT 624 is part of the 96th CA BN (A), Bravo Company, 4th Team. It is part of the 95th Civil Affairs Brigade, 1st Special Forces Command from Fort Bragg, NC.
185. Major Roland Griffith interview with Mr. Mark Nutsch, Institute for Defense Analyses, at Fort Leavenworth, KS, 12 April 2017.
186. Griffith interview, 12 April 2017.
187. Griffith interview, 12 April 2017.
188. Griffith interview, 12 April 2017.
189. Griffith interview, 12 April 2017.
190. Alex Deep, "Village Stability Operations and the Application of Special Warfare Across the Contemporary Global Operating Environment," *Small Wars Journal*, 7 April 2014.
191. Lieutenant Colonel Timothy Scott was interviewed by telephone on 9 July 2018 by Dr. William Knarr, JSOU.
192. Lieutenant Colonel Scott email exchange with Dr. William Knarr, 22 October 2018. From May to July his MSOT was in Qala-I-Naw at the Spanish Provincial Support Base prior to moving into the Dar-I-Bum area.
193. CST: However, due to the combat exclusion rule she was not attached but in direct support from the SOTF. Interpreters: there are three categories of contract linguists, CAT (Category) 1, 2 and 3. CAT 1 is a local hire that has undergone security screening but does not have a clearance. CAT 2 and 3 are U.S. citizens; the CAT 2 has a secret security clearance and the CAT 3 has a TS/SCI clearance. Defense Industry Daily, "Lend Me Your Ears: U.S. Military Turns to Contractor Linguists," accessed 14 July 2019 at https://www.defenseindustrydaily.com/lend-me-your-ears-us-military-turns-to-contractor-linguists-05934/.
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195. Scott email, 22 October 2018.
196. Major General Paul Lefebvre, USMC, (Ret.), former Commanding General of the Marine Corps Force Special Operations Command (MARSOC) discussion with the author on 7 August 2018 at JSOU.
197. Email from Lieutenant Colonel Scott, 22 October 2018. From May to July the MSOT was in Qala-I-Naw at the Spanish Provincial Support Base.

198. Scott interview, 9 July 2018; Scott email exchange with Dr. William Knarr, 22 October 2018.
199. Scott interview, 9 July 2018.
200. DOD report, October 2011, 65; DOD report, December 2012, 81.
201. Colonel Larry Huggins was interviewed by Dr. William Knarr at IDA on 13 March 2015 at the Institute for Defense Analyses, Virginia.
202. Huggins interview, 13 March 2015.
203. Sergeant Major Rod telephone discussions with Dr. William Knarr on 27 July 2018. Note: There are differing dates as to when Bismillah Khan Mohammadi was the Minister of the Interior, but the prevalent dates are indicated in *Afghan Biographies*, "Mohammadi, Bismillah Khan Muhammadi Besmellah Gen." accessed 20 October 2018 at http://www.afghan-bios.info/index.php?option=com_afghanbios&id=1068&task=view lists dates as: Chief of Staff in the Ministry of Defense from 2002 to 28 June 2010, Minister of Interior from 28 June 2010 to 4 August 2012 and Minister of Defense from 15 September 2012 to 30 December 2014.
204. Robinson, *One Hundred Victories*, 135.
205. DOD report to Congress, December 2012.
206. Lieutenant Colonel Scott Mann, U.S. Army, (Ret.), interview with Dr. William Knarr and Mr. Mark Nutsch on 8 March 2017 at Mann's home.
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209. Lieutenant General John F. Mulholland, Memorandum for Major James K. Gant, Headquarters and Headquarters Command, U.S. Special Operations Command, Fort Bragg, NC, 23 July 2012, https://abcnews.go.com/images/Blotter/reprimand_redac.pdf.
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212. Frances Z. Brown, *Special Report: The Surge and Afghan Local Governance*, United States Institute of Peace, 3.

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214. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Audit 11-2, Strategy and Oversight/Civilian Uplift, 4; The COM "has full responsibility for the direction, coordination, and supervision of all U.S. government executive branch employees in that country." Exceptions include "Voice of America correspondents on official assignment and employees under the command of a U.S. area military commander."
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222. Ambassador Ronald Neumann interview at his office in Washington, D.C., with Dr. William Knarr, IDA, on 21 March 2017.
223. "Experts," Ambassador Ryan Crocker, Wilson Center, accessed 30 September 2018, https://www.wilsoncenter.org/person/ambassador-ryan-crocker.
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238. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Foreign Agricultural Service, "USDA at Work for Agriculture in Afghanistan," October 2009, accessed 30 September 2018 , https://www.globalsecurity.org/military/library/report/call/call_10-34-ch9.htm.
239. Joint Center for Operational Analysis, "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan–An Interagency Assessment," 5 April 2006.
240. Carter Malkasian and Gerald Meyerle, *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: How Do We Know They Work?* (Carlisle, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, March 2009).
241. Malkasian interview.
242. Commander David Adams telephone interview with Dr, William Knarr, IDA, on 31 March 2017.
243. Adams interview, 2017.
244. International Security Assistance Force Placement, 2 January 2007, accessed 30 September 2018, https://www.nato.int/isaf/placemats_archive/2007-01-29-ISAF-Placemat.pdf.
245. DOD's 1230 report to Congress, April 2012.
246. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction Audit-11-2, Strategy and Oversight/Civilian Uplift, 26 October 2010, 5.
247. Major General Michael Bills telephone interview with Dr. William Knarr, 5 April 2017.
248. Bolduc, *Village Stability Operations*, April 2011.

249. Per DOD 1230-1 report dated April 2010, 34. "To prioritize efforts, 80 Key Terrain districts and 41 Areas of Interest have been selected with Afghan Government agreement. Key Terrain is defined as areas *the control of (and support from) which provides a marked advantage to either the Government of Afghanistan or the insurgents*; examples include population centers. Areas of Interest are defined similarly, but are of secondary importance to Key Terrain. To optimize use of resources, ISAF selected 45 Key Terrain districts and three Area of Interest districts as focus of effort in 2010 … These districts roughly follow the line of Highways 1, 4, and 7 through the most densely populated portions of the country."
250. DOD 1230 Report to Congress, December 2012, 80
251. "A government has legitimacy when it is perceived as having both the right to rule and the competency to fill expected functions of government." The most important factors affecting legitimacy include: security, justice, economic needs, and ideological [expectations]. Paul J. Tompkins, editor, *Assessing Revolutionary Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies*, 2nd ed., United States Army Special Operations Command and the Johns Hopkins University Applied Physics Laboratory, 2013, https://www.soc.mil/ARIS/ARIS.html.
252. It will continue to plague Iraq until it is fixed.
253. DOD 1230 Report to Congress, December 2012, 80.
254. Major Mark Lee, "The Afghanistan-Pakistan Hands Program," *U.S. Army*, 6 December 2018, https://www.army.mil/article/115523/The_Afghanistan_Pakistan_Hands_Program; Captain James Hamblet, U.S. Navy, Joint Staff Pakistan Afghanistan Coordination Cell (PACC), "AFPAK Hands (APH) Program" (PowerPoint briefing, undated), accessed 6 December 2018, http://pksoi.armywarcollege.edu/default/assets/File/ISAF-DOCS_AFPAK_Hands_Program.pdf; Michael Pirolo, J59-L, USSOCOM, manuscript reviewer wrote on 1 February 2019: "The recruits for AFPAK Hands program were mainly (not all) financial managers from the Army, Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps specifically selected and trained as experts in the Afghan and Pakistani cultures and their financial management processes and systems."
255. Sapp interview, 29 July 2018.
256. Lieutenant Commander Ty Bathurst interview with Dr. William Knarr, 20 July 2018 and Sapp interview, 29 July 2018. Colonel Sapp indicated that this changed over time. According to him the physical location of the DATs and PATs varied. For example the PAT in Uruzgan Province was co-located with the SOTF-SE at Camp Ripley in Tarin Khot. As a result, the PAT participated in the daily update briefs at SOTF-SE. However, the PAT in Kandahar was located downtown Kandahar with State and USAID. The DATs were always located with either an ODA, AOB, or at a U.S. FOB/coalition location.
257. Bathurst interview, 20 July 2018.
258. Bathurst interview, 20 July 2018.

259. Lieutenant Commander Ty Bathurst, email to Dr. William Knarr, 7 January 2018. Lieutenant Commander Bathurst provided assistance in writing this section.
260. Mann interview, 8 March 2017.
261. Sapp interview, 29 July 2018.
262. Sapp interview, 29 July 2018.
263. Colonel Justin Sapp, email to Dr. William Knarr, 4 January 2019.
264. Per the *DOD Dictionary*, civil military operations center is defined as: "An organization, normally comprised of CA, established to plan and facilitate coordination of activities of the Armed Forces of the United States within indigenous populations and institutions, the private sector, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations, multinational forces, and other governmental agencies in support of the commander. Also called CMOC. See also civil-military operations; operation," http://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/dictionary.pdf. According to Colonel Chris Pflanz, in a 9 January 2019 review of this manuscript, "CMOCs always existed and largely supported CA teams, SOF teams, and Command decision making at the SOTF level. Lots or parallel structures existed for varying reasons."
265. There are many configurations of the "levels of war/strategy" matrix. This was simply one way to provoke discussion/food for thought.
266. VSNCC mission per the Village Stability-National Coordination Center PowerPoint presentation, "AFG/VSO/Governance/Civil Affairs," November 2011, on file with the author.
267. Ministry of Rural Rehabilitation and Development, Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, accessed 7 December 2018, http://www.mrrd.gov.af/en/.
268. Afghanistan Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Livestock (MAIL) webpage, accessed 7 December 2018, http://mail.gov.af/en/page/103/14563.
269. Afghanistan Independent Directorate of Local Governance webpage, accessed 7 December 2018, https://idlg.gov.af/en/.
270. Afghanistan Minister of Education, webpage, accessed 7 December 2018, http://www.moe.gov.af/en/.
271. Colonel Chris Pflanz, (Ret.), discussion with Dr. William Knarr on 14 November 2018, and his presentation, "Village Stability Operations and Afghan Governance and Development," on file with the author.
272. Franklin Spinney, "Americans Have the Clock, but the Taliban Have the Time," *Counterpunch*, 9 August 2011, accessed 7 December 2018, https://www.counterpunch.org/2011/08/09/americans-have-the-clock-but-the-taliban-have-the-time/. This is one variation of an old saying.
273. McChrystal, "COMISAF's Initial Assessment," 30 August 2009, 2-1. The above quote cites the second fundamental element. The first fundamental element for improvement was to change "the ISAF operational culture to focus on protecting the Afghan people." This is addressed in the chapter on VSO/ALP.

274. U.S. Command relationships are categorized as COCOM, OPCON, TACON and support per *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Joint Publication 1, (Washington, D.C., March 2013 incorporating Change 1, 12 July 2017), V-1. What the U.S. calls Command relationships NATO also calls degrees of authority. They will be addressed later.
275. Krivdo, "Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force–Afghanistan," 19.
276. Peter Baker, "Biden No longer a Lone Voice on Afghanistan," *New York Times*, 13 October 2009, https://www.nytimes.com/2009/10/14/world/14biden.html.
277. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 175.
278. Berger interview, 30 March 2015.
279. Bolger interview, 20 August 2015.
280. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 343.
281. McChrystal, *My Share of the Task*, 343.
282. DOD Report to Congress, April 2010. 15.
283. Actually, doctrine responded rather quickly with the SOJTF introduced in the 2011 version of Joint Publication 3-05, *Special Operations*.
284. DOD Report to Congress, November 2010, 12.
285. Admiral Eric Olson interview by William Knarr, Tampa, 29 May 2018. Also, "SOF LEADER: A Salute to Special Operators, with Concern for Fraying of the Forces," *Shadow Spear Special Operations*, 18 May 2011, https://www.shadowspear.com/vb/threads/sof-leader-a-salute-to-special-operators-with-concern-for-fraying-of-the-forces.10180/.
286. *Special Operations*, Joint Publication 3-05, 18 April 2011, I-5.
287. General Raymond A. "Tony" Thomas "Key Leader Insights," interview with the Lessons Learned Section of the Operational and Strategic Studies Branch, USSOCOM, September 2013.
288. Thomas interview, September 2013.
289. Thomas interview, September 2013.
290. Austin Long et al., *Building Special Operations Partnerships in Afghanistan and Beyond: Challenges and Best Practices from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Colombia* (California: Rand Corporation, 2015), 7.
291. Colonel Donald Bolduc, "Forecasting the Future of Afghanistan," *Special Warfare Magazine* Volume 24, Issue 4 (October–December 2011): 22-28.
292. When asked about the importance of having a single SOF voice in-country and the stand-up of the SOJTF, General Petraeus indicated that he wasn't necessarily sold on the idea. This is discussed later in the chapter. General Petraeus telephone interview by William Knarr, 1 May 2017.
293. General Thomas interview, September 2013.
294. USSOCOM Study, SOJTF-Afghanistan: Codifying SOF and Conventional Force Integration, Draft, 2012-12-11; Robinson, *One Hundred Victories*, 247.

295. Mann interview, 8 March 2017.
296. *Special Operations*, Joint Publication 3-05, 16 July 2014, III-20.
297. "Sir Winston Churchill: A Biography," Churchill College, Cambridge, accessed 27 June 2018 at https://www.chu.cam.ac.uk/archives/collections/churchill-papers/churchill-biography/.
298. "NATO's Contribution to the Fight against Terrorism," NATO Fact Sheet, updated 19 October 2004, www.nato.int/terrorism/factsheet.htm.
299. United Nations Security Council Resolution 1386, 20 December 2001, http://unscr.com/files/2001/01386.pdf.
300. "ISAF's Mission in Afghanistan," NATO website, updated 13 January 2015, www.nato.int/cps/en/atohq/topics_69366.htm.
301. DOD Report to Congress, April 2010.
302. Brigadier Mark Smethurst, Australian Army, (Ret.), telephone interview with Dr. William Knarr, JSOU, 26 April 2018.
303. For additional information see chapter 2, "SOF Partnership in Afghanistan: The Ministry of Interior's National Mission Units" in Austin Long, Todd C. Helmus, S. Rebecca Zimmerman, Christopher M. Schnaubelt and Peter Chalk, *Building Special Operations Partnerships in Afghanistan and Beyond*, RAND report RR713, 2015, https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR713.html.
304. *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Joint Publication 1, (Washington, D.C., March 2013 incorporating Change 1, 12 July 2017), V-1.
305. NATO Standard, *Allied Joint Doctrine*, Allied Joint Publication (AJP)-01, Edition E, Version 1 (NATO Standardization Office, February 2017); NATO Standard, AJP-3(B) *Allied Joint Doctrine for the Conduct of Operations* (NATO Standardization Office, March 2011), 1-26.
306. Major General Michael Repass, U.S. Army, (Ret.), telephone interview with Dr. William Knarr, JSOU on 26 June 2018. He provided an electronic copy of his briefing: "Task Force 10: A Case Study in Building Relevant Partner Capacity." Master General Repass was the Deputy SOCEUR Commander from 2006 to 2008 and then the SOCEUR Commander from 2010 to 2012.
307. Repass interview, 2018.
308. Major Ty Flinton, U.S. Army, interview with Dr. William Knarr at IDA, 22 March 2017.
309. Flinton interview, 22 March 2017.
310. There were a number of articles published on CSOTF 10's work in Afghanistan. Most notably was the work of David Axe in "Can These Commandos Salvage the Afghan War?" *Wired Magazine*, Part I, 16 February 2012, https://www.wired.com/2012/02/special-forces-salvage/ and "U.S. Commandos in Afghanistan Face a New Battlefield: The Courtroom," *Wired Magazine*, Part II, February 2012, https://www.wired.com/2012/02/commando-courtroom/. Also see David Axe, "A Glimpse Inside Special Forces Training of Top Afghan Cops, Rule of Law Vs.

Corruption," *Breaking Defense*, 21 February 2012, http://breakingdefense.com/author/david-axe/page/2/.

311. Integration, in this context, is from *DOD Dictionary* "The arrangement of military forces and their actions to create a force that operates by engaging as a whole, (JP 1)."
312. DOD Report to Congress, April 2010. Also Admiral Eric Olson interview with Dr. William Knarr, Tampa, 29 May 2018.
313. Major General Michael Bills telephone interview with Dr. William Knarr, IDA, 5 April 2017.
314. Major General Larry Nicholson was interviewed at his office at Camp Pendleton, California 31 March 2015 by Dr. William Knarr and Major General Thomas Jones, USMC, (Ret.). Both were with IDA at the time.
315. Berger interview, 30 March 2015.
316. Berger interview, 30 March 2015.
317. Robinson, *One Hundred Victories*, 148-151.
318. Bolger, interview, 20 August 2015.
319. General Petraeus telephone interview with Dr. William Knarr on 1 May 2017. What he is referring to by "had I gone longer," is his nomination and subsequent reassignment as CIA director.
320. Sapp interview, 29 July 2018.
321. Colonel Brian Petit email exchange with Dr. William Knarr on 30 December 2018.
322. Per Brigadier General Bolduc, "Another one that supported me lock, stock, and barrel was [Lieutenant] General [Donald] Wurster, who at the time was the AFSOC commander. He visited me and asked, 'How can I help you?' That's what you need from force providers. They may not be able to help you in one way, but suggest another way that is very supportive."
323. Per *DOD Dictionary*, June 2019, "conventional forces — 1. Those forces capable of conducting operations using nonnuclear weapons. 2. Those forces other than designated special operations forces. Also called CF, (JP 3-05)," accessed 13 July 2019, https://www.jcs.mil/Portals/36/Documents/Doctrine/pubs/dictionary.pdf?ver=2019-06-26-100529-873, 52.
324. Bolduc telephone interview, 4 April 2017.
325. Colonel Donald Bolduc, "Forecasting the Future of Afghanistan," *Special Warfare Magazine*, October–December 2011.
326. Craig Whiteside, "Innovation in Integration: Task Force Iron Ranger and Village Stability Operations in Afghanistan 2010-2011" *Small Wars Journal*, 7 February 2013. Also Dr. Whiteside telephone discussion with the authors 2 April 2018.
327. Whiteside, "Innovation," 2 April 2018, 7. Dr. Whiteside's journal article does a great job in laying out the minuses and mostly pluses of the integration.

328. Petit, email 4 January 2018. Colonel Petit also commented on the standup of the VCSS. During this period, the VSCC was established to coordinate interagency and international efforts at the RC level. It was sometimes helpful and sometimes not, "in that having a 'separate' organization trying to maneuver VSO was at times helpful, and at times out of sync with the larger fight I was doing (massive Commando operations, TICs [troops in contact] around the clock)."
329. Colonel Buzzard in a telephone interview 2 May 2017 by Dr. William Knarr, IDA.
330. Colonel John Highfill was interviewed 26 April 2017 at Camp Atterbury, Indiana, by Mr. Mark Nutsch.
331. Highfill interview, 26 April 2017.
332. Highfill interview, 26 April 2017.
333. Colonel John Highfill email with attachment to Dr. William Knarr on 4 January 2018.
334. Bolduc interview, 4 April 2017.
335. Major Damon (Sam) Robins, "Special Operations Forces and Conventional Forces Integration: Lessons Learned in Village Stability Operations," 22 May 2012. Submitted to the Center for Army Lessons for publication.
336. CJSOTF commanders such as Colonels Benton, Kraft, Bolduc, and Schwartz, with CFSOCC-A commanders such as Brigadier Generals Reeder, Miller, and Bolduc, and ISAF/USFOR-A commanders such as Generals McChrystal, Petraeus, and Allen.
337. White House Fact Sheet, 1 December 2009.
338. Reeder interview, 23 March 2018.
339. Reeder interview, 23 March 2018
340. Tompkins, *Assessing Revolutionary Considerations of Undergrounds in Insurgencies.*
341. JCOA, "Provincial," 5 April 2006.
342. Hensley interview, 7 March 2017.
343. Thomas interview, September 2013.
344. Berger interview, 30 March 2015; Bolger interview, 20 August 2015. General Bolger described some of the issues in Iraq but had nothing but praise for the establishment of the SOJTF in Afghanistan in addressing those issues. General Bolger was the Commander of the NATO Training Mission/Combined Security Transition Command–Afghanistan from 5 November 2011 to 2 April 2013. Prior to that Lieutenant General Bolger served in Iraq as the Deputy Commander Multi-National Corps–Iraq from February 2005 to June 2005, and then as the Commander, Coalition Military Assistance Training Team, Multi-National Security Transition Command—Iraq from June 2005 to June 2006.
345. Flinton interview, 22 March 2017.
346. Buzzard interview, 2 May 2017

347. There is a reluctance to call it a SOTF so it was simply called a task force.
348. Colonel John Highfill email with attachment to Dr. William Knarr on 4 January 2018.
349. 10,000 troops to be withdrawn by the end of 2011 and an additional 23,000 withdrawn by the summer of 2012, all combat troops out by the end of 2014 and a final troop count of 5,500 in 2015.
350. Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Counternarcotics."
351. Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel and Facilities.
352. VSO/ALP is not mentioned in either 3-24 or 3-05, the joint publications on *Counterinsurgency* and *Special Operations* respectively.