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**COUNTER Improvised Explosive Device (C-IED) Operations as an Element of Counter Insurgency (COIN):**

**Balancing C-IED Efforts to Support Commander International Security Assistance Force (COMISAF)  
Operational Objectives.**

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**A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of  
the Department of Joint Military Operations.**

**The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval  
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**Signature: \_\_\_\_\_**

**27 October 2010**

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## **Abstract**

*COUNTER IED as an Element of COIN: Balancing C-IED Efforts to Support COMISAF Operational Objectives.*

The United States Department of Defense is rich in resources and ingenuity. Since 2001, U.S. and Coalition Forces have marshaled those assets to support military efforts in Afghanistan. As the Improvised Explosive Device (IED) is so central to the enemy's operational design, defense and industry efforts to counter the IED with technology have been aggressive. The US has spent billions of dollars to mitigate the effects of IEDs and defeat enemy actors who employ them. Counter IED efforts are often tactically successful, save lives and reduce enemy capability. Yet, at the operational and strategic level these efforts have had negligible and possibly detrimental effect. The U.S. must continue C-IED efforts to support combat operations. However, those efforts must be better balanced and integrated in support of Commander, International Security and Assistance Force (COMISAF) operational objectives. This paper examines current C-IED efforts in Afghanistan, their tactical focus on combat operations, and the requirement to better balance those efforts. It examines the potential for achieving that balance across six logical lines of operation (LLOs) to support COIN operations. It ends with recommendations on a way forward that incorporates that balance and integrates all aspects of C-IED into an operational design that supports COMISAF COIN objectives.

## INTRODUCTION

The war in Afghanistan has exacted a tragic human toll. Fighting since 2001 has claimed the lives of over 1,700 United States and Coalition Force (CF) service men and women; over six times that many have been wounded.<sup>1</sup> Additionally, since 2007, nearly 5,000 Afghans have been killed and thousands more wounded.<sup>2</sup> The majority of these casualties, over 50 per cent for CF and over 78 per cent for Afghans, are the result of improvised explosive device (IED) attacks.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, US spending on counter-IED (C-IED) efforts through 2010 has exceeded \$40 billion.<sup>4</sup> Despite all this expenditure, the enemy continues to employ IEDs successfully. The United Nations reports a 94 per cent increase in IED incidents in the first four months of 2010.<sup>5</sup> By August 2010, casualties had surpassed last year's totals. Efforts to counter the improvised explosive device are, in the end, failing. Academia, industry and many in defense continue to research, develop and, at significant cost, produce technological solutions to mitigate the effects of IEDs, identify and target individuals involved with the production, emplacement and employment of IEDs, and train and prepare US and CF for operations in an IED-rich environment. These efforts support establishing security – "ISAF's main role".<sup>6</sup> However, they address only one of Joint Publication 3-24's six logical lines of operations (LLO) across which

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<sup>1</sup> Susan G. Chesser, *Afghanistan casualties: military forces and civilians*. (Washington DC: Congressional Research Service, 2010), 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, 3.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

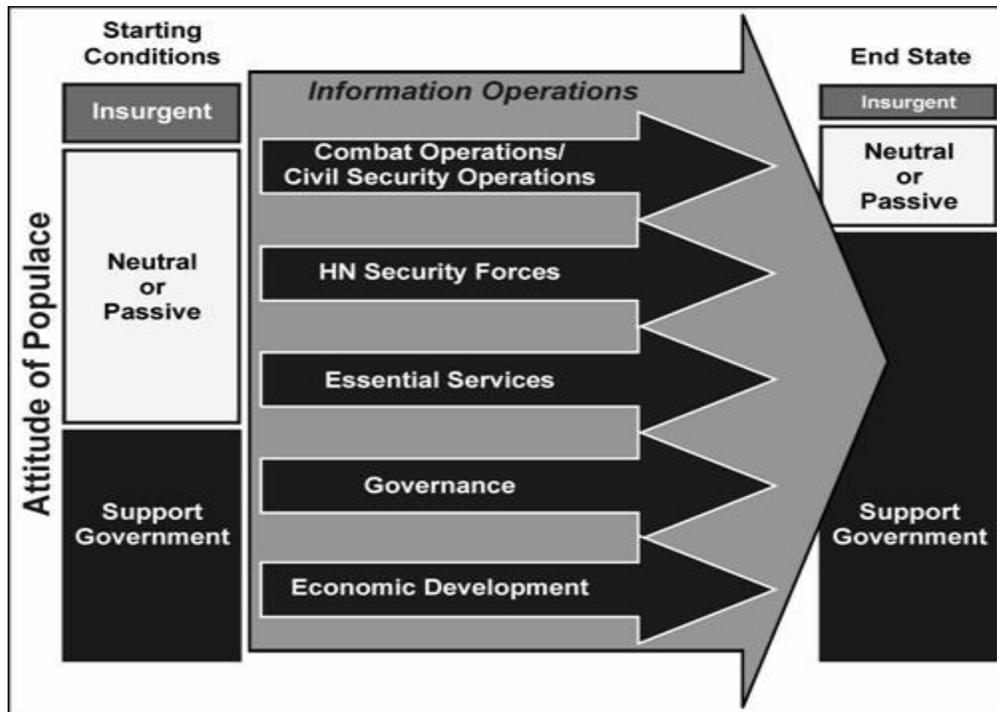
<sup>4</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office. *Warfighter Support: Actions Needed to Improve the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization's System of Internal Control*. Report to Congressional Committees. (Washington, DC: GAO July 2010), 1.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations. Security Council. "Report of the Secretary-General pursuant to paragraph 40 of resolution 1917 (2010)." S/2010/318. 2010.

[http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SG%20Reports/June182010\\_SG\\_Report.pdf](http://unama.unmissions.org/Portals/UNAMA/SG%20Reports/June182010_SG_Report.pdf). (accessed 12 September, 2010), 4.

<sup>6</sup> International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) Afghanistan. Official Website. "Mission." <http://www.isaf.nato.int/mission.html> (accessed 24 September, 2010).

COIN operations can be synchronized – i.e. the *Combat Operations* LLO<sup>7</sup> (see figure 1). The C-IED community must broaden its focus beyond the pursuit of technological and force-protective solutions. It must synchronize and integrate all aspects of C-IED into a balanced operational design and framework that supports accomplishment of COMISAF COIN objectives.



**Figure 1: Example Logical Lines of Operation for a counterinsurgency (FM 3-24)**

To support this argument, this paper reviews US strategic and operational objectives in Afghanistan. It examines the tactical, operational and strategic impact of enemy employment of IEDs. It also discusses the current C-IED fight in Afghanistan and how the US Department of Defense (DoD) supports those efforts. The paper explores the potential to synchronize C-IED efforts across six COIN LLOs, and it concludes with recommendations on a way forward.

<sup>7</sup> U.S. Army/U.S. Marine Corps, *Counterinsurgency Field Manual*, Field Manual (FM) 3-24/Marine Corps Warfighting Publication 3-33.5. Headquarters Department U.S.Army/Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps. University of Chicago Press edition. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2007. 5-7 through 5-18.

## STRATEGIC AND OPERATIONAL OBJECTIVES

Milan Vego states, “the elements of sound operational design include the desired strategic end state, ultimate and intermediate objectives, force requirements, and balancing operational factors against the objectives.”<sup>8</sup> In March, 2009 President Obama published the US objectives in Afghanistan to “disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and their safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Afghanistan.”<sup>9</sup> To achieve America’s desired end state, he articulated the strategic objectives provided in Appendix A. COMISAF 2010 COIN Guidance (Appendix B) and mission statement (Appendix C) support each of the President’s strategic objectives.

With the strategic and operational objectives articulated, leaders must “sequence and synchronize all available sources of military and non-military power” in order to accomplish them.<sup>10</sup> If they do not, the war degenerates into a “set of disconnected battles where relative attrition is the only measure of success or failure.”<sup>11</sup> In Afghanistan, the contributions of the C-IED community can often be described as just that – an unsynchronized “set of disconnected battles” or tactical actions not elemental to COMISAF’s operational design. For example, daily, route clearance patrols clear IEDs from sections of road, yet subsequently do not secure or continuously observe these sections. As CFs travel beyond and can no longer observe these sections of cleared roads, insurgents are free to return and re-emplace IEDs. In the end, the route

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<sup>8</sup> Milan Vego, *Joint Operational Warfare Theory and Practice* (Newport, RI: United States Naval War College, 2007), IX-83.

<sup>9</sup> U.S. President. *White Paper of the Interagency Policy Group’s Report on U.S. Policy toward Afghanistan and Pakistan*. (Washington, D.C. White House 27 March, 2009), 1.

<sup>10</sup> Vego, “Joint Operational Warfare,” I-II.

<sup>11</sup> U.S. Army, *Operations Field Manual*, Field Manual (FM) 3-0. Headquarters Department U.S. Army, (Washington, D.C., 2001,) 2-6.

clearance patrol has had no tangible, lasting effect on the relative safety of travel for CFs or Afghans.

## EFFECTS OF ENEMY IED ATTACKS – Tactical, Operational and Strategic

Insurgents use IEDs successfully to achieve tactical, operational and strategic effects. Tactically, they use IEDs to inflict personnel and materiel casualties and deny friendly force freedom of movement. Strategically, they employ IEDs and Information Warfare (IW) principles to attack the US and coalition center of gravity, our nations’ political will to sustain the COIN fight.<sup>12</sup> Author David Kilcullen describes the insurgent tactic of exhaustion employed to achieve strategic goals. The enemy:

“seeks to impose costs on the opponent government, overstress its support systems, tire its troops and impose costs in terms of lives, resources and political capital in order to convince that government that continuing the war is not worth the cost.”<sup>13</sup>

Operationally, the enemy employs IEDs to balance the factors of force, space and time in his favor. With respect to force and space, the enemy IED attack has caused CF ground movement to be conducted in heavily armored and specially designed Mine Resistant Ambush Protected (MRAP) vehicles. Inside an MRAP, the soldier’s chances of survival are significantly higher than if he were in a Highly Mobile Multi-Wheeled Vehicle (HMMWV) or a non-tactical vehicle. However, he is both literally and figuratively isolated from the population whom he is trying to influence.

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<sup>12</sup> FM 3-34, *IED Defeat Manual*, 2-4.

<sup>13</sup> David Kilcullen, *The Accidental Guerilla: Fighting Small Wars in the Midst of a Big One*. (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2009), 32.

The enemy synchronizes IED attacks to balance the factor of time in his favor as well. In 2009 to support upcoming Afghan Presidential Elections, CFs conducted operations designed to prevent insurgents from disrupting the electoral process. In an effort to clear Taliban insurgents from a district center (DC) in Helmand Province, CFs were ordered to enter Sangin DC, engage the population, provide security, restore essential services, isolate the insurgents, and create a stable environment in which elections could take place. Instead, CFs encountered a „mine belt“ of IEDs denying them access to the people of Sangin. CFs employed state of the art intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance resources, IED detection equipment, armored and remotely operated vehicles, and numerous civilian and military technical experts to clear the IEDs. Unfortunately, CFs had been denied the initiative and demonstrated inability to access let alone provide security to a population whose confidence in CFs and the ANSF is prerequisite to achieving COMISAF COIN objectives. Time, as Milan Vego states, is perhaps the most critical of the operational factors as once lost it cannot be recovered.<sup>14</sup> This is especially critical in a conflict where the enemy is attempting to exhaust and exploit the counter insurgents“ eroding political will.

Insurgents have successfully demonstrated the ability to synchronize tactical employment of IEDs to support their operational and strategic objectives. Too large a portion of ISAF C-IED efforts have been tactically focused and reactionary, to the IED attacks. If the C-IED community does not elevate its focus beyond the tactical and into the operational realm, the enemy will continue to achieve his operational and strategic objectives.

## THE CURRENT C-IED FIGHT IN AFHGANISTAN

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<sup>14</sup> Vego, “Joint Operational Warfare,” III-60.

The C-IED community includes (among others) US and CF Combat Engineer Route Clearance Patrols, Electronic Warfare experts, Joint and Combined EOD and C-IED formations, and civilians who provide technological support, tactical training and advice, and intelligence support. Civilians from various IGOs, NGOs and government agencies also provide C-IED expertise in pursuit of their objectives.

In addition to being poorly synchronized, the efforts of the disparate C-IED organizations are almost exclusively focused on the *Combat Operations* and *Host Nation Security*. In support of *Combat Operations*, Engineers clear roads of emplaced IEDs to enable maneuver while EOD and intelligence formations capture and exploit them to identify and target enemy networks. Meanwhile, in support of the *HN Security Force*, dedicated professionals and contracted civilians train Afghan National Security Forces in various aspects of C-IED.

The US military C-IED community's emphatic focus on the *Combat Operations* LLO is reasonable. Military leaders' perspectives are shaped within a culture which values the overwhelming application of force. More pointedly, the COMISAF mission statement emphasizes operations to establish security.<sup>15</sup> Additionally, intelligence-driven C-IED operations often successfully remove enemies and their IEDs from the battlefield. The confidence gained from each hard-earned, tactically successful network attack intensifies the focus on achieving the next.

The focus on C-IED to support the *Combat Operations* LLO has dangerous downsides. First, the cost associated with fielding and protecting a technologically advanced, IED hunting formation is high. DoD spares no expense fielding the most well-equipped and well-protected

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<sup>15</sup> International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) Afghanistan. Official Website. "Mission." <http://www.isaf.nato.int/mission.html> (accessed 24 September, 2010).

force. The back and forth between insurgents who employ IEDs and the community pursuing technological solutions has been well described as a game of “cat and mouse”<sup>16</sup> in which gains are expensive and fleeting. For example, in Afghanistan, hand-held metal detectors were used effectively by CFs to locate buried IEDs. Insurgents observed this tactic and began to emplace nearly undetectable IEDs in which the electrical contacts were made of material with low metallic content (e.g. cigarette foil paper or carbon poles from batteries). Tactically the IED is more difficult to locate and a greater obstacle to maneuver. Operationally, CFs were isolated from and unable to influence the population. Strategically, insurgents caused millions in US spending to develop technologies to locate these inexpensive and rudimentary devices. Second, C-IED combat support operations can have negative effects in the long term. In *Pashtunwali* (the way of the Pashtun), *badal* (revenge) can mean that by killing one enemy, [a Pashtun], the US gains ten enemies.<sup>17</sup> Intelligence-driven operations to service IED related targets and air interdiction missions against suspected IED emplacers often result in an immediate, short term benefit. However, C-IED leaders must consider and mitigate their potential long term, negative impact.

The C-IED community in Afghanistan also supports operations along the *HN Security Force* LLO. Author Seth G. Jones, in *Counterinsurgency in Afghanistan*, argues that although the support of outside actors (the US) can have a significant impact upon the outcome of counterinsurgency efforts, “the capability of the indigenous government security forces to defeat

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<sup>16</sup> Higginbotham, Adam, “U.S. Military Learns to Fight Deadliest Weapons.” *Wired* 18, 08 (August 2010). <http://www.wired.com/magazine/18-08> (accessed 29 September, 2010).

<sup>17</sup> Storm Savage, “COIN Lessons Learned,” Powerpoint, (17 September 2009), [http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC2/COIN/repository/OPDs/hts\\_coin/hts\\_coin\\_training\\_index.htm](http://usacac.leavenworth.army.mil/CAC2/COIN/repository/OPDs/hts_coin/hts_coin_training_index.htm) (accessed 29 September 2010).

insurgents is paramount to success.”<sup>18</sup> COMISAF’s 24 Points and mission statement reflect his agreement with Jones.<sup>19</sup> Enabling the ANSF to conduct COIN operations successfully and independently is a prerequisite to success. In October, 2009 – supporting approximately 155,000 ANSF<sup>20</sup> – just three ANSF personnel had completed C-IED training. Improving significantly, Task Force PALADIN, the ISAF C-IED Task Force, reports 115 Afghans have now completed their two-phase C-IED course. Additionally, TF PALADIN is developing an ANSF Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell (CEXC) which will enable ANSF to exploit captured enemy IEDs.<sup>21</sup>

Many challenges face those charged with training an ANSF C-IED force. Approximately 85 per cent of ANSF are illiterate forcing a „show and tell“ approach to training.<sup>22</sup> Gen Caldwell, Commanding General of NATO Training Mission Afghanistan, said "We're not trying to make high school graduates. Our intent is to ... bring them up perhaps to a first-grade, third-grade level."<sup>23</sup> Illiteracy will impact C-IED training significantly. Another challenge, principally in Afghanistan’s southern and eastern provinces, is recruiting Pashtuns into the ANSF. The

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<sup>18</sup> Jones, “COIN in Afghanistan,” 14.

<sup>19</sup> ISAF Official Website. “Commander’s Corner.” <http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/commanders-corner-top-news/8.html> (accessed 26 September, 2010).

<sup>20</sup> Anthony Cordesman, “Afghan National Security Forces: Shaping the Path to Victory,” Center for Strategic and International Studies, (Washington, DC: July 2009,) [http://csis.org/files/publication/090727\\_ansf\\_draft.pdf](http://csis.org/files/publication/090727_ansf_draft.pdf) (accessed 23 October, 2010) 3-46.

<sup>21</sup> Jay Venturini, “TF Paladin Improves With Unit Base Solution, Expands Partnership With ANSF,” *Regional Command East News*, 20 August, 2010, <http://www.cjtf82.com/regional-command-east-news-mainmenu-401/3170-tf-paladin>, (accessed 14 September 2010).

<sup>22</sup> Frank Cook, “Partnering with the Afghan National Security Forces,” 047 DSC 10 E.” NATO Parliamentary Assembly. (2010 Annual Session) <http://www.nato-pa.int/default.asp?CAT2=2059&CAT1=16&CAT0=576&SHORTCUT=2084&SEARCHWORDS=047> (accessed 2 October 2010).

<sup>23</sup> Andrew Tilghman, “US Targets Illiteracy Among ANSF,” *Army Times*, 7 September 2010 <http://www.armytimes.com/news/2010/09/MONDAY2army-illiteracy-090610w/> (accessed 4 October 2010).

Pashtun represented only 1.1 per cent of ANSF recruits in July 2010.<sup>24</sup> This stems from widespread Pashtun dissatisfaction with and underrepresentation in the Karzai Government and their continued inter-communal conflict with Tajiks, Uzbeks and Hezara.<sup>25</sup> Other obstacles to training include drug use, unauthorized absences, desertions and lack of discipline in combat.<sup>26</sup>

ISAF C-IED efforts are insufficiently balanced across the remaining four COIN LLOs.

Gen. Chiarelli warned against an unbalanced approach to supporting just the first two LLOs:

“If there is nothing else done other than kill bad guys and train others to kill bad guys, the only thing accomplished is moving more people from the fence to the insurgent category-there remains no opportunity to grow the support base. The task force (TF BAGHDAD 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division) could win engagements by killing or capturing an insurgent emplacing an IED, and it could win battles by targeting, disrupting and killing off insurgent cells. But it could only win the campaign if the local populace revealed insurgent and terrorist cells and accordingly denied sanctuary.”<sup>27</sup>

C-IED efforts in Afghanistan, Iraq and in other regions are supported by the Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO). As posted on their website:

“JIEDDO is the Department of Defense's lead counter-IED organization, dedicated to winning the fight against IEDs using all available resources. Working hand-in-hand with military, government, academia, industry, and international partners, JIEDDO is rapidly finding, developing, and delivering emerging capabilities to counter the IED as a weapon of strategic influence.”

JIEDDO organizes its efforts and operations to support (their own) three LOOs – Attack the Network (AtN), Defeat the Device (DtD) and Train the Force (TtF). AtN operations are

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<sup>24</sup> Julian E. Barnes, “Efforts to Recruit Pashtuns in Afghan South Falter,” *Wall Street Journal*, 12 September 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704621204575487720827425774.html> (accessed 3 October 2010).

<sup>25</sup> Minorities at Risk Project. (2009) "Minorities at Risk Dataset." College Park, MD: Center for International Development and Conflict Management. Retrieved from <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/mar/> on: 28 September 2010.

<sup>26</sup> Matthew Rosenberg, “Drug Use Poor Discipline Afflict Afghanistan’s Army,” *Wall Street Journal*, 28 July 2010, <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704684604575381092012618892.html> (accessed 28 September 2010).

<sup>27</sup> Peter Chiarelli and Patrick Michaelis, “Winning the Peace. The Requirement for Full-Spectrum Operations,” *Military Review*, July-August 2005, 9.

aimed at finding and eliminating bomb makers before they can produce and emplace IEDs.<sup>28</sup> DtD operations are aimed at detection and neutralization of IEDs and the mitigation of effects of IEDs detonated.<sup>29</sup> Finally, the Tff operations are aimed at preparing individuals to recognize and protect themselves against an IED attack.<sup>30</sup>

Through Fiscal Year 2010 (FY10), Congress has appropriated over \$17 billion to JIEDDO to defeat the strategic influence of IEDs. The JIEDDO FY11 budget estimate identifies an additional \$3.25 billion for this year - nearly double the \$1.7 billion budgeted in FY10.<sup>31</sup> JIEDDO has been charged with the mission to defeat the IED as a weapon of strategic influence, and has been extremely well resourced.<sup>32</sup> Yet, these expenditures support the *Combat Operations* LLO exclusively. Research has uncovered no JIEDDO resourcing of C-IED operations to support any other LLO.

#### C-IED ACROSS 6 LLOs – AN ELEMENT OF COIN

FM 3-24 delineates six LLOs that enable “commanders to visualize, describe and direct operations when positional reference to enemy forces has little relevance.”<sup>33</sup> These LLOs enable the commander to “synchronize operations against enemies that hide among the populace and unify the efforts of joint, interagency, multinational and HN forces toward a common purpose.”<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), Official Website. <https://www.jieddo.dod.mil/index.aspx> (accessed 3 October 2010).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> JIEDDO, Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Estimate. <http://asafm.army.mil/Documents/OfficeDocuments/Budget/BudgetMaterials/FY11/pforms/jieddf.pdf> (accessed 3 October 2010).

<sup>32</sup> JIEDDO Website.

<sup>33</sup> FM 3-24, 5-7 through 5-16.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

C-IED operations should be designed to support progress through interim objectives along each of these LLOs to accomplish COMISAF objectives (see figure 2).

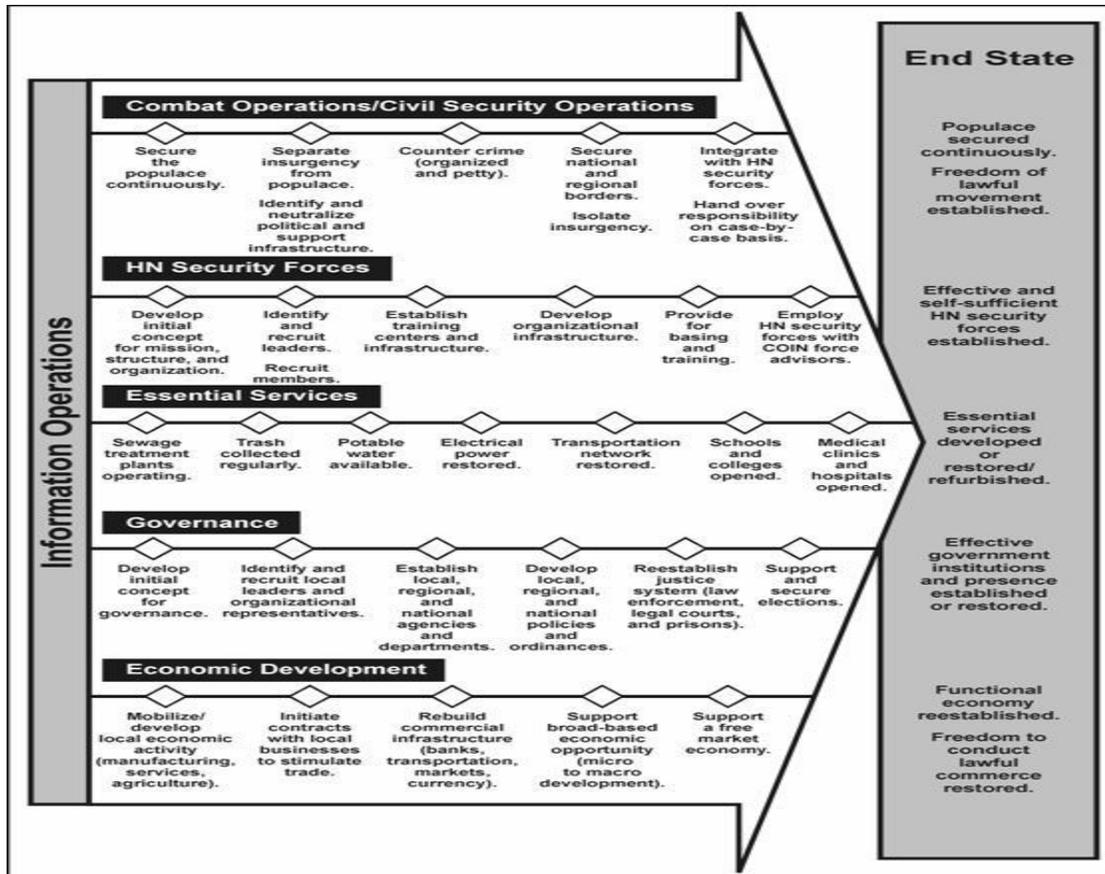


Figure 2: Example goals and objectives along counterinsurgency LLOs (FM 3-24)

C-IED Operations and the *Combat Operations* LLO – As discussed, most effort expended by CF C-IED forces in Afghanistan is in support of the *Combat Operations* LLO. In addition to being unbalanced, C-IED efforts are unsynchronized and often not directly linked to the operational objectives of COMISAF. In order to achieve synergy, C-IED leadership must clearly articulate and prioritize interim objectives that support COMISAF objectives. For example, COMISAF may establish an objective to “Establish security in Qalat (a DC in Zabul Province). To support COMISAF, C-IED community leaders, could establish a supporting interim objective to “Identify and destroy enemy IED production capability in the vicinity of

Qalat.” This interim objective would synchronize the efforts of all C-IED enablers and allow leaders to measure progress toward the Qalat security objective.

This paper does not call for a cessation of C-IED operations to support the *Combat Operations* LLO. C-IED combat support operations save lives and reduce enemy capacity. However, C-IED community leaders must scrutinize and evaluate the tactical, operational and strategic impact of tactically focused, highly technical, and nearly exclusive support of the *Combat Operations* LLO. They must balance the efforts being made to support combat operations with efforts made across all other LLOs.

C-IED Operations and the *HN Security Force* LLO – The requirement to establish and train an Afghan C-IED force capable of independently supporting COIN operations is discussed in detail above. The obstacles to achieving that objective are numerous and significant. To succeed, CF C-IED leaders must apply the elements of operational design and synchronize the work of the C-IED community. They could establish an *HN Security Force* LLO and identify interim objectives to measure progress along that LLO. Interim objectives could include identification of ANSF C-IED force requirements, development of regional recruitment strategies, a training cadre (language and cultural training), a training strategy and continuum, and an assessment and evaluation capability.

The myopic tendency to evaluate other militaries against the metric of our own ignores the importance of actually understanding the problem(s) confronting the other military and must be avoided. The tendency is best described by Marshall Andrews in the 1967 foreword to Bernard Fall’s “A Street Without Joy.” Andrews warns:

“Equipment of local forces to the point that they resemble US units in all important particulars may stimulate local pride and conform to doctrinaire military thought. But it will not prepare them for the sort of warfare they most probably would face”<sup>35</sup>

As CF C-IED trainers face many challenges to training which are beyond their control, they must apply lessons learned in Afghanistan. For example, the pursuit of tactical and technological solutions to defeat the IED as a weapon of strategic influence is expensive and its gains are temporary. Explosively reducing IEDs as obstacles to maneuver is sound in a conventional fight, but destroys valuable intelligence in COIN. Finally, an unbalanced, combat-operations intensive approach fails to address the root causes behind enemy IED attacks. Hard-learned lessons should inform C-IED operations that support the *HN Security Force* LLO and enable a COIN capable C-IED force within the ANSF.

#### C-IED Operations and the *Governance* LLO -

COMISAF guidance is very clear on two points regarding governance. First, ISAF will support not only the national government in Kabul (GIROA), but also the local district governments and the provincial governments as well. ISAF is directed to “help Afghans build accountable governance at all levels from the village shura to the government in Kabul.”<sup>36</sup> Second, ISAF support and efforts will be applied to establish an Afghan government capable of sustaining governance and security operations after the international community has departed. ISAF is directed to “foster lasting solutions, help create good governance and enduring security.”<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>35</sup> Marshall Andrews, Introduction to “Street Without Joy” by Bernard B. Fall, (New York, NY: Schocken Books, 1972,) 13.

<sup>36</sup> ISAF Official Website. “Commander’s Corner.” <http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/commanders-corner-top-news/8.html> (accessed 26 September, 2010).

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

The C-IED community, applying simultaneity and balance, could support COMISAF objectives across the levels of government and provide a capability that will endure. The example (illustrative only) discusses IED exploitation and the use of biometric evidence to support convictions by the judiciary. At the federal level to support GIRoA in Kabul, C-IED community leadership, US Department of Justice (DoJ) and State, and international law experts could work with their Afghan counterparts to strengthen the Afghan judiciary's appreciation and procedures for gathering biometric evidence and its role in identifying and convicting individuals who make IEDs. The DoJ would also work to establish a national forensics database. At the provincial level, Combined Explosives Exploitation Cell (CEXC) EOD operators and laboratory technicians, federal law enforcement forensics and bomb disposal technicians, and weapons technical intelligence analysts could work with their Afghan counterparts to establish provincial explosives exploitation and analysis centers. All IEDs from within each province would be turned in (by ANSF C-IED) to the provincial exploitation and analysis centers, and the biometric data gleaned from them would be uploaded into the national database. At the district center and village level, C-IED teams and law enforcement could work with local counterparts to improve their capability to identify and render safe IEDs while preserving biometric evidence. Each of these capabilities and policies would represent an interim objective and enable the measurement of progress along a *Governance* LLO.

#### C-IED Operations and the *Essential Services* and *Economic Development* LLOs

Essential services include services like sewage treatment, trash collection, electrical power, potable water, and the opening of schools and medical clinics.<sup>38</sup> They are the things needed by a population to sustain life, and the population will support whoever is providing

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<sup>38</sup> FM 3-24, 5-12.

them.<sup>39</sup> Support to economic development includes the production, distribution and consumption of goods, the development of agriculture, the restoration of infrastructure and promotion of a free-market economy.<sup>40</sup> Landmines, IEDs and unexploded ordnance represent obstacles to the provision of essential services and economic development and kill or injure as many as 83 Afghans each month; more than half of them children.<sup>41</sup>

“As in many countries struggling to recover from conflicts, landmines and unexploded ordnance inhibit development, disrupt markets and production, prevent the delivery of goods and services, and generally obstruct reconstruction and stabilization efforts. When you remove these deadly hazards, you enable the socio-economic development needed to further the larger goal of promoting stability and security in Afghanistan and the wider region.”<sup>42</sup>

The demining effort on the ground, “community-based demining”, is led by Afghan NGOs who recruit, train and employ the individual local deminers.<sup>43</sup> The US C-IED community is capable of supporting this effort with Humanitarian Mine Action Project Teams. The teams include Special Forces, Military Information Support Operations, Civil Affairs, EOD and Engineers. They train indigenous teams on mine clearance procedures, mine awareness education programs, and mine-strike victims’ assistance to “develop a self-sustaining, indigenous demining capability”.<sup>44</sup> Community-based demining projects provide employment opportunities, increase community pride, clear arable land, support local governance and reduce insurgent influence.<sup>45</sup> US commitment to support these projects, with local elements of the ANSF, would

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<sup>39</sup> Ibid, 3-68.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid, 5-46 through 5-49.

<sup>41</sup> Andrew J. Shapiro, “Afghanistan: U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action Helps Revive Deserted Town.” DipNote Official U.S. Department of State Blog, 5 April 2010, [http://blogs.state.gov/index.php/site/entry/afghanistan\\_humanitarian\\_mine\\_action\\_revive\\_town](http://blogs.state.gov/index.php/site/entry/afghanistan_humanitarian_mine_action_revive_town). (accessed 29 September 2010).

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) Official Website. “Humanitarian Assistance and Mine Action Overview” link. <http://www.dsca.mil/programs/HA/HA.htm> (accessed 10 October 2010).

<sup>45</sup> Shapiro, “Afghanistan: U.S. Humanitarian Mine Action,”

demonstrate how military forces can support the civilian population, improve economic opportunity and relieve suffering.<sup>46</sup>

### C-IED Operations and the *Information Operations LLO*

Author David Kilcullen asserts that the “main effort” for Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan is information operations (IO); whereas, for US and CF, IO is a “supporting effort”; he subsequently advises developing a whole of government strategic information campaign which may be our “most important capability” as we continue to fight hybrid warfare.<sup>47</sup> Via his “Be first with the truth,” “Fight the information war aggressively,” and “Manage expectations” points of guidance, COMISAF makes it clear how integral he believes IO is to successful COIN.<sup>48</sup> The US Army COIN manual suggests that the IO LLO is “often the decisive LLO” and that it should be synchronized and intertwined with all other operations along the other LLOs. The key battle in the Afghan COIN effort may be the one taking place within the cognitive dimension of the information environment – the conflict between insurgents and counterinsurgents taking place in the minds of Afghans for their respect and support.<sup>49</sup>

The C-IED community can improve ISAF IO and help shape that battle space. EOD teams conduct post-blast investigations and can provide IO experts and the population with accurate and detailed reports of insurgent IED attacks. Often tactical information is fed into intelligence and lessons learned data bases, yet no effort is made to wrest ownership of the

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<sup>46</sup> U.S. State Department, *Foreign Military Training: Joint Report to Congress, Fiscal Years 2006 and 2007*. <http://www.state.gov/t/pm/rls/rpt/fmtrpt/2007/92075.htm> Washington, DC: Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, August 2007, (accessed 29 September 2010,) II-D-3.

<sup>47</sup> Kilcullen, “Accidental Guerrilla,” 300.

<sup>48</sup> ISAF Official Website. “Commander’s Corner.” <http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/commanders-corner-top-news/8.html> (accessed 26 September, 2010).

<sup>49</sup> *Doctrine for Joint Operations JCS Publication 3-0*. Washington, DC: Joint Chiefs of Staff, Washington, DC, 17 September 2006 (with Change 2 22 March 2010,) II-23.

narrative from the insurgents. Subsequently, though horrific violence was visited upon innocents by insurgents, the insurgents win the race to the media outlets with a concocted version of the truth and convince the population that the violence was the fault of US and CF. In such an example, insurgents detonated a massive IED at the opening of a water treatment facility. The investigation made it clear that insurgents had observed the CF pattern of attracting crowds of children and handing out small gifts (candy, soccer balls etc). The insurgents detonated their device killing several children and destroying any perception that the government, supported by CF) provides a more secure environment. Insurgent ownership of the narrative went unchallenged by CF. They cast blame for this atrocity upon CF while the leadership's response was an edict preventing further dissemination of candy. Insurgent IO drove a wedge between security forces and the population. CF failed to engage the enemy in the cognitive domain and "hang their barbaric actions like millstones around their neck."<sup>50</sup>

The C-IED community can help develop a more comprehensive understanding of insurgent objectives in IED attacks, which may drive that wedge between insurgents and the people. C-IED leaders understand and can help manage HN and COMISAF expectations regarding development of an ANSF C-IED capability. They can support development of GIRoA capacity and a corresponding message regarding an Afghan led demining effort.

## CONCLUSION and RECOMMENDATIONS

Applying operational art and the elements of operational design enables leadership and planners to move from an understanding of the strategic end state and supporting operational objectives into the planning and execution of operations that will support attainment of those

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<sup>50</sup> ISAF Official Website. "Commander's Corner." <http://www.isaf.nato.int/article/commanders-corner-top-news/8.html> (accessed 26 September, 2010).

objectives. The President has clearly articulated the end state, and COMISAF has provided operational objectives and guidance for achieving it. All subsequent planning, orders development and ISAF employment should be inseparably linked and synchronized to support the attainment of those objectives.

The efforts and contributions of the C-IED community in and supporting operations in Afghanistan are not always so linked and synchronized. There is a disproportionate and tactical (vice operational) focus upon the *Combat Operations* LLO and the associated development of technology to support tactical combat operations. Engagement in the „cat and mouse“ effort discussed above, though undertaken to protect the lives of service men and women, does not reflect a conceptual appreciation for or analysis of how best to support attainment of COMISAF operational objectives. In fact, continued, unbalanced, participation in the technological arms race centered on the tactical aspects of the IED attack may actually support the enemy’s effort to balance the operational factor of time in his favor and support attainment of his operational and strategic objectives through Kilcullen’s “exhaustion” of the national will of US and CF.<sup>51</sup>

The first recommendation follows logically from the assertion that the current approach to C-IED operations in Afghanistan is unbalanced. Leadership must apply operational art and design to develop and implement C-IED operations that are synchronized to support COMISAF operational objectives. Military C-IED units will not succeed without the integrated support of other government agencies and international and Afghan NGOs. This extra-military, simultaneous approach applies especially in supporting progress along the *Governance, Economic Opportunity and Essential Services* LLOs. On a practical level, leadership from across the collective C-IED community must identify and incorporate interim objectives that will enable

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<sup>51</sup> Kilcullen, “Accidental Guerrilla,” 32-35.

them to make and measure progress along LLOs toward COMISAF operational objectives. Subsequently, they must coordinate, collaborate and cooperate in the synchronized application of their elements of support in order to achieve those interim objectives. Identifying and delivering CF military support to DoS and Afghan led demining efforts provides an example.

The second recommendation applies to improving the US base of support for C-IED operations in Afghanistan. JIEDDO lines of operation are entirely focused upon supporting only the *Combat Operations* LLO. The billions of dollars spent have enabled numerous improvements and tactical successes for the C-IED community. However, the DoD lead agency for C-IED has not identified the requirement to resource C-IED operations across any of the other LLOs.<sup>52</sup> Industry supports the development and fielding of improved route clearance vehicles, electronic frequency jamming devices, improved under-belly armor packages for flat-bottomed infantry fighting vehicles, and expanded network support of the all-source intelligence picture. The efforts have saved lives, but are often redundant and nearly always result in only temporary, tactical advantage. JIEDDO could make a lasting and significant operational impact by realigning its LOOs with the COIN LLOs. For example, in concert with the collective C-IED community forward, JIEDDO could identify and resource the development of Pashto, Dhari, Uzbek and Tajik language skills and infrastructure to support Afghan C-IED training. They could train and equip additional humanitarian demining teams and resource increased mine awareness education efforts for Afghans. Additionally, JIEDDO could resource the effort to hire, train and equip quality IO professionals to support C-IED operations in Afghanistan.

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<sup>52</sup> Joint Improvised Explosive Device Defeat Organization (JIEDDO), Fiscal Year 2011 Budget Estimate. [http://asafm.army.mil/Documents/OfficeDocuments/Budget/BudgetMaterials/\\_FY11/pforms/jieddf.pdf](http://asafm.army.mil/Documents/OfficeDocuments/Budget/BudgetMaterials/_FY11/pforms/jieddf.pdf) (accessed 3 October 2010).

David Kilcullen reminds us that in the end “a minority of the population will always support the Taliban, and another will always support the government. The majority want peace, security and stability and will support whomever appears most likely to prevail in the fight to meet those needs.”<sup>53</sup> The focused quest for technological solutions – the elusive “silver bullet” – to the IED problem saps resources disproportionately. Insufficient attention and resources are applied to identifying and addressing why insurgents employ IEDs so effectively. Its participation in the „cat and mouse“ IED/C-IED contest decreases the likelihood that ISAF will be perceived as the side that will “prevail and meet those needs.” The US and CF C-IED community must ensure that the efforts of all their disparate enablers are synchronized across all LLOs and support COMISAF objectives to provide the peace, security and stability mentioned above.

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<sup>53</sup> Kilcullen, “Accidental Guerrilla,” 66.

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## **What's New in the Strategy for Afghanistan and Pakistan**

*"As President, my greatest responsibility is to protect the American people... We are in Afghanistan to confront a common enemy that threatens the United States, our friends and allies, and the people of Afghanistan and Pakistan who have suffered the most at the hands of violent extremists. So I want the American people to understand that we have a clear and focused goal: to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda in Pakistan and Afghanistan, and to prevent their return to either country in the future... To achieve our goals, we need a stronger, smarter and comprehensive strategy."*

--President Barack Obama  
March 27, 2009

## **INTRODUCTION**

The United States has a vital national security interest in addressing the current and potential security threats posed by extremists in Afghanistan and Pakistan. In Pakistan, al Qaeda and other groups of jihadist terrorists are planning new terror attacks. Their targets remain the U.S. homeland, Pakistan, Afghanistan, India, Europe, Australia, our allies in the Middle East, and other targets of opportunity. The growing size of the space in which they are operating is a direct result of the terrorist/insurgent activities of the Taliban and related organizations. At the same time, this group seeks to reestablish their old sanctuaries in Afghanistan.

Therefore, the core goal of the U.S. must be to disrupt, dismantle, and defeat al Qaeda and its safe havens in Pakistan, and to prevent their return to Pakistan or Afghanistan.

The ability of extremists in Pakistan to undermine Afghanistan is proven, while insurgency in Afghanistan feeds instability in Pakistan. The threat that al Qaeda poses to the United States and our allies in Pakistan - including the possibility of extremists obtaining fissile material - is all too real. Without more effective action against these groups in Pakistan, Afghanistan will face continuing instability.

## **Objectives**

Achieving our core goal is vital to U.S. national security. It requires, first of all, realistic and achievable objectives. These include:

Disrupting terrorist networks in Afghanistan and especially Pakistan to degrade any ability they have to plan and launch international terrorist attacks.

Promoting a more capable, accountable, and effective government in Afghanistan that serves the Afghan people and can eventually function, especially regarding internal security, with limited international support.

Developing increasingly self-reliant Afghan security forces that can lead the counterinsurgency and counterterrorism fight with reduced U.S. assistance.

Assisting efforts to enhance civilian control and stable constitutional government in Pakistan and a vibrant economy that provides opportunity for the people of Pakistan.

Involving the international community to actively assist in addressing these objectives for Afghanistan and Pakistan, with an important leadership role for the UN.



HEADQUARTERS  
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COMISAF/CDR USFOR-A

1 August 2010

FOR The Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Civilians of NATO ISAF and US Forces-Afghanistan

SUBJECT: COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance

Team, here is my guidance for the conduct of counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan. In keeping with the admonition in this guidance to "learn and adapt," I will update this document periodically in the months ahead. Indeed, this edition is my first update, as I received useful feedback on the initial draft from Afghan partners and also received advice from elders and Special Forces teams in Herat Province's Zericho Valley. I welcome further feedback.

As I noted during my assumption of command remarks, it is a privilege to serve with each of you in this hugely important endeavor. And I appreciate all that you will do in helping to turn this guidance into reality on the ground.

**Secure and serve the population.** The decisive terrain is the human terrain. The people are the center of gravity. Only by providing them security and earning their trust and confidence can the Afghan government and ISAF prevail.

**Live among the people.** We can't commute to the fight. Position joint bases and combat outposts as close to those we're seeking to secure as is feasible. Decide on locations with input from our partners and after consultation with local citizens and informed by intelligence and security assessments.

**Help confront the culture of impunity.** The Taliban are not the only enemy of the people. The people are also threatened by inadequate governance, corruption, and abuse of power – recruiters for the Taliban. President Karzai has forthrightly committed to combat these threats. Work with our Afghan partners to help turn his words into reality and to help our partners protect the people from malign actors as well as from terrorists.

**Help Afghans build accountable governance.** Afghanistan has a long history of representative self-government at all levels, from the village shura to the government in Kabul. Help the government and the people revive those traditions and help them develop checks and balances to prevent abuses.

**Pursue the enemy relentlessly.** Together with our Afghan partners, get our teeth into the insurgents and don't let go. When the extremists fight, make them pay. Seek out and eliminate those who threaten the population. Don't let them intimidate the innocent. Target the whole network, not just individuals.

COMISAF  
SUBJECT: COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance

**Fight hard and fight with discipline.** Hunt the enemy aggressively, but use only the firepower needed to win a fight. We can't win without fighting, but we also cannot kill or capture our way to victory. Moreover, if we kill civilians or damage their property in the course of our operations, we will create more enemies than our operations eliminate. That's exactly what the Taliban want. Don't fall into their trap. We must continue our efforts to reduce civilian casualties to an absolute minimum.

**Identify corrupt officials.** President Karzai has said, "My government is committed to fighting corruption with all means possible." Help the government achieve that aim. Make sure the people we work with work for the people. If they don't, work with partners to enable action, or we will appear to be part of the problem. Bring networks of malign actors to the attention of trusted Afghan partners and your chain of command. Act with your Afghan partners to confront, isolate, pressure, and defund malign actors – and, where appropriate, to refer malign actors for prosecution.

**Hold what we secure.** Together with our Afghan partners, develop the plan to hold an area (and to build in it) before starting to clear or secure it. The people need to know that we will not abandon them. Prioritize population security over short-duration disruption operations. And when we begin to transition to Afghan lead, thin out rather than handing off and withdrawing, maintaining headquarters even as we reduce combat elements.

**Foster lasting solutions.** Help our Afghans partners create good governance and enduring security. Avoid compromises with malign actors that achieve short-term gains at the expense of long-term stability. Think hard before pursuing initiatives that may not be sustainable in the long run. When it comes to projects, small is often beautiful.

**Money is ammunition; don't put it in the wrong hands.** Institute "COIN contracting." Pay close attention to the impact of our spending and understand who benefits from it. And remember, we are who we fund. How we spend is often more important than how much we spend.

**Be a good guest.** Treat the Afghan people and their property with respect. Think about how we drive, how we patrol, how we relate to people, and how we help the community. View our actions through the eyes of the Afghans and, together with our partners, consult with elders before pursuing new initiatives and operations.

**Consult and build relationships, but not just with those who seek us out.** Earn the people's trust, talk to them, ask them questions, and learn about their lives. Inquire about social dynamics, frictions, local histories, and grievances. Hear what they say. Be aware of others in the room and how their presence may affect the answers you get. Cross-check information and make sure you have the full story. Avoid knee-jerk responses based on first impressions. Don't be a pawn in someone else's game. Spend time, listen, consult, and drink lots of tea.

COMISAF  
SUBJECT: COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance

**Walk.** Stop by, don't drive by. Patrol on foot whenever possible and engage the population. Take off your sunglasses. Situational awareness can only be gained by interacting face-to-face, not separated by ballistic glass or Oakleys.

**Act as one team.** Work closely with our international and Afghan partners, civilian as well as military. Treat them as brothers-in-arms. Unity of effort and cooperation are not optional.

**Partner with the ANSF.** Live, eat, train, plan, and operate together. Depend on one another. Hold each other accountable at all echelons down to trooper level. Help our ANSF partners achieve excellence. Respect them and listen to them. Be a good role model.

**Promote local reintegration.** Together with our Afghan partners, identify and separate the "reconcilables" from the "irreconcilables." Identify and report obstacles to reintegration. Help our partners address grievances and strive to make the reconcilables part of the local solution, even as we work with our partners to identify and kill, capture, drive out, or "turn" the irreconcilables.

**Be first with the truth.** Beat the insurgents and malign actors to the headlines. Preempt rumors. Get accurate information to the chain of command, to Afghan leaders, to the people, and to the press as soon as possible. Integrity is critical to this fight. Avoid spinning, and don't try to "dress up" an ugly situation. Acknowledge setbacks and failures, including civilian casualties, and then state how we'll respond and what we've learned.

**Fight the information war aggressively.** Challenge disinformation. Turn our enemies' extremist ideologies, oppressive practices, and indiscriminate violence against them. Hang their barbaric actions like millstones around their necks.

**Manage expectations.** Avoid premature declarations of success. Note what has been accomplished and what still needs to be done. Strive to under-promise and over-deliver.

**Live our values.** Stay true to the values we hold dear. This is what distinguishes us from our enemies. We are engaged in a tough endeavor. It is often brutal, physically demanding, and frustrating. All of us experience moments of anger, but we must not give in to dark impulses or tolerate unacceptable actions by others.

**Maintain continuity through unit transitions.** From day one, start building the information you'll provide to your successors. Share information and understanding in the months before transitions. Strive to maintain operational tempo and local relationships throughout transitions to avoid giving insurgents and malign actors a rest.

COMISAF  
SUBJECT: COMISAF's Counterinsurgency Guidance

**Empower subordinates.** Resource to enable decentralized action. Push assets and authorities down to those who most need them and can actually use them. Flatten reporting chains (while maintaining hierarchical decision chains). Remember that it is those at tactical levels – the so-called “strategic sergeants” and “strategic captains” – who turn big ideas in counterinsurgency operations into reality on the ground.

**Win the battle of wits.** Learn and adapt more quickly than the enemy. Be cunning. Outsmart the insurgents. Share best practices and lessons learned. Create and exploit opportunities.

**Exercise initiative.** In the absence of guidance or orders, figure out what the orders should have been and execute them aggressively.



David H. Petraeus  
General, United States Army  
Commander, International Security Assistance Force/  
United States Forces-Afghanistan

## Mission

ISAF, in support of the Government of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, conducts operations in Afghanistan to reduce the capability and will of the insurgency, support the growth in capacity and capability of the Afghan National Security Forces (ANSF), and facilitate improvements in governance and socio-economic development, in order to provide a secure environment for sustainable stability that is observable to the population.

## Security

In accordance with all the relevant Security Council Resolutions, ISAF's main role is to assist the Afghan government in the establishment of a secure and stable environment. To this end, ISAF forces are conducting security and stability operations throughout the country together with the Afghan National Security Forces and are directly involved in the development of the Afghan National Army through mentoring, training and equipping.

## Reconstruction and development

Through its Provincial Reconstruction Teams, ISAF is supporting reconstruction and development (R&D) in Afghanistan, securing areas in which reconstruction work is conducted by other national and international actors.

Where appropriate, and in close cooperation and coordination with GIROA and UNAMA representatives on the ground, ISAF is also providing practical support for R&D efforts, as well as support for humanitarian assistance efforts conducted by Afghan government organizations, international organizations, and NGOs.

## Governance

ISAF, through its Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTS), is helping the Afghan Authorities strengthen the institutions required to fully establish good governance and rule of law and to promote human rights. PRTs' principal mission in this respect consists of building capacity, supporting the growth of governance structures and promoting an environment within which governance can improve.