

WINNING IN AFGHANISTAN

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1. "Corruption"
2. "No American Solution to Afghan Problems"
3. "Don't Get Punked"
4. "Mountain Tops and Villages: The Strategic Terrain"
5. "Intelligence Overview"
6. "Elements of Power"
7. "Influence in the Village"
8. "Knowledge"
9. "Time"
10. "Resources" (10 A)
11. "Resources" (10 B)
12. "Distracters and Enablers"

ISSUE 1: SEEING THE REAL ENEMY -- CORRUPTION

Afghanistan is easily one of the most corrupt countries most Americans have ever been to and conducting counter insurgency in this environment is extremely taxing and difficult.

Corruption starts from the highest level official and goes to the lowest level private. A few examples:

- We had ANA and the Ford Rangers that were given to them were missing the spare tires and jacks. All spare tires and jacks were gone in every company.
- New fuel pumps were taken off of the trucks and sold in downtown Kabul. An old fuel pump was brought back in and put on the truck.
- The Battalion Maintenance Officer had failed to list 3 of the older Ford Rangers on the vehicle list. They were at his relatives houses.
- Tools were taken from the maintenance shop out of the brand new #1 Common tool set
- The battalion S4 drove 3 hours out to the field to steal cases of MREs
- Kickbacks were given from any project back to the local officials, ANP or the ANA. And who got them caused fights
- Fuel trucks arrived with half of what fuel was bought. The Brigade Commander had relatives who owned gas stations

- Soldiers would sell their TA50 (issue equipment) downtown for money
- The BDE warehouses would load trucks full of equipment and sell it downtown
- Whole sections of Afghan National Police (ANP) were not paid because the sub-governor kept their pay for himself. After 3 month the ANP quit
- ANP consistently shake down or extort the local people for money because that is all they really know
- Citizens have to pay bribes to government officials for VISAs to travel abroad

The list of corrupt practices within the Afghan society is astounding. The impact of how this mindset effects getting operations done on the ground cannot be underestimated. There are two basic ways that people get things done when working together. Americans are operating in one mindset and the Afghans are operating in the other. We need to better understand the cultural mindset of the country we are operating in or we will continue to fail as we operate in it.

The Americans tend to operate in the mindset of cooperation with direct action where we see ourselves working with other people toward a common goal. Once American military personnel start a project and move forward with it, they tend to agree on the goals, set milestones and handle the issue in a project management fashion.

The Afghans are not thinking like this at all. They come to the table with more hidden agendas than David Copperfield has hidden rabbits. All of the bids for any project may well come from the same person under numerous front companies via relatives. Once a project is started the Afghan contractors may not show up at all to do the work. If they do, their workers won't have the tools they need and will expect the Americans to supply them just so they can have the workers steal them. Poor performing workers will not be fired and there will definitely be hidden costs and work slow-downs.

Why would the Afghans take any of these actions? The village elders could be working with the Taliban, the Taliban could be holding hostages of the village, or there could be a warlord in the area who is dragging the project out to continue charging for the needed service. There are any number of reasons why this happens and the way the Americans conduct business encourages the locals to try to siphon off as much money as possible.

We need to change the way we do business in Afghanistan. Soldiers need to be briefed on how to handle projects that we use FOO funds for and we need more knowledgeable soldiers and leadership when it comes to running projects. Soldiers who are deploying should have individual training that involves electrical work, power generation work and general construction knowledge. The background knowledge of how to check work as it is done and know that projects are being carried out correctly cannot be understated.

This knowledge gap can be covered partially by sending soldiers to civilian skill schools while here in the states as part of the training for going overseas. On the active duty side, many of the units going overseas can send soldiers to local training at community colleges or trade schools. This can be initially financed using 100% tuition that the active duty has for soldiers going to school. The unit would have to be willing to let the soldier go to class during the duty day for a period of time, but having even remedial knowledge of these skills (plumbing, electrical, concrete and building) would exponentially improve our effectiveness while working on CERP and FOO projects.

Often the CERP officer is an untrained officer who is assigned with little skill, knowledge or experience. In one case, a young LT paid 20K for a mud hut that was supposed to function as a shower for the ANA. The contract was for far too much for the work initially. The contractor put up some rock walls and some plumbing and then left with the money. Intelligence later confirmed that the money was given to HiG forces that the contractor was working with. The LT CERP was under immense pressure from his battalion commander to spend money, whether the projects worked or not. In this same sector, we had two LTs with degrees in engineering and one with extensive civilian experience. Neither one of those two was allowed to work with the CERP officer even when requested.

In the logistics arena we need to have conventional regular army units guarding the warehouses and escorting the supply convoys of the ANA. While most conventional regular army units see this sort of work as beneath them, this is exactly what we have to do to support the ANA soldier. The ANA command will siphon off all of the material that they can before it ever gets into the hands of the soldiers that need it. The Americans need the Afghans to fight. In order to do that, we have to work on the logistics aspect of getting the ANA soldiers the supplies they need. This means a large number of US soldiers shifted from combat-type missions to support and guarding type missions.

Also, the open-air markets where military surplus and hardware are sold in Kabul and other areas need to be shut down. The ANP should go into the shops and arrest the people who run them as well as confiscate the equipment. No one wants to get pepper sprayed and have the product taken. It drives up the cost of business. Stealing and selling equipment from the government of the US or Afghanistan and selling it blatantly in open air markets makes us lose face and look incompetent to the very people we are trying to influence.

Nothing undermines our mission in Afghanistan as much as the corrupt nature of the society -- except for our own inability to deal with that corruption. The American military needs address this aggressively. Our image and prestige with the people of Afghanistan is what will win. Building a stable democracy with a solid and effective government should be our goal. It starts with getting the basic functions of government to deliver services to the people. The first place we should be able to set the example is the military. Until we can get the ANA under control, whom we pay and have the most direct control over, we will not be able to help the Afghan Government control the nation.

ISSUE 2: AMERICAN SOLUTIONS WILL NOT WORK FOR AFGHAN PROBLEMS

Afghans have problems that they deal with on a daily basis that Americans also deal with. However, the Americans deal with problems in a certain way and Afghans deal with them in another. We need Afghan solutions to Afghan problems.

Trying to impose the American solutions to their problems does not work. The Afghans need to produce their own solutions to social problems. Some issues we run into:

- There is no legal system as we think of one in the vast majority Afghan villages
- There is no concept of written laws in the villages
- There is no written record of child birth -- they make up a birthdate for forms and use it all the time
- There is an extremely limited system of jails
- There is an extremely limited system of healthcare
- There is no street or address system
- There is no system for vehicle registration or drivers licensing
- There a very limited system for identification cards
- There is no system to register marriages
- No one wears eye glasses, no matter how bad their eyesight is
- Most people are illiterate
- There are very few telephones outside of the larger cities

What all of this means to Americans is that you cannot operate in Afghanistan villages like you can in America. Also, the Afghans do not have the patience or the resources to deal with issues like prisoners or courts the way we do. Afghan justice must be swift and final. Holding someone for a period of time to them means feeding and housing an extra person in the village and paying for someone to guard them. This will not happen in most villages. They have bad guys and they must either live with them or kill them. There is no status in between, except to talk to the family of the person and trust them to modify the behavior.

Asking where someone lives is not as simple as getting a street address and just walking up to the house. There are no streets to people's houses, often only a muddy

walking path. There is no town hall where records are kept and most people don't know what a calendar is, so they usually don't know how to read one. Even the holiday of Ramadan changes a few days every year because the local religious leader must look at the moon and determine when, exactly, it goes into the right phase to begin Ramadan. They will often speak of different things and refer to something happening in "Taliban times" or "Russian times". It is how the Afghans solve their problem of tracking dates.

The Afghan National Army soldiers must be dealt with in a specific manner because of these circumstances, too. The US Army has tried to implement a US Army style UCMJ system upon the ANA. It doesn't come close to working. The ANA use traditional Afghan methods of punishment. Some typical punishments range from the commander locking the soldier in a room, pit or CONNEX until the commander sees fit to let him out. Another one is the traditional Afghan slap where the commander puts a literal smack-down on a soldier for getting out of line. Some commanders even use sodomy as a method of disciplining and controlling their soldiers. Trying to withhold the pay of a soldier like in the American system would mean that the commander would just keep the soldiers pay, which would infuriate the soldiers. Keeping them in some sort of American approved confinement facility would be impossible due to the expense. So the Afghan slap and the CONNEX box in 120 degree weather is what the Afghans do instead because it is done and over in a relatively short period with very little expense.

In one specific example of this, we had an American who worked as an interpreter. The American interpreter was rude and condescending to the ANA, but we needed him because he had a security clearance. One day the American interpreter finally hit an ANA soldier right in front of some American soldiers. The ANA soldier was going to kill the American interpreter but the American soldiers stopped him. American soldiers are obligated to protect American citizens and property. But then we came into the conflict with the ANA. Now they wanted to handle the interpreter for abusing an ANA soldier. We had to sit for 4 days and negotiate the number of slaps the interpreter would get, who would give them, etc. At the end of it, the interpreter would not take the 3 slaps in front of the formation of ANA, so we ended up negotiating a 1 month pay for the soldier from the American interpreter and a public apology in front of the formation. But it would have been a lot simpler if he would have taken the slaps. Again, an Afghan solution to an Afghan problem.

Another good example is how the Afghans pay their soldiers. Americans take it for granted that we can pay them and they will be happy. The problem is that the soldiers have to get the money back home to their relatives. They take the pay in cash and have to leave on an often dangerous journey back to their houses. Then once there they stay for a couple of weeks before coming back. They go home every 2-3 months for 2-3 weeks. The American model of 2.5 days of leave every month doesn't fit the realities on the ground, but that is what we have told the ANA they must do. Many soldiers leave as soon as we rotate back to the base and we won't see them again until it is time to go back out and fight. Without direct deposit or reliable mail or banks that will accept a paper check, the ANA must be paid in cash and must take the payment home. The Americans will have to deal with the numbers of AWOL not fitting our model -- it's an Afghan solution to an Afghan problem.

Another excellent example of how we expect things to be done in America is when someone comes to us with what we consider actionable intelligence. An Afghan source may come to us and let us know that a bad guy is in the village. We'll bump the idea around and start to call up if the ANA trust us. But often the ANA will go into the village on a routine shopping trip for batteries, a new goat, or whatever. Then the guy's family might come to the post and tell us they can't find him. We don't have the ability to know if the ANA sent people into town to kill the bad guy or threaten him to leave (which is often done). We're just advisors. If the ANA decide to take action on their own without telling us they are implementing an Afghan solution to an Afghan problem. If we do in and demand investigations, no one knows what will happen. Maybe the guy took off and told the family to come complain to the Americans to cover his tracks, or maybe they want to get the ANA in trouble so they are making up the story. Also, if someone comes to us with information then they usually are risking their lives. They expect this person to disappear if action is taken. We lose face, credibility and respect if we take a person away for a few days and he comes back to the village looking for who ratted him out. It's not the advisors place to investigate this sort of thing. If the bad guy is gone, then whatever happened is an Afghan solution to and Afghan problem.

Whatever the issues that arise while operating in Afghanistan, it is important for the command in country of both the conventional regular army American Forces and the advisory command that we are there to support the ANA, not the other way around. It's their country -- if they decide it needs to be done then it gets done. Our telling them that we don't like it is pretty irrelevant.

Often the cause of a lot of conflict and problems is the American concept that we are going there to make them more like us. This is not the case. We are going there to help a government win. We will add all of the assistance we can and that is in accordance with our laws and orders. The Afghans are not governed by are laws and orders. They are governed by their own laws and orders. This is a key point to keep in mind when dealing with them.

ISSUE 3: ACHIEVE YOUR OBJECTIVES -- DON'T GET PUNKED

The Afghans have multiple and divergent agendas whenever we deal with them. However, one thing they all see is that the Americans have more money and resources than they do. Many ambitious people in Afghanistan look at Americans and the American military as a large Automatic Teller Machine (ATM). Whether it's getting a contract for someone's relatives, acquiring equipment or delaying a project to drive up costs, the Afghans are masters at manipulating the Americans for their needs.

Having said this, one of the primary concerns is how to handle the Afghans when we are working with them on a project either on the civilian side or on the military side. Some examples of what will happen:

- The Afghan soldiers will say the last ETT promised them boots, sleeping bags, tools, etc.
- The Afghan S4 will want the American to do all of the paperwork for him
- Records for equipment will be non-existent
- Equipment will be missing and the ANA officers will demand that you fix or replace it
- The ANA will not have working material for their weapons and trucks
- Supplies and equipment will suddenly be a "problem" 1-2 days before the mission requiring the ETT to step in and either buy it or go to their higher to get it
- The village elders will always angle to get their relatives placed as workers on a project and will block workers from other villages trying to get to a worksite
- The Taliban will DEFINITELY try to shake-down any contractor for money

The key thing for the American on the ground to remember is that we are there to accomplish our mission -- not someone else's. These two need to be tied together. The Afghans should not be able to succeed unless we get what we want. That could be intelligence or the project finished. Ideally, it will be both.

The main strategies the Afghans will use in most of these situations are: stalling and foot dragging on a project to bill us more; attempting to secure the terms of the project in private so that they can blame the Americans for the job not going well and to playing one American off against another.

There are some very effective strategies for dealing with the Afghans, the major one is prevention. In all cases and whenever possible, once the contract is due to be awarded, there should be a public meeting, shura or staff meeting (military contract award)

where all of the details of the project are briefed and any questions can be asked. This will bring up any issues that have been missed during the discussions and it will prevent the contractors from blaming the Americans later for incomplete work. The more details you can put in front of the people (especially the amount being paid for the services and the pay schedule), the more the village is likely to hold the contractor accountable. Also, the village should put "sweat equity" into the project by providing free labor. Otherwise, the villagers will just let the Taliban come in and burn or destroy what was built. It just means more jobs for the village when the Americans come back in to rebuild it next year.

The next strategy revolves around what you do when something goes wrong and the project isn't getting completed. You need to know where the person lives and be able to go to their house to talk to them with the ANA. Usually a few truckloads of ANA coming to someone's house and searching it will encourage them to finish the project. No one likes strangers going through their stuff looking for evidence that they are working with the Taliban. This technique is very effective for someone who has been delaying completion of a project for a while, especially after the ANA have the opportunity to talk to the person.

When dealing with military personnel who are engaging in foot dragging or stonewalling on equipment you have to talk to their chain of command. Quite often, however, their chain of command is directly involved in the effort to try and steal equipment or supplies. In this case you have to talk to the person several times to try to get them to do the right thing. After a little while, it will become clear who you can deal with in the ANA and who you can't. Many S4 personnel are trying to steal the place blind and an ETT, group of ETTs or ETTs and ANA soldiers will have to go into the S4 office to get his full cooperation. The door should be shut when something like this happens and others should be out of the area. Yelling and arguing with the S4 in front of people will cause him to lose face and he will be obligated to get you back somehow. However, leaning into him and having the ANA make it perfectly clear to him that he will cooperate is the key to success with this type of person. It shows a united front between the ANA leadership and the ETTs. It also shows that the Americans aren't acting unilaterally to bully people around for no good reason. When everyone leaves the office, it should be all smiles and handshakes, even if the ANA have to jack someone up against a wall to get their cooperation. Americans don't need to do that directly, but we need an Afghan solution to an Afghan problem and the solution often involves some use of direct force on the Afghans part. Again, we are there to advise and support, not turn them into Americans.

The biggest part of the Afghan strategy to get money out of the Americans is very simple: ANA will ask people until they find someone who gives get answer they want. The ANA will poke around and play mommy-daddy games looking for someone who will say "yes" to them until they find the weakest link. This person just got punked. Once that weak link is found, they will exploit it to the fullest. For example, if someone in supply refuses to give up equipment or you catch a truck full of stuff going downtown to be sold and you stop it, the supply or warehouse person will come and complain to the command about the American soldiers and how they interfered with the ANA. The American command needs to let the guys on the ground handle their business and send the ANA complainer out of the office with the impression that he should not come back over such trivial matters. Blowing the story

out of proportion is a key part to the ANA strategy. After the guy is gone command needs to check out the story. If the ANA complain and the command immediately folds, then they will complain to the same person or people constantly and the ETTs will be in a weak position via the ANA that will make them ineffective across the board. Then the Americans just got punked again.

Remember that Americans are dealing with different people in a different land. Ultimately, we control the resources but they have more influence among the people. Generally speaking, the objective of the Afghans will be to get as much money or "stuff" out of the Americans for the minimal amount of effort, whether that includes a public works contract, intelligence or the very equipment the Army needs. The American leadership needs to be aware of these realities and ready to back the ETTs when strange situations come up. Without this united effort, our national goals will be impossible to achieve on the ground. And when this happens, we lose.

ISSUE 4: MOUNTAIN TOPS AND VILLAGES -- THE STRATEGIC TERRAIN

There are two essential elements of winning the battles on the ground in Afghanistan: one is the high ground and the other is the villages. The high ground has the traditional tactical advantage and the village is the center of power for the enemy.

Some important things to consider about high ground:

- Allows clear observation of your own forces and the enemy forces
- Better communication capability among the forces who possess the terrain due to Line of Sight radios
- Better focus of fires and plunging fires upon the enemy
- Better concealment during a fight

Some important things to consider about a village:

- It is where the people live
- It is the source of recruits for the government and the enemy
- It is where the supply base for the enemy will be
- It is the center of gravity for winning

These are the two strategic areas that must be held in order for us to win. Without holding the high ground we will take casualties from incoming fire and constantly find ourselves fighting uphill. It gives the enemy a place to hide and our risk factor goes way up.

The terrain advantage would seem apparent, but this is not always the case. There were three firebases in one river valley that were put directly in the middle of the valley. The enemy couldn't have placed them better themselves. The Taliban had phenomenal unobstructed views of the firebases and could see everything going inside and outside of the HESCOs. The combat posts were probably placed in their initial location because it was an open area that was easily accessible for logistics and convoys. There is a saying in the military that "You can always improve your position."

However, sometimes improving your position is moving it. No one should have built those combat locations with so little protection. There were bullet holes in the roofs of the buildings and people were getting hit there all of the time. The mistake made with those positions wasn't locating the firebases there to begin with, but rather improving them and leaving them there. It fits the definition of insanity perfectly -- doing the same thing over and over and expecting different results. Soldiers just sat there day after day taking casualties. Just moving the location of the firebases a few meters uphill against a mountain wall completely changes the angle of the attacker and allows for vastly improved protection against enemy fire. However, no one wanted to be the commander to say that the location was bad and admit a mistake. Consequently, the soldiers on the ground took incoming fire daily at the same locations and often took casualties. This problem would likely have been fixed if the battalion or brigade staff had to sleep in one of those locations for just a few days.

Another key piece of knowledge about terrain is what sort of firepower you have available. While the mountains can be treacherous or a great opportunity, depending on your position in the fight, using your weapons effectively can make the difference between a position you get shot at constantly and the location of a tactical advantage. One firebase was sitting in a half-bowl of mountains. The Pakistan border was on the back side of the mountains and insurgents were moving through a pass as well as the mountains at night. The ANA had an old D70 howitzer artillery piece that we could not use for indirect fire due to lack of technical expertise. However, it was great for direct fire. Direct fire was simple -- point and shoot. The half-bowl of mountains around the firebase provided an excellent shooting gallery for the D70. Once the D70 was placed in that location, movement across the mountains came to a standstill. Similarly, we had a mortar platoon that could not do indirect fire and it was placed in the middle of a village instead of being used in the narrow river valley to shoot up at the enemy, so we had a useless weapons system in a village that would have been phenomenal in the river valley.

Certain weapons systems have an ability to fight "up" better than others and should be purposely used in that capacity. If those weapons aren't available, then positions should not be put at locations where they are vulnerable to the enemy on higher terrain unless absolutely necessary. And if the position needs to be put in a vulnerable location, it should be moved as soon as possible to a more secure site.

The village is the most important piece of terrain that exists. The people in the village are who we need to win. Unfortunately, the village is often the least understood place for Americans. Often, regular force commanders station their soldiers outside of a village by 2-3 kms. This leaves the village vulnerable to the enemy at night and the soldiers unable to respond to a problem or support the local police quickly and effectively. Conventional American commanders tend to think of "battlespace" and kinetic operations as something to be planned on large and massive scales with large numbers of units coordinating movement. They are also concerned about risk assessments, packing lists and various other issues including force protection measures. This is a crippling mindset to us winning.

The main problem with this mindset is that it lends itself to American units isolating themselves from the people for safety and force protection reasons. We need to be in the villages 24/7 in safehouses with the ANA backing up the ANP when they need it. Providing protection and safety for the people is what will win them over. If the Americans and the ANA spend their time hiding behind HESCOs at night, then we shouldn't blame the people for being so intimidated by the enemy that they refuse to help us find them. They have to be in the village at night with no protection or backup when the bad guys come in to kidnap their family or shoot up their house. The American preoccupation with filling out patrol forms, packing lists, coordinating timelines and submitting everything 24 hours or more in advance is destroying our ability to work with the people in the villages who need quick response to issues as they come up. The leaders on the ground need flexibility and support to win the villages -- not micromanagement.

If a trusted source comes to the Americans with good information on bad guys in the area, usually the Americans won't put something together for at least 2-4 hours. By then the intelligence has become history. We need to be in the villages whenever possible and flexible enough to react almost immediately. Running a support base along a road for supply and support purposes is fine, but packing it with hundreds of troops so that a battalion commander can have troops available to him for operations he wants to run is inadvisable. It will give the commander control over his troops, but will lose us the war. We need soldiers out securing neighborhoods and denying the enemy the terrain of the villages and their people.

By having forces in the villages we deny the enemy the key terrain of the people. Additionally, anyone who wants to give us information on the bad guys is more capable of passing that. Quite often, we patrol through a village once every 3-4 weeks or maybe 2-3 times each year. If anyone wants to talk to us, they have to come out to our location and that is not good for their safety. The person will be seen going back and forth and will be targeted to be killed.

If the bad guys decide to run operations in a village we are running a safehouse, their job becomes exponentially harder. Who are the people on our side going to tell when the Taliban knock on their door? Who is going to come help the people of the village when the Taliban come to collect taxes, demand information or kidnap relatives of people there to hold hostage? Who do the people come to when the ANP are corrupt? Getting into a village and being a part of the day to day operations affords us opportunities to gather vastly more intelligence and take the initiative away from the enemy.

The Taliban need to be worried about taking the high ground from us and getting into the villages. This should be difficult for them since we are entrenched in villages and the people are on our side. Instead, we are trying to get into the villages and taking fire from the high ground. We need to change the tactics that we are using. We should give the ANA the lead and operate in support of them. That means doing things their way, not ours. Trying to make the ANA more like us separates them from the villages and mountain tops and pulls them into a firebase with the Americans. This strategy has consistently yielded poor results and lost us ground. We should stop and adjust to something that will allow us to win.

ISSUE 5: WINNING THE VILLAGE -- YOU CAN'T TELL THE PLAYERS APART WITHOUT A PROGRAM

And

DON'T STUMBLE AROUND IN THE DARK

The village is the battlefield where the people live. The most important piece of terrain is the people of the villages. If the lives of the villagers can be improved and the leadership shifted to backing the government, then that is success for us. There are several things that need to be considered when deciding what Courses of Action (CoA) need to be taken when dealing with an area:

- Who are the power players in a village?
- Who is on our side?
- Who is in the middle and can be turned?
- Who is on the enemy side and cannot be turned?
- What can we effectively get in terms of intelligence from the village?
- What actions can we take to improve our position with the villagers and turn the village?

There needs to be an assessment of a village or area done by the Afghans and Americans with the objective being which villages are most important to be turned and which ones are easiest to turn (bang for your buck).

Most American officers and enlisted have little knowledge or practical experience in dealing with assessing the intelligence value of persons or intelligence operations. Additionally, many people who have exposure to intelligence training rarely have experience in the field and dealing with handling sources. While American soldiers

have a lot of restrictions on handling sources and working with intelligence assets, the job of working an area for intelligence value needs to be done. Additionally, the Afghans are under a separate set of rules which allow them far more capability to determine who the good and bad guys are.

What is key to being successful within the context of the village is the triangulation of intelligence. Quite often the intelligence that we get is shared in informal meetings with our key intelligence personnel. This would include the Afghan Army, Afghan National Police, NDS personnel, Intelligence Team Members and Special forces personnel, just to name a few. The intelligence people on the ground who work in the area should paint the picture. Intelligence is rarely received from higher and when it is it is often wrong and rarely of good value.

Once these groups get together, they will give out any information they feel necessary. One on one meetings will occur and, clearly, not everyone will give out all of the information they have. What is essential is getting a "baseline" of information for knowing who the bad guys are and what their relationships to others are. It also gives people the opportunity to figure out who they can work with -- and who can't be trusted. Usually most people in the villages and intel community know who the guys we need to get are. This is very similar to people in a city knowing who the drug dealers are. Knowing them is really not that difficult. The tough part is getting down to the specifics of where and when to find the criminals/insurgents/supporters and what to do with them once we catch them. Among the people, rumor intelligence will abound with what is going on with the enemy AND allied units. Sorting out fact from fiction among the players is the first part to figure out. Unfortunately, no village comes with a pre-printed program and the players don't wear jerseys.

Turning a village can be ridiculously complex or relatively simple, depending on the conditions on the ground. Some villages may be tired of the Taliban coming in at night extorting money from the locals and threatening their people, but they are not strong enough to stop it. They will need a minimal amount of support from the government to kick out the insurgents. Conversely, the people may be tired of the government coming in and taking their money, so they welcome the insurgents. Each situation will be different.

There is a basic assumption in counter-insurgency that we can convince people to support the government. There are a whole host of factors which influence how people decide to back the government or the insurgents. This decision making process can be altered quickly or slowly depending on the person and the circumstances.

This all involves the decision making of an individual. There is an entire field of applied mathematics called GAME THEORY which basically states that people will make decisions based on their known set of assumptions and beliefs. According to game theory, you can lay out all of the choices a person has in a matrix with cost/benefit numbers assigned for each decision. This constitutes a "game" that people play making decisions about what is best for them.

If the conditions for a routine decision are constant and don't APPEAR to change for the individual, then that person will make the same decision every time they are presented with the same scenario. This "stuck in a rut" or "it's what we've always

done" decision can be looked at as the default decision. The decision making where the same choice is made over and over where conditions don't change is known in mathematics as a NASH EQUILIBRIUM. The person has played the game before and already knows what is in their best interest, so that is what they do. Re-looking the choice set won't happen unless the person thinks that something has changed or their needs have changed which would give them a reason to re-think their usual decision.

This consistency of making the same decision based on the belief that the circumstances are the same is what we are trying to change. We want to change the NASH EQUILIBRIUM from insurgents to government. We want the default answer for any questions about who to back to be government forces. Obviously, this is not the case already or we would not be fighting an insurgency.

So the question becomes how do we change the circumstances of the people's decision making process? Will killing the head bad guy in the area make a difference? Will getting rid of the police or sub-governor in the area make a difference if they are corrupt? Will building a freshwater plumbing system make a difference? Will building a road make a difference? Will arming the people make a difference? Will delivering health care make a difference? Will communications equipment that allows government forces to respond to ANP forces within a village quickly make a difference? Will winning over a local village elder or mullah change the way people think?

It is our job at the village level to go in and determine what will work to turn the village and what will NOT work. Doing the wrong thing can be just as damaging to our effort as enemy attacks. Being unable to protect the people that help us, building schools or clinics that fall apart, water systems that freeze up and don't work, or roads that collapse make us look incompetent and we lose face.

There are 2 basic things that need to be done when a unit moves into an area for us to be successful. One is to sort out who the players are. The other part is to sort out what needs to be done that will be most effective in changing the people's default response to the insurgents from backing them or sitting on the fence to backing the government. If those two major issues are effectively addressed, the village can be won. Without doing both, we are stumbling around aimlessly in the dark taking action blindly and hoping that things work out in our favor. Hope is never a plan.

ISSUE 6: ELEMENTS OF POWER

The village has numerous people within it with numerous different loyalties and motivations for action.

Consider a few of the potential players within the village:

- Who are the leaders?
- What motivates each one of them?
- Who has an interest in backing the government?
- Who has an interest in backing the insurgents?
- What are the capabilities of the insurgents in a village?
- What are the capabilities of the government forces in the area?

All of these things in a village, district or province point to one thing -- power. Power is the ability to get done what you want to get done when you want to do it. If you have the ability to do what you want when you want, that is power. There is a power establishment within the villages that we need to change. How do we know we need to change it? Because American soldiers are there. We would like to bring them home victorious. Winning the village is essential to victory.

Power can be broken down into four basic elements:

- Influence
- Knowledge
- Time
- Resources

Knowing where we are stronger and where the enemy is weaker in each area will help determine what Courses of Action we need to take to undercut the enemy within the village and to bring the government into a more powerful position. The following short examples will help define and clarify each element of power.

Influence is the ability to ask or tell someone to do something and get their willing cooperation. In America, examples of people with influence are politicians and celebrities. While they are usually well off, their ability to get people to do things using their influence far outweighs their financial capability. The opposite of this is also true. There are people that are so despised that no one will listen to them on anything. Influence is all about your credibility, or lack thereof, with other people. In a village, it might be the local mullah that preaches against the Americans. It might be

a local village elder who has children within the Taliban power structure. A local warrior who was mujahedeen during Taliban times may have a lot of influence within the village. These people are minor celebrities in the village and in order to change the attitude of the village, you need the influence of these people or you need to set up others to have that positive influence for what we want in order to displace the people who do not like us.

Knowledge is knowing how to do something. If you are a mechanic, you know how to fix cars. If you are an electrician, you know how to wire a building. Rocket scientists know how to build rockets. Physicians know how to treat wounded. Knowledge is an element of power. People in a village who know where a weapons cache is that the enemy has hidden have the power of knowledge. People who know how the enemy operates, where their safehouses are and when they are going to attack have the power of knowledge. The enemy's knowledge of the terrain and people is power. The more knowledge you have, the better.

Time is marked in seconds, minutes, days, weeks or years. Time for most Americans in a combat zone is counted down until they go home. Another American soldier can see time in country as how long he has to complete projects. Another American can see time as how long they have to capture bad guys. The enemy can see time as how long they have until another American unit arrives or how long until the Americans or the coalition forces leave altogether. For healthy children, they have a lot of time. For sick older people, they have very little time. Time all depends on your perspective of what you want to accomplish. It can be a hindrance or a help, but having time on your side is definitely an aspect of power. You can wait your enemy out if you have time, but you have to defeat an enemy with a sense of urgency if time is against you. Your position may grow stronger over time due to improvements in personnel and material or it may grow weaker as your personnel and material are worn out or used.

Resources -- stuff you have. We usually think of resources as money, but money really represents resources. Oil is a resource that some countries have which they trade for other things they need. In Afghanistan, there are jewels to be mined in the mountains but they are often traded for something else. Timber in Afghanistan is a resource which is very limited and villages fight over what little treed land is still there.

Combining the elements -- All four of these elements -- influence, knowledge, time and resources -- combine to determine what capabilities a person or organization has. If you are the richest person on the planet and can command the entirety of the worlds resources that's great -- to a point. Once your child gets cancer that no one has a cure for, you will realize that you need knowledge to save them. If you know how to build the worlds most energy efficient house but don't have the money to do it, you cannot make that happen. Having the knowledge without the resources yields the same result as having the resources without the knowledge.

In the same scenario above, the rich person with the sick child might have some time before the child dies, so they can apply the resources they have to hire scientists to work on a cure for the child. If the guy who wants to build a house has time, he can save money and pursue a loan. That is the advantage that time gives.

Influence is the ability to get people to do something -- anything. If you are a scientist who is brilliant and working on something that can cure your mother of a particular type of cancer when the rich guy comes to hire you, you won't work for that person no matter how much money they offer you. That's because the person asking doesn't have enough influence to get the scientist to change his mind. If you are the guy trying to build a house but the house you want to build is against the building codes in the location you want, then you need to influence the local board to change the zoning codes to allow you to build the house.

In Afghanistan each village is concerned with these sort of issues and how we turn the village in favor of the government will depend on how well we play these elements of power in our favor. There are two aspects of this strategy.

1. Reduce the power of the enemy within the village
2. Build up the power of the government within the village.

We need to reduce the bad guys power within a village and increase government power. Tipping the balance of power in favor of our people is what counterinsurgency is all about.

What should concern a commander on the ground is how to get this done. Each village will be different and the answers are almost never straightforward. Will building a medical clinic in the town help take care of the local villagers or will it become a medical treatment and supply facility for the enemy? Or, will the drugs be sold in Pakistan and the profits taken by the local doctor and a kickback given to the Taliban? This is just one example of some of the many outcomes that can possibly come from the successful completion of a project. The question with a successful project is not only did it get done, but who did it make stronger -- us or the bad guys? Did the successful completion of your project just add value to the government position or the enemy position? Did your project just add something to an individuals resources or the villages?

Someone will benefit from any project -- the question to be answered is who. We need to make sure that the effects of our efforts are directed toward shoring up a stronger government that can stand on it's own.

ISSUE 7: ELEMENTS OF POWER -- EVALUATING INFLUENCE

Influence is the ability to get people to do what you ask or tell them to. Consider how this works within a village or area and how people react when someone speaks or gives orders. There are many examples of people who have influence:

- A local Mullah who preaches at the Mosque
- A village elder who has lived within the same 15km of his house for 60 years
- An insurgent leader whom the people know will send bad guys into the village at night to kill them if they don't cooperate
- A local police chief who is respected for the performance of his duties
- A local doctor who is constantly treating people
- A respected former Mujahedeen warrior who fought the Soviets

There are many people who possess influence within a village. Part of our job is to determine who has influence and of those people who can we turn to a more positive government position. If we determine that they have influence but cannot be turned to a more positive government position, then how do we neutralize, discredit or get rid of them.

The inverse of this influence is also true. If someone is so hated by the people in an area that no matter what the hated person says the people will not listen, then that is a form of negative influence which we need to be aware of.

Consider a Mullah who preaches at a local Mosque and absolutely hates the government. He preaches against it and fumes about how the Americans are there to corrupt his people. How do you handle this? You can call him into the firebase for a meeting and listen to his problems; send the ANA or ANP to talk to him; build another mosque and bring in another Mullah (unlikely); have him followed by a source so that he can lead the source to bad guys; have a source in the village take notes on who comes and goes and at what times to find out who he is talking to; etc.

There are any number of actions that can be taken to counter this problem or use it to figure out the bad guy network within the village. We want to weaken the influence of an individual like this. We do not want to build a school at or near his mosque and let him teach in it. Neither would we want to have humanitarian assistance that we would hand out to the village using him as a prominent person to coordinate or help with this sort of effort. We also do not want to put him in a position to handle any government work or funding projects.

There must be a calculated effort made to know what this person's intentions are and what network he is in. It may be possible to turn this guy and change his mind, but we will likely need some sort of inside information to do this. This can be obtained

through various US government and Afghan sources. Does the Taliban have his sons in a MADRASA across the border in Pakistan? Who are his daughters married to? Has he had trouble having sex with his wife? Maybe we can slip him some Viagra and that will change his mind. Does the guy have some sort of clear pain from arthritis? We could get him some arthritis treatment. Is there a sick child or grandchild that we can help fix? Someone who is deeply ideologically committed to a cause may be very difficult to turn to our side, but it is usually possible. The question is -- is it worth the effort?

One thing we never do -- we never give something for nothing. We want someone's good will and influence but they had better give us some intelligence to go with that. Otherwise, they may get a small sample of things, but not much of anything.

It may be easier to discredit or displace a person that is having a negative impact on the village. If the person is popular among the people we will need to bring to light some things that will make him less popular. Something small like giving nice warm jacket or two to his children during the winter will make some other people in the village a little jealous and think that he is getting things for the village and keeping them for himself. Another good example of discrediting someone is when we know we have a big raid or weapons cache that we know the person we are targeting knows about is to go and see that person after the raid and thank them profusely in public. You can give them a gift of new clothes or nice chair -- anything to make some of his friends think that he is selling them out. Another option is to take that same person along on the raid. You can send someone down to the village before you roll out and tell them to bring him back. When the people at the raid site see the person there, they will think that person is helping you. When Then, after you go and get everything, the people who are there will see that the person you don't like is trying to help you find things.

Discrediting someone can be very easy or extremely difficult and time consuming. People in many areas have known each other for some time, but that doesn't prevent us from being able to discredit them. If the job is done well enough there are several positive potential outcomes: the person will leave fearing for their life from their former friends; the person will be eliminated by their former friends or the person will come to us to turn over his former friends because he fears for his life.

Displacing someone of influence is a different methodology. One of the biggest abilities we have to lessen that person's influence is to introduce something new into the environment. This includes such things as television, cell phones and roads. People simply having the option to do other things will often lessen the negative influence of someone. Additionally, we can set up an opposing point of view by helping a person who is more favorable to us grow their influence within a village. Consider replacing the service that the person with the negative influence for the village with someone else, even if it is another village away. In the case of doctor you might set up a competing clinic nearby and supply it with better drugs. In the case of a Mullah, you might start coordinating for a MEDCAP immediately after prayer on Saturday at the mosque of a Mullah you want to back or hand out humanitarian assistance at the place of the person who is favorable to you.

Finally, you can simply put the word out on the street that there will be no help of any sort coming to a certain village unless someone we don't like leaves. That can often have a big impact as villagers from one place see the villagers from another getting schools, clinics, water purification and electric projects done. Also, refusing to hire anyone from a certain village until an undesirable influence is gone can be very effective.

There are multiple ways in which to influence a situation and every situation will be different. However, without knowing who possesses influence on the ground, who can be turned, what the effort required to turn someone is or not knowing the techniques, you will be stumbling around hoping for success rather than executing a well focused plan. The well focused plan usually works better.

The first thing to do is evaluate who has influence, why the person has it and how they use it. After that, decide courses of action on which individuals to target for help growing their influence and which ones to target for reducing their influence.

ISSUE 8: ELEMENTS OF POWER -- KNOWLEDGE

There is a lot we would like to know. Winning this war or any counterinsurgency would be made much easier if the enemy would just send us a list of who is on their side, where they lived and a meeting schedule. Unfortunately, this idea has not made it through the insurgent suggestion box to the insurgent leadership for them to put before a committee on insurgent operational changes. Until then, we will have to think about what the enemy is doing and address the root causes of the insurgency that we are fighting.

Consider some of the things that we would like to know. It's not that no one knows these because someone does.

- Where are the weapons caches?
- Who are the members of the insurgency?
- Where are the likely locations of upcoming attacks?
- What are the safehouse locations of the insurgents?

Also, consider some questions that we would like to know the answers to which no one knows for certain. It also makes answering these questions somewhat of an art to get them right.

- What people should we target to help turn the village or area?

- Which actions should we take to help win over the populace?
- What are the root causes of insurgency in a particular area? (Corrupt govt., no govt., lack of services, etc)
- What steps should we take to address the root causes of an insurgency?

Note that there are two distinct areas that we need to figure out COAs (Courses of Action) for and each revolves around separate issues. One is blunting the enemy and the effectiveness of his attacks. This is of great concern to most commanders, as it should be. The cost in lives for a commander and his soldiers is not something that is taken lightly and is often the overriding concern of every mission. However, in the overall strategy of winning the war, addressing the causes of the insurgency must also be given a top priority. But you have to know what the true causes of the insurgency are in order to address them. Focusing exclusively on blunting the enemy attacks will not win the war. You need the knowledge of what the enemy is doing and the knowledge of how to deny them the territory of the villages and people.

There are important lessons learned here from other conflicts. One unit in our other theatre of operations was working on a sewage project in one part of a city. They were responsible for pouring millions into getting the sewage out of the street and actually having it flow into a processing plant. The unit was getting attacked constantly and couldn't figure out why no one appreciated the work they were doing. After a replacement unit came in and a series of meetings were held, the local leaders said they were more worried about the lack of electricity. They had been smelling and dealing with shit in the streets for years and did not see it as an issue. Electricity, however, was a big issue. As that issue got addressed, the hardcore insurgents were killed and the people were given jobs protecting their areas, the place got cooperative.

Just taking action sometimes works, but knowing that the action you take is going to make a difference is good strategy. Being able to read the tea-leaves on the ground involves knowing who the players are and what their hidden agendas are. Building a girls school may be an objective for the Civil Affairs unit on the ground, but the village elders may not care. They may want a boys school built, electricity run, roads improved, better weapons for the police or any number of things that is on the local leaders priority list. If you put money into a project that they don't care for or even are against, then it is tough to convince them to give you information on bad guys in the area, much less back the government and stand up to the insurgents themselves. Additionally, if you sit down with these people and they discuss their concerns with you, but you don't address them, then you've wasted their time and they have lost face for even dealing with you. You can't "divine" that information from them or do some sort of Vulcan mind-meld to see what these guys would like. This is the real world and you have to sit down and talk to them to figure out what their intentions are or what their desired outcomes are. There is no other way to gain this level of personal knowledge.

Note that you can introduce some new information to the village or area. This adds to the level of knowledge that the village has and may well change the outcome of how the area. Remember that all you need is for the villagers to want to back you more than the bad guys. Handing out a few sample tablets of Viagra to the local village

elders might be effective. The Taliban may see this as against the Koran, but in a country where men have 2-3 wives and lots of health issues, this is about the safest recreational drug they can take. Once you are the person that helps them out with their sex life, you become the guy who helps get them laid and everyone likes their buddy who helps get them laid. They may well be willing to tell you more just from feeling better about themselves and they see a benefit in their relationship with you.

Knowledge of relationships and of skill sets on the ground is extremely valuable. If a known bad guy leader is from a village and his family is respected there, then he will have numerous friends who will be with him or help him. If you do not know this information, then you are at a disadvantage. Also, knowing what kind of skill sets people have in the village is extremely important. You may need to hire an electrician for a project or the contractor will need to hire an electrician for a project. If the village has one, that will help. If the village does not have one, there will be issues with getting electric properly connected. There is the same problem with pouring cement. If there is no one there who knows how to pour cement properly, then the basis will be weak and the building will eventually collapse. If you are building a medical clinic, there should be a qualified doctor to utilize it properly.

One important piece of strategy is to not give the village any projects that they do not have a reasonable chance of maintaining. If the knowledge base is not there to support the project, then don't do it. They may want a nuclear research facility, but the chances are better of the Commander-in-Chief winning "Dancing with the Stars" before he leaves office than having an American standards electrician in a remote village, much less a nuclear engineer.

The knowledge base within a village is one of the determinate factors on what can be done within a village or area. The knowledge people possess is a determining factor in any society about what they can produce and their economy. Building schools and educating people is a critical part of economic development in any area, but it must be built incrementally. Trying to run a school that teaches kids to read requires a teacher and the assets to teach the children. Teaching welding, electrician skills or anything else will be limited by the skills of the people available. If those skills don't exist, they can be introduced or improved upon. However, trying to make too big a leap forward will result in collapsed effort and a failed project. The knowledge of the people must be evaluated for these sort of issues.

This is also one key area where the Americans will often have an advantage over the enemy. While we may not have local knowledge, we can build that and with the cooperation of the ANA and ANP, a considerable amount of what we lack in local knowledge can be made up. Consequently, what the locals lack in technical knowledge we can help with greatly through hiring contractors and bringing in people with technical expertise. Whenever someone is brought in with a skillset from the outside, it is critical that the local people give him an "assistant" who can help, observe and learn from the other person. A conscious effort must be made to build the knowledge base with the local populace.

We also lend a certain knowledge base when it comes to dealing with maps and contribute with intelligence that is NOT HUMINT based. We know how to use a GPS and a map to tell where we are on the ground; how to use satellite radios to relay a

position; how call for air support, etc. There is no doubt that the ANA and ANP benefit from having the Americans there to help them fight.

The question we need to ask ourselves is how much local area knowledge are we getting out of the ANA, ANP, NDS, local sub-governor, village elders, etc? How much technical knowledge are we putting into a village to help them? Adding to the knowledge base of people within an area that is loyal to the government is a good thing. Adding to the knowledge base of the people who are our enemy means that they construct better bombs to blow us up with.

Either way, knowledge is an element of power that the local commander on the ground will have to address and estimate to achieve his goals.

ISSUE 9: ELEMENTS OF POWER -- TIME

Time will never be on your side when fighting an insurgency. Afghanistan in particular is known as the "graveyard of empires" because of the difficulties involved in fighting there.

Consider some issues involved as we count off time in the war zone:

- There is a cost from national treasury everyday
- There is a cost in human life everyday
- There is a cost in public support everyday
- The villager who has lived there his whole life lives in the same house his family has been in for hundreds of years.
- The same villager is very concerned about his FAMILY honor and reputation within the 15-30 kilometers of his house. He has rarely gone further than that, but the entirety of his 50 years of life is wrapped up in that area.
- The villager is dismissive of most of the rest of the planet
- The soldiers get tired of being in-country and want to come home
- The enemy does have the same concerns, but on a much smaller scale

The element of time means that the villager can wait. The Soviets were in Afghanistan for 9 years. Then foreign fighters and Mujahedeen fought over the area, now the Americans, Brits, French and many other countries are there. If you are Afghan, you don't need to travel the world -- the world comes to you.

The villagers of Afghanistan have seen foreign nationals on their territory for many, many years. Fighting is nothing new to them and foreigners come and go as far as they are concerned. When we work a village for intelligence and information, the average Afghan villager is very wary about dealing with the Americans or any other foreigners because they will be gone soon and he will still be there left to deal with whatever changes happened while we were there.

Our timeline to the average Afghan is very, very short. A unit that is going to Afghanistan spends the 4 months before getting ready to leave. Then, once a unit gets to Afghanistan, there is usually 2-3 weeks time in which the new unit works with the unit that is being relieved. Once that is done, there is a 49 week countdown that starts for most soldiers before they go back home. The last 3-4 weeks of the tour will be busy getting ready to leave and handing off the area to a new unit, really giving us only 45 weeks to figure out what to accomplish, finish what the last unit started, get something else going and try to secure the area from bad guys. If a unit is lucky, they have some of the same people operating in the same area of the country it was in before. If they are unlucky, no one in that unit has even been to Afghanistan before, much less the area that they are operating in.

The learning curve on someone coming into an unfamiliar area with an unfamiliar environment is extremely steep. Think about moving into a new city with a new job. There are all sorts of things you will need to know -- where to get your car worked on, where to buy food, where to get a drivers' license, how to build a social circle of friends, which schools to send their kids to, etc. Most people rent for about a year before they buy a house just to get to know a new area before they commit to a big permanent expense.

Acclimatizing a new unit to a new area takes time. Most of the people who move to a new location take about one year just to get fully acclimatized and really become effective at their jobs and their lives. We only have one year on the ground to get acclimatized and accomplish our mission of turning as many people in the area to our side as possible. Then we leave and hand it over to someone else.

Our timeline is compressed, to say the least. Additionally, the skillset that comes with the unit to an area may or may not meet the needs of the mission. Usually it is a partial fit, at best. Sometimes the unit skillset is a complete mismatch.

Time is power. Our enemy can wait us out. Something will come up on our end that will distract us from the war eventually and public support will erode. Each dollar that is spent on a war is money not spent on a school, healthcare, roads, buildings, etc. Each life that is lost has a political cost. While we will have to expend both treasury and lives to win a war, the cost needs to be minimal and the time needs to be minimal. Our enemy understands that each day he goes without loosing he has won. We need to understand this too.

Because of these time loss realities, we need to be effective as possible once we hit the ground. A change that should be made is for each unit to send an advance part of four persons per company size element halfway through the tour of the unit they are due to relieve for continuity. Currently, while there is an advanced party, their main concern is getting the new guys in and settled. The old unit is responsible completely

for the hand-off of information to the new unit. Staggering a few people halfway through the tour to help them understand the area, monitor the information coming through and keeping focus with the new unit would add a level of continuing institutional knowledge that is often lost. The advance/integration party would end their tour halfway through their parent unit's tour once their relief arrives -- a new advance/integration party halfway through the in-country unit's tour.

Another concept would be to set up teams that remain in-country and focus on an area for 2-3 years that work with the units as they rotate through. These people would be responsible for relaying information and keeping the new unit up to speed on the history and intelligence of the area, giving guidance on what has worked before and what has not. We spend a lot of time figuring out what has not worked, just to put another unit in who comes in to re-invent the wheel. Also, knowing and tracking the pattern of attacks and enemy behavior over time will make our efforts much easier.

Keeping people in theatre who want to stay in-country needs to be encouraged and simplified. It is currently almost impossible to stay in theatre and there is no incentive for it. Most regular US Army units will take all of their people home with them without exception. Often only soldiers of the National Guard or the Reserve have the option to stay in theatre and then there is no incentive to take this action. It takes 6 to 8 weeks just to prepare a soldier to come into theatre. It also takes 2-3 weeks to do a battle hand-off and another 10 weeks to get used to running operations in an area. Just keeping one person in theatre saves the Army about 10 weeks in training and hand-off time alone. If we had 1000 to 2000 soldiers staying around country out in the field, working the day-to-day issues, we would greatly improve our effectiveness. However, we don't incentivize this within our forces. Soldiers aren't given a month of free leave for staying a year or given an extra 1k-3k each month for their second tour. We don't even allow them to get a second award for the tour until they leave under the assumption that there can only be one tour award per tour and if you extend, then it is one tour not two.

In short, there are no incentives for soldiers to stay additional tours. This set up is completely counter to our strategy. We need people who understand the area and know the people. We should encourage soldiers to do more continuous tours if we want to win. We need to quit watching our talent get aboard a plane and go home, sometimes even when they don't want to.

Keeping people around for multiple tours helps us not lose time in two major ways: it keeps people around who remember what has been tried and why it did or didn't work. That helps us make more effective decisions and shortens our time cycle for getting things done. Also, it builds our ability to continue productive relationships with the Afghan people, which is central to our strategy and ability to win.

Time is not on our side and we need to do everything we can to make lasting connections and differences with the Afghan people. Unfortunately, the way we handle both our strategic units and individual soldiers does not make the most of their relatively short time on the ground. The policies are actually contrary to our strategic and policy goals. We should focus on the effectiveness of our people and soldiers. It saves us time -- of which we need all we can get.

ISSUE 10: ELEMENTS OF POWER -- RESOURCES

Don't own a Ferrari when you live in the projects.

One area in which we usually have an undisputed advantage is in resources. The United States will come in and outspend anyone. Each side is limited to the resources they can produce and borrow, both locally and internationally. The Taliban have foreign funding sources all over the world from small mom and pop stores selling CDs to citizens of oil rich nations who just don't like the Americans. Just because we have the advantage doesn't mean that the resources are used wisely or efficiently, but without having large amounts of resources available to you to begin with, the fight becomes tough. Consider what the Americans bring to the table:

- There is more computer technology in the Blue Force Tracker computers and satellite radios in the HMMVs that roll into a village than the entire village usually has
- We bring in soldiers who have been paid to train for combat operations. The cost of paying the American soldiers salary in a platoon size element for one month is greater than the economic output of a village for the year. This doesn't include the equipment, food or other expenses. Just soldier salary.
- We buy weapons with special scopes, mounts, camelbacks to carry water, knives, etc. The amount spent on equipment that an American soldier has could easily outfit a squad size element of enemy, if not a platoon.
- It is not uncommon that the total cost of an American HMMV is what the total cost of building every structure in the village would be.

The one area where the Americans can dominate the battlefield is in the element of resources. However, just spending money is not necessarily what needs to be done.

Think about owning a really nice car in the biggest slum in a city. And you have to park it on the street. You made a huge investment in the vehicle. But now people are breaking into it constantly, so the alarm is going off all the time. Also, when people aren't breaking into it, they are scratching it with a key, putting dents into it and using spray paint on the side of the car. Soon, your nice shiny Ferrari looks like a very expensive ghetto wagon. The repair bill is high, you have to put it in the shop so you never get a chance to drive it and after a little while you just want to get rid of it but you owe more on the vehicle than you can sell it for. After a relatively short period of time it would have been cheaper to buy the house next door, tear it down, build a nice garage with a sophisticated alarm system and hire a private security guard at nights.

This is what a bad strategy for an area will do to your resources. If they are not used wisely, you have something that starts out nice but ends up costing more than you can possibly afford. Putting in a nice project that is constantly getting destroyed or blown

up by the bad guys is not a desirable outcome. There is a total cost of ownership that comes with anything and we need to know what that cost is. If we are not willing to pay those costs, then we should not start the project.

An experienced CW3 from Special Forces gave me the advice that the Afghans don't understand the way we do business at all. They see it as weak when we come in, do a site survey and then go back to ask our superiors for approval. His advice was to determine what you want to get done, but don't say a word about it. Just show up with the equipment when the project gets approved and dig the well, build the building, etc. Don't tell the people in a village anything you can't deliver right there and then. What usually ends up happening is that one American unit comes in from a PRT or something and talks about a project. After that, every American unit that comes through the place has to listen to questions about some project they've never heard of until then.

What exactly makes resources valuable in the counter-insurgency and Afghan environment is the ability to use them to strengthen the people on our side. You may go into a village and find out they want electricity, but the security of the village is dependent on the local ANP, who have very little ammo, no force protection (HESCOs, reinforced static traffic control points, etc) and need help. Without providing security for your projects, they will fail or drain resources. If the ANP need radios, HESCOs and ammo, then build the structure for the ANP first. After you can secure an area by building the police and ANA up, focus on what the villagers need or at least do both at the same time. You can dig a well and put up HESCOs. You can also tie the successful completion of the ANP force protection completion in as a condition for putting in a water system or school. Additionally, all of the projects need to be located near the ANP station so that there is some security. If the ANP are corrupt or incompetent, then when they fail to protect the project it is a reason to fire them.

Resources can immediately tip the balance of power in a village or area. This is literally a case of "bang for buck". Quite often there is little to no analysis done of projects. Unfortunately, someone in the command structure will often look at what looks good on an OER. After he sees what looks good on someone else's OER, the person then decides what he needs to do. For example, the last guy put down that he had "successfully completed over 15 million dollars worth of CERP projects that directly contributed to the strategic goals..." etc., etc, etc. What that really translates into is if the last guy did 15 million, the next guy will want to put down 20 million. Whether these resources are allocated well or not can be debatable.

The use of resources that contributes to the fight is what helps us win. Just spending money or ordering equipment is not what is required. There is a judgment that needs to be made over whether the money being spent on new projects or equipment is properly accounted for or used. Putting in buildings that are stripped for wire, lighting fixtures and anything else valuable is not a success. Money and equipment must be spent and bought with a STRATEGIC goal in mind, not an OER bullet point.

Using resources and raising the value of a village is a good thing -- if the village and the people are on our side. If there is a strategy to win over a certain area from Taliban control and part of the strategy is to dig a well for every village we can, then there is

effectively no strategy for the area. The villages controlled by insurgents will benefit from the wells just like the villages that backed the government. There may have been more money spent than the previous rotation and there may have been more development done in the area than before, but we may not be any closer to winning. If the resource management was done poorly then we will actually have lost ground.

Everything we do must be looked at in terms of how it helps us win. In the case of resources, the decision must address 2 questions -- Can we secure what we are spending money on and did it help improve our position? If we can't secure it, then it will not be ours for long after we leave. If it did not result in someone giving us intelligence or improving the position of the government within the village, then we have wasted our time.

Look at putting in projects like calling for artillery. If you just randomly put artillery rounds into an area you can't see, you might hit the enemy if they are there. You might hit your own forces if they are there. You might hit civilians if they are there. You might also hit nothing if there is nothing there, but you will tear up the land.

Using resources has a similar effect. Putting in projects randomly without a strategic purpose or pattern will have an effect -- the question is will it help you, your allies or the enemy. If you have an effective strategy for winning in an area, the projects you have will produce happy villagers, more productive villages, dead bad guys and a better government organization. Poor resource allocation will produce better resourced bad guys, unhappy villagers, worse governance and dead Americans and allies.

Money is a weapons system. If you don't use it well, then the enemy will use it against you.

ENABLERS AND DISTRACTERS

"Winning is habit. Unfortunately, so is losing." -- Vince Lombardi

The US military has become more attached to procedures than it is to outcomes. This mindset has the effect of causing us to lose a war and no one cares as long as we are following the procedures. The first step to winning is to stop losing habits.

We continue to "check the blocks", so we must be successful because that is how we have now defined success. Success is a completed process, not an outcome to the military. The rotations come and go through Afghanistan, people collect a good OER and an award, but we continue to lose. However, no one is ever held accountable for the failures and everyone just continues to cycle through and get a "go" for their career. Consider a few issues:

- We have well educated officers leading capable soldiers. Our enemy is generally led by illiterate or partially literate commanders with part-time minimally trained soldiers -- yet the enemy is winning
- We bring billions of dollars into a country to try and win a war. Our enemy doesn't spend 1/1000th of the money we do, but they are holding their own -- and winning
- The strategy for many is not to win or defeat the enemy. It is to rotate through and go home with a good award and OER or NCOER
- We cannot get scopes for weapons in-country, but we had so much new office furniture and flat-screen television sets on the FOBs people were throwing away things that still worked

How can we possibly be losing in a war we should be easily winning? Because we are tied to a myriad of multiple processes that are not outcome based. Additionally, these processes are completely uncoordinated. For the military, the process is definitely more important than the results. The processes must be followed even if they result in the unnecessary loss of life, equipment or even a war. This mentality must change drastically for us to achieve victory.

What the leadership, across the board from lieutenant to general, needs to realize for us to win is that everything needs to be oriented toward what works on the ground. Every person at every level is putting in place a policy. There are policies for going to sick call, leaving the wire, taking prisoners, writing memos, reporting to higher, etc. Most of these policies were put into place in order to make it easier for someone in a bureaucracy to do their job. This does not make it easier for the person on the ground to do their job or to win the war. It makes it harder.

Every policy or rule throughout the military is one of two things: an enabler or distracter. There is nothing else. What happens is a soldier is required to take an action or not allowed to take an action according to a policy. That policy either helps him accomplish his mission and win the war or it distracts him from his mission and makes it tougher to win.

There are multiple policies in place that prevent us from winning and there are more being added every day. We were doing better in 2002-2005 when soldiers were unobtrusively running around Afghanistan in ordinary pickup trucks and no body armor. Now we have large HMMVs that limit us to certain roads and are required to wear large amounts of body armor which prevent us from moving. We have lost our flexibility, maneuverability and versatility because someone who is not even fighting (and probably never has) wrote a policy about what the soldier needs to do on the ground at all times.

These policies put into place and stacked on top of each other, have eroded our combat effectiveness. In some areas it has made our soldiers useless and combat ineffective.

From stateside training to operations in theatre, there are multiple policies put in place that PREVENT us from winning. The argument can easily be made that we are a tougher obstacle than the enemy. Policies are usually put in place based on the assumption that if the last guy did X, then the next guy needs to do X + Y. The problem is that X was good enough and should have been left alone. The addition of Y canceled any value X originally had.

There is one key element to remember in all of this -- there is a limited amount of time and effort for anything. If we need to win, we need to be flexible enough to do what it takes to achieve victory and not let people who are completely enamored with policies and procedures get in the way. They look at victory as a nice, clean bureaucratic system. Victory should be seen as dead enemy, reliable governance and a peaceful place for people to live.

The process starts with home station training. Ft Bragg can be used as an example. There is operation "clean-sweep" two times a year and it lasts for a week each time. It is intended to clean up post and teach the soldiers not to throw stuff down in the woods because they will just have to clean it up. However, with the OPTEMPO of the soldiers being the way it is, I would rather have them at the known distance range, learning PASHTO or DARI or teaching the soldiers Afghan history or Afghan culture, sending them to electrician courses, generator repair courses, construction courses, etc. However, there was never any stopping CLEAN SWEEP. But did CLEAN SWEEP enable us to win or distract us from preparing to win? It did one or the other.

Another example is a mobilization station run by 1st Army. When a unit gets there, 1st Army has a chart lined up with all the things you need to do get out. We referred to it as "Do the trick, get the banana." You're not a soldier, just a trained monkey. One of the things that we are not teaching is how to use pack animals in the mountains. Why? Because someone decided that we didn't need that skill. But, in my opinion, it is far more important than 1/2 of the classes that are taught at mobstation, especially if you've deployed to Afghanistan before. What a soldier IS required to do at mobstation is to sit at a poorly run range all day to zero and qualify. I have been to a mobstation where I went to the qualification range to shoot after I had zeroed my weapon. When I got there, I was told that I was not given the proper coaching on how to use my weapon (PMOI -- Primary Method of Instruction) and even though I had successfully zeroed, I could not qualify without a PMOI.

When I explained that I was going into my 3rd combat deployment, had 8 years of active duty time, decorated for valor and was a CPT, the NCO running the range said he didn't care, I had to do a PMOI. I returned to base to explain to the LTC in charge of ranges (who had never deployed) that I needed to qualify. The LTC said I couldn't qualify without a PMOI because without the proper PMOI I might accidentally shoot someone and then it would be his fault. I could get a PMOI in 2 days, the LTC told me. All people have to get a PMOI he told me, no exceptions. It was his policy. But was it an enabler or a distracter? And why can't a CPT going to his 3rd deployment get an exception? I would say that it was a distracter and the policy was put in place by an overcautious officer who did not know what he was doing.

These examples go on endlessly. Our enemy does not have any of these hindrances. The only thing the enemy is concerned with is winning. The enemy does not mandate

written policies and bureaucratic timelines or milestones. The enemy is everything we are not -- flexible, maneuverable, effective -- and winning.

Until we take a very serious look at the way the military conducts business across the board we will continue to flounder in a war we should easily be winning. As a commander at any level on the ground, all leaders at all levels need to take an immediate look at what the old unit was doing and ask the outgoing soldiers what they thought needed to be eliminated because it made no sense or was stupid. Usually the soldiers will be more than happy to inform anyone who asks what they see as a problem.

Don't discount the wisdom of JOE -- remember JOE KNOWS. If you want to find out what is going on in your unit, just ask a private. He'll tell you what isn't working. That information will help you eliminate distracters. All leaders at every level should actively look to eliminate ineffective policies as a top priority to winning the war as soon as they get in country.

The American military needs to get out of its' losing habits and start developing winning habits. War is an outcome based business and we need to start paying attention to the bottom line -- winning. Getting rid of the mentality that following procedures equates to success is the major first step we need to winning.

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In January of 2007 he assumed command of 290th Military Police Company from the MDARNG and his command was responsible for guarded detainees in Iraq from February 2007 through October 2007.

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