

KILL/CAPTURE AND THE EFFECTS ON AFGHANISTAN'S RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNITED STATES

for

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Abstract

The purpose of this report is to evaluate the controversy surrounding the International Security and Assistance Forces' Kill/Capture campaign in Afghanistan, and make a recommendation based on the data collected. The report describes the complaints of the Afghani people and documents the support they are receiving from the Afghani government. The strategy of the Kill/Capture campaign is assessed against the U.S. Army's counterinsurgency manual for discrepancies. The methodology of counterinsurgency is explained in brief and deficiencies of the Afghan campaign are highlighted. Resulting in the recommendation that some changes be made to procedures but on the whole the campaign is going as planned and should continue as long as conditions require.

INTRODUCTION

In the *Frontline* broadcast “Kill/Capture”, Grey and Edge explain the controversy around kill/capture is arising because of the killing of civilians in the process of carrying out the raids to capture insurgents. The very nature of the “night raids” is also causing issues with Afghans that feel culturally abused when their homes are entered by counterinsurgent forces. The use of dogs and the removal of Afghani women from their homes during searches are very offensive to the local populace. The inhabitants of towns and villages searched in the “night raids” can become sympathetic to the insurgents due to the perceived harassment. Many of the Afghani government’s higher officials voicing disapproval of the policies are speculating the campaign is doing more damage than good (Grey and Edge). This report studies these claims and evaluates the possibility the government is making the statements to rally support from the people.

BACKGROUND

Kill/Capture

Furthermore, the *Frontline* broadcast states Coalition forces have engaged in an endeavor to remove the insurgency from Afghanistan. The very controversial portion of this campaign, known as Kill/Capture, ultimately led to the killing of Osama bin Laden. The campaign utilizes information-gathering techniques refined in Iraq and other areas to establish who the insurgents are and where they are. Once this information has received verifications, missions, normally occurring at night, seek to capture the insurgents to gather additional information, but often the missions require the killing of insurgents (Grey and Edge). Lt. Col. John Nagl (Ret.), a Pentagon Advisor, made the following statement:

We’re getting so good at various electronic means of identifying, tracking, locating members of the insurgency that we’re able to employ this extraordinary machine, an almost industrial-scale counterterrorism killing machine that has been able to pick out and take off the battlefield not just the top level al Qaeda-level insurgents, but also increasingly is being used to target mid-level insurgents. (Grey and Edge)

The method of operations is in place for the safety of troops as well as the effectiveness it possesses. Opposition of the Afghani government to a campaign that is so successful, on so many levels, does not seem realistic. The Afghan government is making the statements in an effort to win support of the people. The people of Afghanistan who are seeking relief from the ravages of war are finding support of the government may be the quickest way to that relief. Support the Afghan government against the insurgency and the government will facilitate the changes in policy and the eventual withdrawal of U.S. forces.

PRIMARY OPPOSITION

Mohammed Daudzai on Kill/Capture

Frontline broadcast the January 30, 2011, interview with Mohammed Daudzai, Afghan President Hamid Karzai’s Chief of Staff, on June 17, 2011, to shed light on the issues arising from the Kill/Capture campaign. The Chief of Staff believes that inaccuracies in operations falter the peace process. Additionally, he goes on to say the night raids violate Afghani culture and there is zero acceptance of civilian harm (Daudzai). During his *Frontline* interview, Daudzai gave this account:

You have a village, has a very peaceful life, and then in the middle of the night, people come and surround the village and search a few houses and take a few prisoners, and in that scuffle a few of them are killed; women are disgraced. The next day, what do you expect? The entire village youth becomes Taliban. They are searching for the Taliban to recruit them and give them weapons. (Daudzai)

In the *Frontline* interview, Daudzai iterates Afghan President Hamid Karzai's is against the night raids and the disgrace they cause the Afghani people. Furthermore, he claims on numerous occasions that Karzai has made requests that the night raids cease (Daudzai).

Petraeus Comments on Kill/Capture

The June 14, 2011 *Frontline* interview of David Petraeus covered many aspects of the military actions in Afghanistan focusing primarily on the Kill/Capture campaign. Petraeus states the escalation in violence is the result of many factors including the influx of troops, and the mild winter allowing the Taliban to continue fighting for areas under the control of coalition forces. The reduction of civilian casualties, even with the increased volume of missions, is aiding in reducing opposition. Petraeus reiterates members of JSOC (Joint Special Operations Command) know that Kill/Capture has limitations but overall is very effective. Petraeus emphasized that their goal has not changed, which is to utilize every available asset in an expandable and realistic manner to gain control of the situation. Elimination of an occupation of this magnitude requires extermination, incarceration, purging, and the elimination of regrouping facilities. Reducing munitions and reinforcements and the ability to transfer intelligence is required. The fortification of all levels of the régime will allow the populace to ostracize eventually the members of the occupation to achieve peace (Petraeus).

General David Petraeus made the following statement in his June 14, 2011 *Frontline* interview: "Of course it's often said, and I often say, you don't kill or capture your way out of an industrial-strength insurgency, which is what faces Afghanistan. Rather, it takes a mix of every aspect. It takes a comprehensive approach, and not just military but civil-military." Dexter Filkins, a writer for *The New Yorker*, comments on the civil-military approach in *Frontline's* "Kill/Capture" broadcast:

The overriding goal of counterinsurgency is to make friends. You make friends with the people, you isolate the insurgents. Go where the people are. Go where the population is. Go to the population centers. Get in among the people, protect the people, isolate the insurgents. (Grey and Edge)

THE REAL PROBLEM ADDRESSED

Night Raids

Afghanis despise the night raids, first used in the Russian occupation, because of the manner in which they were performed. Mohammed Daudzai made this statement during his *Frontline* interview: "Night raids are against our culture. The first time we came to know about night raids were during the communist regime. They started going to people's houses, taking out youths, and then they disappeared (Daudzai)." Daudzai continues saying "everybody hated that regime." This is the foundation for the animosity against the night raids of the current campaign. Daudzai reiterates the night raids are against Afghani culture and makes this declaration, "Going to anyone's house, particularly when you go on a mobile ladder and go to people's rooftop and appear with your gun in people's house and say, 'Don't move!,' or 'Women move to one side and men move to another side,' this is entirely against Afghan culture. There is no tolerance for that" (Daudzai).

Dogs and Afghani Culture

Another aspect of the night raids that is of offense to the Afghani citizen is the use of dogs. An Afghani man made this statement during an interview for the *Frontline* broadcast "Kill/Capture," "These people come in the middle of the night. They break into houses. They bring dogs with them. They drag women out of the house. This is an offense to Islam (Grey and Edge)." The Hadith of Bukhari provides most of the verses that influence the Muslims where dogs are concerned. The Hadiths are teachings derived directly or indirectly from the prophet Mohammed. Volume 4 verse 448 states: "I heard Allah's Apostle saying; 'Angels (of Mercy) do not enter a house wherein there is a dog or a picture of a living creature (a human being or an animal)'" (Ali and Bukhari 654). Volume 3 verse 515 tells the Muslim there will be a loss of reward for having a dog in the following:

Allah's Apostle said, 'Whoever keeps a dog, one Qirat (readings) of the reward of his good deeds is deducted daily, unless the dog is used for guarding a farm or cattle.' Abu Huraira (in another narration) said from the Prophet, 'unless it is used for guarding sheep or farms, or for dog for guarding cattle or for hunting.' (Ali and Bukhari 456)

The saliva of a dog is considered unclean and anything the saliva touches must go through the purification process, a primary reason Muslims do not keep dogs in their homes and are against dogs being brought into their homes (Hadith of Bukhari).

Women in Afghan Culture

Afghanis think the night raids cause disgrace to the women of the home entered. The Afghan culture requires women to follow the teachings of the Quran at all times. The following, which is Book 24 Verse 31 from the Quran, explains the thoughts of disgrace:

And say to the believing women that they should lower their gaze and guard their modesty; that they should not display their beauty and ornaments except what (must ordinarily) appear thereof; that they should draw their veils over their bosoms and not display their beauty except to their husbands, their fathers, their husbands' fathers, their sons, their husbands' sons, their brothers or their brothers' sons, or their sisters' sons, or their womenfolk, or those whom their right hands possess, or male servants free of physical needs, or small children who have no sense of the shame of sex; and that they should not strike their feet in order to draw attention to their hidden ornaments. And O ye Believers! Turn ye all together towards Allah, that ye may attain bliss. (Ali 290)

The removal of women from their homes during the night raids, perhaps in their night cloths, without the opportunity to prepare themselves for the public, which includes the soldiers is a disgrace to the women. An Afghani man made this comment during an interview for the *Frontline* broadcast "Kill/Capture," "If the Taliban were hiding in my house, I wouldn't tell you. They don't dishonor our women, but your friends do (Grey and Edge)."

The Killing of Civilians

In his article, "Finding the Target, Fixing the Method: Methodological Tensions in Insurgent Identification," Dr. Mathew Charles Ford of the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Hull, Hull, UK commented that counterinsurgency efforts require the utmost of care to insure the correct individuals or individual is the target. Causing harm to individuals that are innocent of any wrongdoing can create at the least animosity and at the worst new insurgents. The gathering of

intelligence in a reliable and accurate fashion to eliminate mistakes is required. Utilizing a combination of COIN and CT to develop manner of identifying insurgents allows for a more accurate technique. Using past failures and successes to tweak the intelligence gathering process to the highest accuracy possible is imperative (Ford 114).

Ford had this to say about the comparison of Counterinsurgency (COIN) and Counterterrorism (CT):
 COIN is characterized as “population-centric,” demanding a quasi-political whole-of-government response that works within the Law of Armed Conflict and that aims to win over the people so as to isolate insurgents and deprive them of indigenous support. This differs from CT, a technique often portrayed as a law-enforcement approach working within a domestic legal contest that is directed at the pursuit of a terrorist group through the development of intelligence provided by the security services and police combined with the occasional surgical use of special forces. (Ford 114)

Ford went on to say CT and COIN have other variances depending on the perpetrator of the action and the location of the action. One variable of COIN being, “the extent to which the military should be ‘enemy’- or ‘population’-centric or should apply force to coerce, kill, or incentivize communities to change behaviors or attitudes” (Ford 114).

Additionally, Ford believes for an insurgency to exist, the populace must allow the existence of the insurgency. When the populace rebels against the insurgency and removes the influx of recruits and provisions, operations begin to dwindle. A variety of actions can bring about the unpopularity of being or assisting the insurgency. For instance, if the insurgency repeatedly strikes against the populace or if the populace is frequently “caught in the crossfire” because of insurgents hiding among civilians, popularity will dwindle. Fear based rule is short lived; ruling with terrorism against the populace removes any true loyalty and leaves the populace seeking revenge in any manner available (Ford 114).

Furthermore, Ford iterates a crucial piece of the intelligence collection process is very similar to the “beat cop” patrolling a neighborhood for an extended time. The indigenous population becomes familiar with the soldiers in their area and eventually starts sharing information they would not normally communicate. The soldiers at the same time are becoming familiar with local “atmospheres” and “patterns of life.” Once there is an understanding of these aspects of the area, the soldiers can recognize changes in routine that are indicators of insurgent activity (Ford 117).

STRATEGIC PLAN

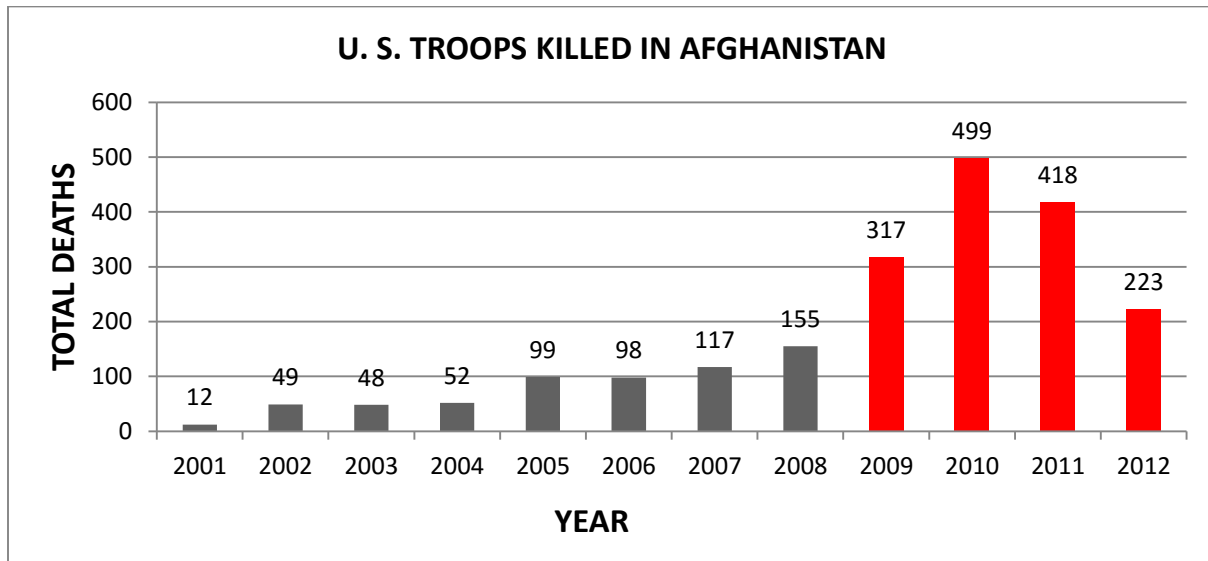
Overseas Contingency Operation

In his article, “Finding the Target, Fixing the Method: Methodological Tensions in Insurgent Identification,” Ford spoke of U.S. President Barack Obama’s creation of the “Overseas Contingency Operation” in 2009. “Overseas Contingency Operation” was not just the replacement of a G.W. Bush title; it was a new strategy for combatting insurgency. This policy not only replaced the “Global War on Terror” and “Long War” titles (Ford):

Instead, this new language points to the emergence of military practices that are the product of Coalition and International Security and Assistance Force (ISAF) efforts to defeat insurgencies and Al Qaeda in Iraq and Afghanistan. These practices do not emphasize global Counter Insurgency (COIN) over Counterterrorism (CT) but more accurately represents a certain blending of the two techniques in a manner that reflects the U.S. military’s large-scale troop deployment on operations overseas. (Ford 113)

One aspect of this strategy has resulted in an escalation of missions, called kill/capture, targeting high level Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders. The killing of Osama Bin Laden on May 2, 2011 was a direct result of this campaign (Grey and Edge). This triumph was not without cost to the U.S. military. The graph in Figure 1, created with data from icasualties.org, shows the escalation in U. S. troop deaths that correlates to the beginning of the “Overseas Contingency Operation.”

Figure 1



Source: “Operation Enduring Freedom”. icasualties.org/oef. August 2012. Web. 11 August. 2012.

<<http://icasualties.org/oef/>>

The years on the graph highlighted in red represent the troop escalation and the implementation of the Kill/Capture campaign. Along with the fatalities, icasualties.org reports the number of U.S. troops wounded as follows:

- 2008 – 795
- 2009 – 2,143
- 2010 – 5,242
- 2011 – 5,183

In all years prior to 2008, fewer than 750 troops were wounded (“Operation Enduring Freedom”).

COIN OPERATIONS

A counterinsurgency campaign has three distinct approaches according to the U.S. counterinsurgency manual *FM 3-24*. These three aspects comprise the short and long term goals of the campaign and are as follows:

1. Clear-Hold-Build
2. Combined Action
3. Limited Support

Short Term Goals

According to *FM 3-24*, The U.S. military's Counterinsurgency manual, "clear, hold and build" is designed for strategic zones and is the first of three stages (5-18). The trident for the operation in Afghanistan to defeat the insurgency and remove the breeding ground from world terrorist control is an evolved method. This approach requires forces to enter regions controlled by the insurgency and remove the insurgency by killing, capturing or driving out. Once the area has been "cleared," forces must continue a strong presence to "hold" the area and repel any attempts by the insurgency to return to the area. The counterinsurgency effort will "build" up the governing body in the process of "holding" the region creating support from the public through the protection of the public. Once occupancy of a region stabilizes, the counterinsurgency efforts reach outward to encompass a greater area (Department of the Army 5-18).

Long Term Goals

The second and third aspects of COIN operations comprise the extended goals of the campaign, and allow utilization when campaign conditions reach certain criteria. For implementation of Combined Action, the utilization of the host nation (Afghanistan) forces with U.S. Forces can only occur when insurgency levels reach a minimum and the insurgency that does exist has limited capabilities. At this point in the campaign, the training of the Afghani forces to maintain control of the area takes place. Afghani forces join the U.S. forces on missions and raids as well as making a presence in areas held by U.S. forces (Department of the Army). General David Patraeus pointed out the various Afghan forces receiving training in his *Frontline* interview:

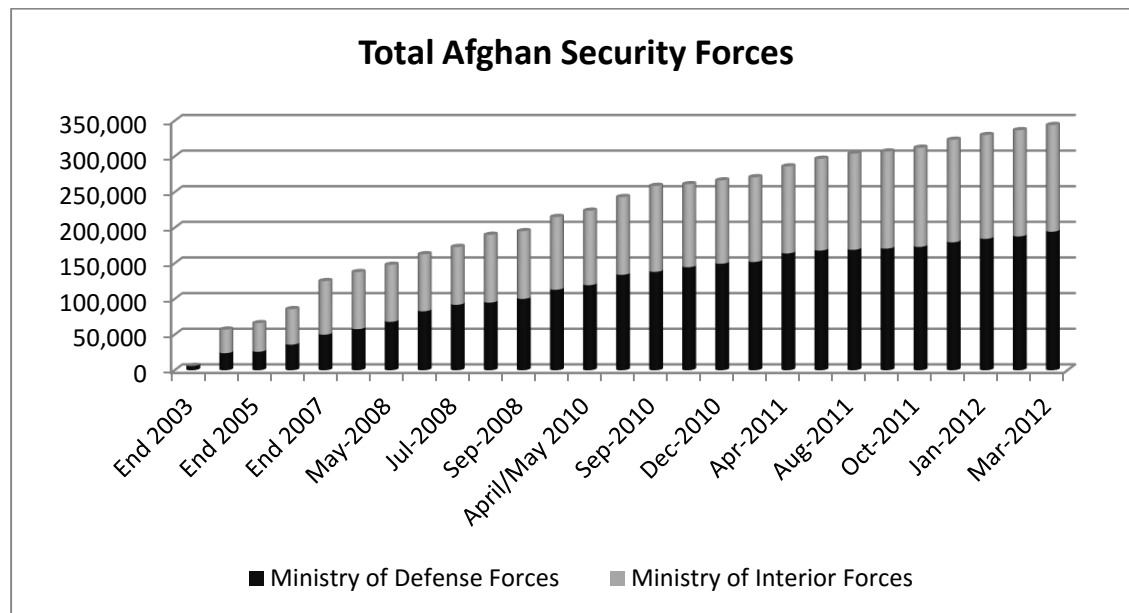
Now ideally, when you get a certain location to a certain point in security terms, that Afghan conventional forces can do the large measure of the security operations, and you can help them, because in many cases, by the way, these are Afghan-led. We have helped to build Afghan Special Mission Units, Afghan commandos, Afghan police [Provincial] Response Companies, Quick Reaction Forces [QRFs] and so forth. You can reach a point where they can maintain the security by and large. (Patraeus)

The third aspect of the COIN operation in Afghanistan, Limited Support, per the description in *FM 3-24*, is in the process of implementation. Once the region stabilizes, the concentration of effort becomes shifting the ability to govern to the host nation. General David Patraeus spoke of this application of Afghan forces in his *Frontline* Interview:

We've certainly sought to enable our Afghan partners who conduct targeted operations, and that has moved forward as well, to help them develop their Special Operations forces, to bring that into more of an arrest warrant-based — in other words, rule of law-based detention operations, rather than security threat-based, something that is ongoing, [and we've] begun the transition of the detention facility at Parwan.

Implementation of Limited Support requires the host nation have the military strength to maintain control when U.S. forces withdraw from the region. The Afghanistan government has steadily built forces since coming into power. The graph in Figure 2, created with data from the Brookings Institution Afghanistan Index, shows the evolution of the Afghan forces towards a state that would allow them to control the country with little or no outside assistance.

Figure 2



Source: Ian S. Livingston and Michael O'Hanlon. Afghanistan Index. Brookings Institution. July 12, 2012. Web. August 18, 2012. <<http://www.brookings.edu/about/programs/foreign-policy/afghanistan-index>>

The Afghanistan Index states that as of May 2012 combined U.S. troops in Afghanistan are approximately 87,000. At the height of the troop buildup U.S. forces reached 100,000 (Livingston and O'Halon).

According to Ford in "Finding the Target, Fixing the Method: Methodological Tensions in Insurgent Identification," there is certain criterion that is critical for the campaign in Afghanistan to succeed:

(A) there is an undecided population waiting to be brought round to favoring an established regime and that (B) the insurgent category might be considered to have an essential or fixed quality. For only on the basis that it is possible to fix the identity of a notional and legitimate population group can such categories as insurgent be defined. From an intelligence perspective, then, what is required is a certain identity baseline from which unusual or out the ordinary patterns might be discerned. (124)

Ford continued indicating that detrimental to the attempts in Afghanistan are past history. The indigenous population is reluctant to put trust in an operation that lacks verification. The populace is unwilling to fraternize with counterinsurgents that may leave the area at any time, leaving the local population in a vulnerable position should the Taliban attempt to seek revenge. To perpetuate the existence of village and family the populace is required to withhold valuable information from the counterinsurgents attempting to remove the insurgents the villagers fear. At times the populace may not only withhold information but may also transfer incorrect information regarding opposing local parties in an effort to acquire vengeance (Ford 125).

SAFETY OF TROOPS

Reconnaissance by Fire

The Taliban have a distinct advantage in their lack of proper military dress, essentially a member of the Taliban looks identical to any other Afghani. Often this has required counterinsurgency teams to utilize a routine known as “reconnaissance by fire,” (Ford 115) which requires the teams to occupy an area and continue the presence in that area until attacked by members of the insurgency. Although this eventually accomplishes the desired result and eliminates the question of, who is the enemy, it can be very costly to counterinsurgency forces. A far more preferred method, though not always as accurate, is the use of “intelligence-led insurgent Identification (Ford 115).” Identifying insurgents by collecting data, filtering and reducing the information, then examining the information for accuracy is a lengthy effort. When this effort reduces the number of injured and killed ISAF (International Security Assistance Force) members the effort is very valuable (Ford 115).

Cover of Darkness

According to Todd Boock, a U.S. soldier who has served two tours of duty in Afghanistan, several clear advantages to night missions exist, among these advantages is the fact the majority of the insurgents sought will be asleep. Waking from sleep the insurgents are groggy and will possess a slower reaction time as well as an inability to see clearly. Under these conditions, counterinsurgent forces have a better chance of capturing the insurgents. Additionally the U.S. military possesses some of the best night vision equipment available, another advantage to the night operations. Working under cover of darkness greatly reduces counterinsurgents being wounded or killed; the primary objective is to perform the mission while preserving the forces.

Reintegration and Reconciliation

The present leaders of the Afghanistan government have issued multiple invitations for the Taliban to stop fighting and join the government in unifying Afghanistan. In his interview *Frontline* Mohammed Daudzai spoke about the creation of members of the Taliban because of the actions of counterinsurgency forces, “Now, when we are talking about peace, this is our primary target, because we feel guilty about this particular group. We need to provide them with the opportunity to come in and reconcile, to reintegrate back into society (Daudzai).”

This desire to reconcile and reintegrate members of the Taliban by the Afghan government is admirable as an act of forgiveness, but the policy has some serious complications. The following is from *Frontline*’s “Kill/Capture” broadcast when a supposedly ex-member of the Taliban, Abdul Aziz, “forgets he is wearing a microphone” (Grey and Edge) while speaking with a village elder:

Come this way please, uncle. Right, the Taliban who are hiding here— I was a member of the Taliban myself. About 30 fighters worked for me. I joined the government side about a month ago, but the Taliban are still my brothers. Look, we don’t like the Americans. We’ve had bad experiences with them. They’re infidels. They are the enemies of our religion, our nation and our honor. If God makes the Taliban successful, then we will be Taliban again. Do you understand? On that day, we will be Taliban. (Grey and Edge)

The recent killing of three United States soldiers, and the wounding of a fourth, adds evidence of the futility of the reintegration program. A member of the Taliban joined the Afghan police quickly receiving commander status. This member of the Taliban gained access to the soldiers because of the position he had acquired through the Afghan government. The soldiers attack came during a meeting with the

insurgent disguised as an Afghan commander. This attack, known as a green on blue shooting, is the 25th incident of its kind in 2012 (“Three U.S. Soldiers Killed by Afghan Police in Helmand”).

CONCLUSIONS

Overall, the data presented indicates the orchestration of the campaign as designed, with some minor exceptions such as the green on blue shootings, which require change to procedure. The operation went from phase to phase with seamless transition. The data indicates stages of the U. S. campaign were dependent on the Afghan governments’ ability to perform its portion of the campaign. Once the insurgent level was satisfactory, the Afghan armies gained more responsibilities in the raiding process. When the Afghan armies reached an acceptable level U.S. troop withdrawal began. As far as the controversy is concerned, it coincided with phases of the operation and allowed the Afghan government to protect the populace from the American war machine, as well as the Taliban, in an effort to build the people’s trust in the government. The incentive to support the government and reject the Taliban a creation of the U.S. forces as they removed the Taliban from regions of Afghanistan.

The question of the hour: Will the Afghan government maintain a country where the breeding of terrorists is not allowed?

RECOMMENDATIONS

The opening paragraph of Chapter 5 in FM 3-24, the U.S. military’s Counterinsurgency Manual is by Sir Robert Thompson and comes from “Defeating Communist Insurgency: The Lessons of Malaya and Vietnam, 1966:”

It is a persistently methodical approach and steady pressure, which will gradually wear the insurgent down. The government must not allow itself to be diverted either by countermoves on the part of the insurgent or by the critics on its own side who will be seeking a simpler and quicker solution. There are no short-cuts and no gimmicks. (qtd. in Dept. of the Army)

This quote, though 46 years old, is very appropriate for the circumstances today in Afghanistan and other countries with similar situations. The conditions spoken of involve a variety of contributors just as the quote by Thompson indicates. The insurgent force in Afghanistan is using all possible tactics to remove the force that is working to eradicate its very existence. Continuation of the Kill/Capture campaign in Afghanistan, without remorse, is required. Some changes are required to protect our troops to the greatest degree possible. Attempting to reintegrate known members of the Taliban is a dangerous and futile effort and should cease. Not allowing any members of the Taliban, past or present being one in the same, in a position where U.S soldiers might be vulnerable is imperative. The night raid policy would remain in place, it is the safest method, and it gets results. Any Afghan that harbors an insurgent is as guilty as the insurgent. The campaign strategy is to make the populace that protects the insurgency, freely or reluctantly, very uncomfortable; evidently, that is exactly what the campaign is doing. This strategy is pushing the people toward the Afghan government and away from the insurgency. Giving in to pressure that may be fueled by the Taliban would not allow the strategy the timeframe to succeed. It is the author’s hope that Afghanistan will stabilize and become a peaceful nation in the next five years. Afghanistan has the natural resources to be a thriving country should the fighting cease and the populace focuses their efforts on bettering the nation.

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